PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 239

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1993–94

COMPRISING PERIOD
7 March—18 March 1994

CAMBRIDGE
REFERENCE LIBRARY

Comm Reg R
~~328~~ 328
(invertebrate)

ISBN 0 10 681239 4

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(Formed by the Rt. Hon. John Major, MP, June 1993)

Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
Lord Chancellor—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
President of the Board of Trade (Secretary of State for Trade and Industry)—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
Secretary of State for Transport—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
Secretary of State for Defence—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Wakeham
Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
Secretary of State for the Environment—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
Secretary of State for National Heritage—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, CH, MP
Secretary of State for Employment—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
Secretary of State for Social Security—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
Secretary of State for Scotland—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
Secretary of State for Education—The Rt. Hon. John Patten, MP
Secretary of State for Health—The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, MP
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—The Rt. Hon. Gillian Shephard, MP
Chief Secretary to the Treasury—The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP
Secretary of State for Wales—The Rt. Hon. John Redwood, MP

LAW OFFICERS

Attorney-General—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
Lord-Advocate—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, QC
Solicitor-General—Sir Derek Spencer, QC, MP
Solicitor-General for Scotland—Thomas Dawson, Esq, QC

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
Ministers of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office—
- Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
- The Rt. Hon. Alastair Goodlad, MP
- The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
- David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP

Ministers of State, Home Office—
- The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
- The Rt. Hon. Peter Lloyd, MP
- David Maclean, Esq, MP

Financial Secretary to the Treasury—Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP
Paymaster General—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP
Ministers of State, Department of Trade and Industry—
- Minister for Energy—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
- Minister for Industry—The Rt. Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
- Minister for Trade—Richard Needham, Esq, MP
- The Lord Strathclyde

Minister of State, Department of Transport—
- Minister for Public Transport—The Rt. Hon. Roger Freeman, MP

Ministers of State, Ministry of Defence—
- Minister of State for Defence Procurement—Jonathan Aitken, Esq, MP
- Minister of State for the Armed Forces—Jeremy Hanley, Esq, MP

Ministers of State, Department of the Environment—
- Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction—The Rt. Hon. Sir George Young, MP
- Minister for Local Government and Planning—David Curry, Esq, MP
- Minister for the Environment and Countryside—Robert Atkins, Esq, MP

Minister of State, Department of Employment—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP
Minister of State, Department of Social Security—
- Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP

Minister of State, Scottish Office—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC

MINISTERS OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. Sir John Wheeler, MP
Michael Ancram, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Blatch, CBE
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—
Minister for Health—The Rt. Hon. Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—Michael Jack, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, WELSH OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Wyn Roberts, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. Gillian Shephard, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Michael Jack, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—
The Earl Howe
The Hon. Nicholas Soames, MP

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—Jonathan Aitken, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—Jeremy Hanley, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Lord Cecil of Essenden

Education—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. John Patten, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Blatch, CBE
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCHOOLS—Eric Forth, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Robin Squire, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION—Timothy Boswell, Esq, MP

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Henley
Miss Ann Widdecombe, MP

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction—The Rt. Hon. Sir George Young, MP
Minister for Local Government and Planning—David Curry, Esq, MP
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—Robert Atkins, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Tony Baldry, Esq, MP
The Earl of Arran

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
The Right Hon. Alastair Goodlad, MP
The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd, MP

Health—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Health—The Rt. Hon. Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Hon. Tom Sackville, MP
The Baroness Cumberlege, CBE
John Bowis, Esq, OBE, MP

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
The Rt. Hon. Peter Lloyd, MP
David Maclean, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Charles Wardle, Esq, MP

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Derek Spencer, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Thomas Dawson, Esq, QC

Lord Chancellor's Department—
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—John M. Taylor, Esq, MP

National Heritage—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, CH, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Iain Sproat, Esq, MP

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. Sir John Wheeler, MP
Michael Ancram, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Baroness Denton, CBE
Tim Smith, Esq, MP

Paymaster General's Office—
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Wakeham

Public Service and Science, Office of—
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—David Davis, Esq, MP

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, MP
Allan Stewart, Esq, MP
Sir Hector Monro, MP

Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Alistair Burt, Esq, MP
William Hague, Esq, MP
The Viscount Astor

Trade and Industry—
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE (SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY)—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Energy—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
Minister for Industry—The Rt. Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Trade—Richard Needham, Esq, MP
The Lord Strathclyde
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CORPORATE AFFAIRS—Neil Hamilton, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TECHNOLOGY—Patrick McLoughlin, Esq, MP

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Public Transport—The Rt. Hon. Roger Freeman, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Robert Key, Esq, MP (Minister for Roads and Traffic)
Steve Norris, Esq, MP (Minister for Transport in London)
The Lord Mackay (Minister for Aviation and Shipping)

Treasury—
PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY—Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Anthony Nelson, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
Irvine Patnick, Esq, OBE, MP
Nicholas Baker, Esq, MP
Timothy Wood, Esq, MP
Timothy Kirkhope, Esq, MP
Andrew Mackay, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Robert G. Hughes, Esq, MP
James Arbuthnot, Esq, MP
Andrew Mitchell, Esq, MP
Michael Brown, Esq, MP
Derek Conway, Esq, MP

Welsh Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. John Redwood, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Wyn Roberts, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Gwilym Jones, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—
LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, KT, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Viscount Ridley, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Lord Somerleyton
TREASURER—Greg Knight, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—David Lightbown, Esq, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Sydney Chapman, Esq, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Viscount Ullswater
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne
LORDS IN WAITING—The Viscount Long, CBE, The Viscount St. Davids, The Viscount Goschen
BARONESS IN WAITING—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Trumpington

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—The Rt. Hon. Michael Alison, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—The Rt. Hon. Betty Boothroyd, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Michael Morris, Esq, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Geoffrey Lofthouse, Esq, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Dame Janet Fookes, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—

Dr. John G. Blackburn, MP, Frank Cook, Esq, MP, Patrick Cormack, Esq, MP, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, Alan Haselhurst, Esq, MP, Robert Hicks, Esq, MP, James Hill, Esq, MP, Norman Hogg, Esq, MP, Roy Hughes, Esq, MP, Sir John Hunt, MP, Barry Jones, Esq, MP, Sir James Kilfedder, MP, Sir David Knox, MP, John McWilliam, Esq, MP, Michael J, Martin, Esq, MP, Iain Mills, Esq, MP, Edward O'Hara, Esq, MP, Sir Giles Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, Roger Sims, Esq, MP, Mrs. Ann Winterton, MP, Nicholas Winterton, Esq, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—

The Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Ms Janet Anderson, MP, The Rt. Hon. Margaret Beckett, MP, The Rt. Hon. Alan Beith, MP, The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP, The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP,

SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION—R. W. G. Wilson

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—

Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB (Chairman), Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG, Miss J. B. Tanfield, J. Rodda, FCA, I. D. Church, Mrs. S. J. Harrison

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—B. A. Wilson

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—N. Bevan, CB

ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO THE SPEAKER—Mrs. M. E. Thomson

TRAINBEARER—D. J. Lord, MBE

DEPUTY TRAINBEARER—P. L. Warwick

DIARY SECRETARY—Mrs. S. Norvell

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon D. C. Gray, TD, PhD

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—H. Knorpel, CB, QC, T. J. G. Pratt, CB

ASSISTANT TO SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—P. Harvey, CB

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Ms P. A. Helme

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB

CLERK ASSISTANT—D. W. Limon, CB

CLERK OF COMMITTEES—J. F. Sweetman, CB, TD

PRINCIPAL CLERKS—

W. R. McKay (Public Bills)	R. J. Willoughby (Private Bills)
C. B. Winnifrith (Table Office)	D. G. Millar (Select Committees)
R. B. Sands (Select Committees)	M. R. Jack, PhD (Standing Committees)
G. Cubie (Overseas Office)	R. W. G. Wilson (Domestic Committees)
A. J. Hastings (Journal Office)	W. A. Proctor (Financial Committees)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—S. A. L. Panton, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms A. Milner-Barry, F. A. Cranmer, R. J. Rogers, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig, D. L. Natzler, E. P. Silk, A. R. Kennon, L. C. Laurence Smyth, S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, D. F. Harrison, S. J. Priestley, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips, R. G. James

SENIOR CLERKS—Ms P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert, B. M. Hutton, J. S. Benger, D Phil, Miss E. C. Samson, N. P. Walker, M. D. Hamlyn, P. C. Seaward, DPhil, C. G. Lee, C. D. Stanton, A. Y. A. Azad, H. R. Neilson (acting), D. Steel (acting), D. J. Clarke (acting), P. E. Bolton (acting)

CLERKS OF DOMESTIC COMMITTEES—K. J. Brown, P. G. Moon

ASSISTANT CLERKS—C. A. Shaw, P. M. Hensher, Ms L. M. Gardner, F. J. Reid, M. Hennessy, G. R. Devine, Mrs. J. N. St. J. Mulley, T. W. P. Healey, Miss S. A. R. Adams

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss R. J. Challis, S. D. Barrett, Miss S. J. Fox

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—L. L. Kaye, A. P. Hubner, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, J. D. Whatley, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader, Miss F. L. Allingham, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, J. A. L. Dresner, M. P. Oxborough, N. P. Wright, Ms C. M. Genis, Mrs. C. Oxborough, R. W. A. Barrand, A. Catinella

SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—J. K. Wheatley, Miss S. Phipps, PhD, Miss C. M. French, C. B. Dibben, J. Cable, V. A. A. Mengot, R. J. Gartside, P. J. King

EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—B. Tidball, DEPUTY—Miss L. Lewis, ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, J. Puricelli, K. B. Wood, P. D. Howlett, Mrs. L. R. Shade, P. A. Jack, P. L. J. Sullivan

SECRETARIES—Mrs. G. E. C. Sclater (Clerk of the House), Mrs. S. D. Pamphlett, Miss S. P. Chubb, Mrs. D. Gent, Miss A. T. Power, Miss D. J. Somers, Mrs. K. J. Georgiou, Miss L. Young, Mrs. H. Agnew, Miss S. Littlebury, Mrs. J. Stott, Mrs. A. M. Douglas, Miss K. McClelland, Mrs. B. Hunter, Mrs. A. M. Allen

EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—R. J. Willoughby, B. P. Keith

REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—R. B. Sands TAXING OFFICER—R. J. Willoughby

SUPERINTENDING CLERK—R. A. Broomfield

CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—Miss A. Fuki, J. Hole, Miss E. Segal, Mrs. D. B. Nelson, Miss C. A. Benger, P. A. Derrett, I. A. Blair

Vote Office—

DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster

DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—J. F. Collins ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney

BOOKSHOP MANAGER—C. D. Lister HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—B. G. Underwood

SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—Mrs. S. Fuzio, A. J. Ashton

VOTE OFFICE ASSISTANTS—G. E. Howard, C. P. Williams, P. Hannett, J. Harrington, M. D. Cook, J. E. Lawford, Miss V. Frewin, S. Haher, P. Smith

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG

DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. N. W. Jennings

ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANTS AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright, J. M. Robertson

CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss S. J. Scott Thomson

ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren, A. J. Spencer

PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—R. H. Usher

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPERS—C. E. Gray, D. Shiels

SENIOR DOORKEEPERS—R. A. F. Chapman, J. Town, R. J. Tyack, J. W. Kirman, L. Outram

HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—M. Bryant, MBE

SENIOR OFFICE KEEPERS—V. M. Roccia, K. R. Dickason, C. R. Harris, BEM

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH MANAGER—Mrs. M. Mainland NURSING SISTER—Miss S. Todd

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS DIRECTORATE—

DIRECTOR OF WORKS—H. P. Webber

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF WORKS—B. C. Sewell

PRINCIPAL WORKS OFFICERS—A. Makepeace, R. Bentley, G. Goode, B. R. Hall, C. Hillier, M. Moone, J.F. Moore, M. Trott

SENIOR PROFESSIONAL TECHNICAL OFFICERS—C. Brown, C. Cowell, J. Eaton, T. Fox, S. Howard, T. Jardine, B. O'Boyle, J. Stone

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—A. Blake

DEPUTY COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. S. Morrison

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—Miss J. B. Tanfield

DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—Miss P. J. Baines, B.Litt

LIBRARY AND RESEARCH—

ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Division)—S. Z. Young, K. G. Cuninghame

DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Section)—Mrs. J. M. Wainwright, FIInfSc, C. C. Pond, PhD, Mrs. C. B. Andrews, R. C. Clements, Mrs. J. M. Lourie, R. J. Ware, DPhil, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, R. J. Twigger, Mrs. G. L. Allen

LIBRARY CLERKS, SENIOR—Ms F. Poole, T. N. Edmonds, R. J. Cracknell, CStat, Miss O. M. Gay, Miss B. McInnes, B. K. Winetrobe, Miss M. Baber, Ms A. Walker, Mrs. H. V. Holden, Mrs. P. Carling, Miss J. Seaton, FLA. A. J. L. Crompton, Ms P. Strickland, Miss V. A. Miller, Ms H. M. Jeffs, M.P. Hillyard, Ms J. Roll, S. A. Wise (period)

ASSISTANT—Ms W. T. Wilson, E. H. Wood, Miss N. J. Chedgey, M. Nawaz, P. Bowers, PhD, T. E. Dodd, A. C. Seely, Ms J. K. Dyson, Miss F. M. Watson, G. Danby, PhD, W. F. Lea, PhD, Miss P. M. Hughes, PhD, B. C. Morgan, Ms K. S. Wright, J. Vernon, Miss L. A. Conway

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—P. W. Skerratt (period), J. A. Prince, MLS (acting)

SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—K. N. H. Parry, ALA, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Miss I. O. White, ALA, Miss G. L. Cooper

EDUCATION OFFICER—Mrs. C. Weeds; ASSISTANT—Mrs. C. C. O'Connor

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—E. L. V. MacGregor, Ms B. A. Rowlands, ALA, J. P Brevitt, Miss C. Owens

HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. P. V. Wiles, Mrs. D. W. Clark, Miss M. H. Fletcher, Mrs. G. C. Brown, Mrs. P. E. Cook, Ms H. Armstrong, Miss E. J. Jones, ALA, G. Haig, Mrs. E. H. Riley, ALA, Mrs. F. M. Ward, Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, Ms F. Whittle, T. C. Holmes, C. M. Sear, Ms J. B. Hall, ALA, R. Freebury, ALA, A. D. Parker, ALA, Miss G. Rose, Mrs. J. Priestley, Miss C. M. A. Chambers

EDITOR, WEEKLY BULLETIN—D. B. Inns

LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—P. E. M. Ward, Mrs. J. A. Smith, Miss J. Lyall, ALA, Ms Z. Smallwood, Miss C. M. Blair, ALA, Miss S. Pepin, ALA, P. C. Tomes, R. O. Steeden, G. G. Newell, Miss A. Hatton, Miss V. S. Spratt, Miss K. E. Susilovic, Ms J. Davies, P. D. Banks, G. Howard, A. B. Estorffe (temporary), Miss S. Howden (temporary)

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss N. Harland, Mrs. A. J. H. Mara, D. A. Brown, M. Greenhill (Head Library Attendant), B. Smith, Ms J. Fessey, A. J. Fuller, Miss J. M. Perkes, Mrs. H. Onyskiw, A. Clark, Miss A. Gual, Ms M. A. Moulton, Miss N. M. Sutherland, Mrs. C. Millar, Mrs. P. M. Burnett, P. R. Mann, Miss A. O. Creevy, Miss J. Appleton (acting), Miss H. C. Weltman (acting)

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

DIRECTOR—J. Rodda, FCA

FEES OFFICE—

ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis

DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. R. Marskell ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—M. Fletcher, Mrs. G. Crowther

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. D. C. Hill, N. P. Crawley HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. J. Peach, Mrs. G. M. Baker, Miss R. Harrison, Ms M. R. Morris, G. L. Turner EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss D. E. Johnson, D. M. Allen, D. J. D. Woods, Ms P. R. Mills, Miss S. V. A. Weaver, P. H. Olden, A. D. Rowlands, P. J. S. French, Miss M. Oliver, Miss D. M. McGuire, Mrs. S. M. Chalmers, R. A. P. Edwards, Mrs. C. J. Stockton, A. C. Martin, I. Montgomery, (temporary), Mrs. D. Euesden (temporary)

FINANCE OFFICE—

HEAD OF OFFICE—M. J. Barram, IPFA, MBCS,

ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—R. H. A. Russell, ACMA, Ms S. Peterson, IPFA

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Mrs. N. Norman

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Ms K. Bigwood, Miss V. E. Wilson (temporary), P. F. Barratt (temporary)

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss T. D. Ruewell, P. F. Dawson, Miss V. Browne (temporary), Miss R. Astbury (temporary), Ms S. Pratt (temporary), Ms T. Myers (temporary)

ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—

HEAD OF OFFICE—B. A. Wilson

DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Miss P. J. Hurford HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss J. Bremner, P. McGuinness

PERSONNEL OFFICE MANAGER—M. Page

PERSONNEL OFFICERS—C. L. Watson, Miss C. E. Jackson, Mrs. R. A. Baker, Mrs. A. McGuinn

COMPUTER OFFICE—

COMPUTER OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc

NETWORK PLANNING OFFICER—J. Fishenden

NETWORK SUPPORT OFFICER—Mrs. J. M. Cleveland

COMPUTER SUPPORT OFFICER—Miss M. Morrison (temporary)

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—C. J. Bumstead, P. D. Welsh

COMPUTER SUPPORT MANAGER—M. Luckins (temporary)

COMMON SERVICES UNIT—

HEAD OF UNIT—V. H. Stocker HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell

INTERNAL AUDITOR—A. A. Cameron SENIOR AUDITOR—S. J. Lewis

STAFF INSPECTOR—R. C. Collins

WELFARE OFFICER—Mrs. A. Mossop

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—I. D. Church

DEPUTY EDITOR—P. Walker

PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley, W. G. Garland, Miss H. A. Hales

ASSISTANT EDITORS—Ms C. V. Grainger, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Miss L. Sutherland, S. M. Hutchinson, C. Fogarty

COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—D. Crosswell, Mrs. A. M. Browne, Miss V. A. Widgery, Mrs. H. J. G. Natzler, Mrs. A. Street, L. Gilmore, Ms G. Hargrave, P. Oglethorpe, P. Hadlow, Miss C. Hanly, M. Watson, Ms K. Stewart, J. Ransley, Mrs. E. J. Gregory, Ms J. Dall

REPORTERS—Miss E. Morris, Ms P. Kelly, Miss K. Myers, Ms J. Warrington, Ms D. Jones, Mrs. J. Symons, Mrs. J. L. Davies, Miss E. A. Jarka, Miss J. Goodman, Miss J. Levy, K. Gall, Ms V. Wilson, A. Roberts

IT MANAGERS—Miss J. L. Brown, R. Daniels

PRINCIPAL HANSARD ADMINISTRATOR—Miss R. Washington

SENIOR HANSARD ADMINISTRATORS—Mrs. M. J. Harding, J. Brake, S. O'Riordan

ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—A. E. Thompson

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

DIRECTOR OF CATERING SERVICES—Mrs. S. J. Harrison, MHCIMA

OPERATIONS MANAGER—N. M. Hutson, MHCIMA

CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

CATERING MANAGER, HOUSE OF COMMONS—P. Gale, MHCIMA

CATERING MANAGER, BELLAMY'S—Ms S. Hovells, LHCIMA

BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths

ASSISTANT BANQUETING MANAGER—Miss C. Skidmore, LHCIMA

ASSISTANT CATERING MANAGER—M. W. E. Johnson

ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE CHEF—S. Norris

SYSTEMS MANAGER—D. Capstick, MHCIMA

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. P. J. Woolgar

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent A. E. F. Longhurst, LVO

DEPUTY HEAD OF SECURITY—Superintendent C. M. Harris

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—J. W. Jones

SUPERVISOR OF PARLIAMENTARY BROADCASTING—Miss M. E. Douglas, OBE

DIRECTOR OF THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY—Dr. M. G. Norton

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 239**

SEVENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1993-94

House of Commons

Monday 7 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Tourism

1. **Mr. Rooney:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how the tourism industry is consulted by Government on issues concerning it.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): Consultation on issues identified as affecting the tourism industry is undertaken through the British Tourist Authority, the English tourist board, regional tourist boards and a number of trade associations.

Mr. Rooney: I thank the Minister for his answer. What discussions has he had with the Secretary of State for Transport about the implications for tourism of the abolition of the BritRail pass and of ticketing, which are of serious concern to the tourist industry?

Mr. Sproat: I have had consultations with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on that matter and he is convinced that no problems will arise.

Sir Peter Emery: Does my hon. Friend realise that there is uproar in the hotel trade about the possibility of television sets in hotels being surcharged? Does he know that hoteliers in Sidmouth and Exmouth in my constituency are worried that, even if such a policy applies at first only to the bigger hotels, that will be a foot in the door and it will spread to motels and the whole tourist industry, and they are much against it?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I am aware of the worry felt by hoteliers at all levels. I emphasise that that worry arose not from Government policy but from the National Heritage Select Committee's proposals. It is not Government practice to reply to odd bits of suggestions; our practice is to reply all at once. When we reply to what the Select Committee proposes, I hope that we shall put my right hon. Friend's mind at rest.

Mr. Gunnell: What consultations has the Minister had with British Coal or with those in the tourist industry who take an interest in the many facilities around the nation supported by British Coal, particularly the mining museums, which are an important tourist facility? What national consultations have taken place?

Mr. Sproat: I very much enjoyed my visit to Caphouse colliery mining museum, in which the hon. Gentleman plays a role. I agree with him that it is an extremely important element of the tourist industry, which the old British Coal Board supported with regard to sports facilities and brass bands, and ensuring that local community halls were made available for practising and the storage of musical instruments. I have been in touch with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs and am seeing within the next few days a delegation led by Councillor Les Marshall.

Mr. Simon Coombs: My hon. Friend will be well aware of the tremendous interest in the tourism industry in his efforts at deregulation. What progress has been made with the consultations that are taking place?

Mr. Sproat: We have identified almost 90 regulations that impact damagingly on the tourist industry and we are going through those one by one. With the help of the Department of Employment, to which I pay great tribute, we have already published a document showing that the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 are not as damaging

as we previously thought. I shall have a meeting this afternoon with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs to see how much further and how much more quickly we can take this important subject.

Children's Play

2. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consultations he has had on future national arrangements for children's play.

Mr. Sproat: We are looking at options for children's play as part of our review of the Sports Council's structure and functions. We shall consult widely before deciding on any new national support arrangements.

Mr. Kilfoyle: The Minister will be aware of recent publicity suggesting that children's sedentary life style is storing up a huge future incidence of heart disease in the population. Does he agree that a wide range of play activities is essential for the social and physical well-being of future generations and prepares them for more formal team sport activities at school and in other organisations? Will he commit the Government to supplementing and complementing the excellent work already being done in play activities by local authorities?

Mr. Sproat: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his helpful remarks about the importance of fitness and team sports among school children. I agree with him whole-heartedly. As for supplementing the work done by local authorities, the Sports Council is spending some £300,000 on children's play. I am looking at the role that the Sports Council will or will not continue to have in supporting children's play around the country in succeeding years.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: In view of the Allied Dunbar, Health Education Authority survey on children's fitness, does my hon. Friend agree with the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) that children's sport in schools is especially important? What progress is my hon. Friend making with the Department for Education in his efforts to ensure that more competitive sport is played in schools?

Mr. Sproat: The entire Government are convinced of the importance of sport in schools. We are engaged in a series of discussions with the Department for Education, which is responsible for education, and my Department, which is responsible for sport, to see how we can best advance the cause.

Listed Buildings

3. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to visit Hampstead garden suburb to discuss the cost of maintaining listed buildings.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): I spent much of my youth visiting Hampstead garden suburb, and look forward to doing so again.

Mr. Marshall: On behalf of my constituents, may I say that we look forward to my right hon. Friend visiting the garden suburb, which is England's premier conservation area? He will be aware that within the area there are two Lutyens-designed buildings, St. Jude's church and Hampstead Garden Suburb institute. Does he agree that the state, having listed those buildings which are non-commercial in character, should be willing to help with their upkeep, as they will be of benefit for the future? Should not the national lottery be used for that purpose?

Mr. Brooke: The spirit of Ebenezer Howard is clearly safe in the hands of my hon. Friend. As to the churches, English Heritage already funds the restoration of churches to the tune of about £10 million a year and of cathedrals to the tune of £4 million a year, so the churches could make an appropriate application. However, it would also be an appropriate application in the context of the national lottery.

Sports Ground Safety

4. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the expected start and finishing dates for his Department's review of the scope for consolidating or simplifying the legislation on sports ground safety.

Mr. Sproat: The review will begin as soon as is practicable.

Mr. Austin-Walker: I share the concern about safety and recognise that, post-Hillsborough, all-seater stadiums appeared to be the correct approach. Is the Minister aware, however, of the tremendous financial burden that that places on some clubs and of the desire of fans for standing areas? Does his recent visit to Risley with my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) represent a step towards the possibility of providing safe standing areas at our football grounds?

Mr. Sproat: Two points have been raised by the hon. Gentleman. He is right to say that the cost is extremely great. Indeed, over the 10 years between the response to the Taylor report in 1990 and the year 2000, the cost will be some £600 million for the top two English divisions alone —that does not include sports such as rugby league—so that is an extremely important point. As to my visit to Risley, I thank the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) for arranging it. I am extremely grateful to him for that very interesting meeting. I shall look in detail at what I learnt at that meeting.

Television Licences

5. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about the operation of the concessionary television licence system.

Mr. Sproat: Responsibility for the administration of the television licensing system, including the concessionary licence system, rests with the BBC.

Mr. Luff: Notwithstanding that reply, I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand my gratitude to him for the time that I spent with him last week discussing the operation of the scheme at Severn house in Worcester. Having reflected on the facts that I shared with him at that meeting, does he agree that the situation facing the residents of Severn house is grossly unfair?

Mr. Sproat: It is certainly the case that, with some 50 flats at Severn house, of which one is in private sector

ownership, the other residents, apart from those with previous opportunities for having concessionary fees, are prevented from having such fees. I hope that something can be done. I will certainly do all that I can to ensure that natural justice prevails.

Mr. Winnick: How can it possibly be justified that, arising from Government legislation, pensioners who were in such accommodation before May 1988 get a concessionary licence fee, and rightly so, but if they moved in after May 1988 they must pay the full fee? Surely, that is unjust. It causes antagonism between residents and neighbours and is entirely due to the legislation that the Government introduced at the time. Had my Bill become law, there would have been no television licence fees for pensioners.

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman puts his finger on what I have sought to acknowledge to my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) is a difficult situation. Wherever one makes a cut-off point, someone is always just below or just above it, and suffers. What I am trying to do, however, is to ensure that, notwithstanding the fact that the BBC will have to administer the system, natural justice prevails in the case of Severn house.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Friend put it forcefully to the BBC that where a warden is taken away from warden-controlled accommodation, but continues that function part time, and the concessionary licence fee is withdrawn as a result, that is a real injustice for those residents? Will he do something about that matter?

Mr. Sproat: I undertake to look closely at the hypothetical, or practical, case that my hon. Friend quoted.

Ms Mowlam: If the Minister is undertaking to look at that case, why not include, as part of his review of the BBC's royal charter which is under way, the whole question of television licences? It is a national problem which is unjust, unequal and unacceptable. If he is so keen to get justice, why not include the licence fee in the review and let us see some action?

Mr. Sproat: We are certainly happy to consider all relevant matters in the review. If all pensioners were to be given concessionary licences, however, that would cost the BBC some £500 million a year. If the cost of the concession were covered by the normal licence paid by the rest of society, that licence would cost £120 a year. The hon. Lady will see the problems involved, but we are happy to consider all the issues, so that we come up with the fairest possible solution.

Mr. Ian Bruce: If one is looking for a fair system, should one not consider the whole arrangement whereby the BBC is able to charge everyone in the country for a licence whether or not people watch the BBC?

Mr. Sproat: Those are all matters which will come up under the review.

Tourism

6. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he has concluded his review of the regional tourist boards in England.

Mr. Sproat: The regional tourist boards in England are membership organisations. They are not statutory bodies and it would not, therefore, fall to my Department to conduct a review.

Mr. Etherington: What guidance has the Minister given the English tourist board with regard to the split in funding between that body and the various regional tourist boards?

Mr. Sproat: The split means that £4.3 million goes to the ETB, £4.3 million to the regional tourist boards and £2.25 million to the rather oddly called corporate promotion fund. That split was agreed with the regional tourist boards. I hope that we can move forward next year according to that split and see how it works.

Sir Donald Thompson: Will my hon. Friend bring to the attention of the regional tourist boards the recent letter that was published in *The Times Literary Supplement*, which was signed by 64 of our great national literary figures? They pointed out the disadvantages to tourism of hideous wind farms in areas of national significance.

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I read with interest that letter, which made a strong point. I will draw it to the attention of the relevant Departments.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Government arrange for the money that is spent in Cornwall by the ETB to be transferred to Wales, as the Minister's Department transferred a question that I had tabled on the Cornish language—which was selected as Question 4—to the Secretary of State for Wales? Can he confirm that his Department believes that Cornwall is part of Wales?

Mr. Sproat: No, no and no.

Calcutt Report

7. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he proposes to meet the chairman of the Press Complaints Commission to discuss the Calcutt report.

Mr. Brooke: I am looking forward to meeting the chairman of the Press Complaints Commission after I publish the White Paper in response to the National Heritage Select Committee, which I hope to do shortly.

Sir David Knox: When my right hon. Friend publishes his response, will he make it clear that if self-regulation of the press is to continue—that is desirable—it will have to be much more effective in the future than it has been in the past?

Mr. Brooke: I have commented on the fragility of self-regulation in the context of certain recent cases. I believe that the whole House would endorse my hon. Friend's view.

Mr. Soley: Will the right hon. Gentleman also raise with the chairman of the PCC the question of reporting trials? Will he make the point that there is a strong case for the press to report prosecution and defence cases impartially and with balance, bearing in mind the number of wrongful convictions that have involved press coverage? On the question of trials alone, there is a strong case for reporting with balance, because individual liberty is threatened.

Mr. Brooke: I must distinguish, in the context of that question, between a conversation with the chairman of the Press Complaints Commission after I publish the report and what might be in the report itself. I am disinclined further to delay the White Paper by enlarging its agenda.

Mr. Nicholls: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Calcutt proposals, although welcome, would not have prevented the sort of photographs that the *Daily Star* published, of PC Robertson dying in the street while open-heart surgery was performed on him? That picture, which was in glorious technicolor, appeared because the shooting did not take place on private ground. Will my right hon. Friend learn from that incident and see whether Calcutt can be persuaded to make proposals that would take care of such situations in future—which right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House surely regard as a complete outrage?

Mr. Brooke: The Government made their response to Sir David Calcutt's second report on 14 January 1993. It is my Department's responsibility to produce a White Paper in response to the National Heritage Select Committee's report. It is not for Sir David to bring forward further proposals of his own.

Voluntary Arts

9. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what support he is giving to the voluntary arts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: I fully recognise the great range and quality of voluntary arts activity in this country and the vital contribution that it makes to our cultural life. Government funding of the arts is channelled through the Arts Council, and I note that it is providing financial support for the Voluntary Arts Network, which was established in 1991 as a national umbrella body for amateur arts organisations.

Mr. Brandreth: Is my hon. Friend aware that public funding of sports participation runs at about twice the level of public funding for participation in the voluntary arts —£25 compared with £11 per head? Does he agree with the network's aim of redressing that imbalance while encouraging greater participation in the voluntary arts?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point. A document recently produced by the Voluntary Arts Network, "Strengthening Foundations", headed the section on sport

"A useful but not exact analogy".

It is a useful analogy, and we will consider it. I take this opportunity to salute the excellent work done by Sir Richard Luce, Mr. Peter Stark and my hon. Friend in promoting volunteer arts.

Mr. Enright: Does the Minister agree that investment in the voluntary arts brings a far better return than investment in commercial arts, such as the £200,000 that the Department lost to Unicorn Heritage plc, not to mention the huge amount of taxation that was given back to some of the company's investors?

Mr. Sproat: It is extremely important to support both the voluntary and the professional arts. Unicorn Heritage plc was treated no differently from any other company finding itself in the same circumstances.

Sir Anthony Durant: Will my hon. Friend comment on work on the Albert memorial? Will some money be spent on that?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, money will be spent—but that matter arises in a later question.

Madam Speaker: That is quite right.

Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

10. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the Arts Council grant to the City of Birmingham symphony orchestra for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I apologise for the detail contained in my answer. That is due entirely to the way in which the question was phrased. The information requested is as follows: in 1989-90, £928,400; in 1990-91, £983,800; in 1991-92, £1,062,500; in 1992-93, £1,126,250 and in 1993-94, £1,149,000. Decisions on allocation of grants are a matter for the Arts Council.

Dr. Jones: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the City of Birmingham symphony orchestra is an internationally renowned national asset? It plays to packed audiences even though its concert ticket prices are the highest in the land. Will the right hon. Gentleman act to remove the threat to the orchestra's high standards posed by the standstill and real-terms cut in its Arts Council grant? Given that the Department has an increased budget, why does not the right hon. Gentleman pass on an increase to the Arts Council, so that the orchestra's grant can be maintained and increased in line with reasonable costs?

Mr. Brooke: I join the hon. Lady in paying tribute to the City of Birmingham symphony orchestra. My Department did not, in terms of indicative funding, have an increase in funding for the coming year, save that arising from the bringing forward of certain expenditure on the British library that will not be incurred in the following year. The decisions are essentially for the Arts Council. It is not for me to intervene with the Arts Council to change its decisions.

Mr. Fisher: I join the Minister in paying tribute to the CBSO, but will he join me in praising Birmingham city council for its very good support for the orchestra, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) said, has an international reputation? Does the Minister not understand that it is an absurdity, and wrong, that in these difficult times Birmingham city council can increase the grant to the CBSO—and has offered to do so —but that is not matched by the Arts Council? If he is serious about wanting a partnership between the Arts Council and local authorities, when local authorities come up with the goods why does not he persuade the Arts Council to do so? Should he not be putting his mind to that matter if he is to be taken seriously in terms of supporting the CBSO? If he does not, there is a real danger that Mr. Simon Rattle will leave the orchestra, which would be a loss to the whole country.

Mr. Brooke: I join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to Birmingham city council and to its support for the orchestra. The considerable regenerative effects that the arts can have has been demonstrated elsewhere in the kingdom. The hon. Gentleman must not ask me to take

decisions for the Arts Council. He knows perfectly well what he would say if I took one that he did not like. The arm's-length principle remains extremely important.

Film Industry

11. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what funds his Department has made available to the British film industry in each of the last five years.

Mr. Brooke: I repeat the health warning that I gave earlier in my answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones). Government expenditure on film was £15.6 million in 1989-90; £16.7 million in 1990-91; £19.6 million in 1991-92; and £22 million in 1992-93. Provision for film expenditure in the current financial year is set at £24.4 million.

Mr. Ainger: I am sure that the Secretary of State would wish to join me in congratulating the six English, Welsh and Irish actors who have been nominated for an academy award this year and in welcoming the nomination of "Hedd Wyn", which was produced in Wales, as the best foreign language film. Does he accept that that success is in spite of, not because of, Government policy and that there has been a significant reduction in investment in film since 1984—from £270 million to £189 million in 1992? Will he now persuade, cajole or do what he can to get his right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to improve massively the capital allowance that is given to the film industry?

Mr. Brooke: As a man whose blood is half Welsh—appearances to the contrary notwithstanding—I join the hon. Gentleman in congratulating "Hedd Wyn" on its achievement. I am conscious of the state of the film industry in the past 10 years. That is why I set up the review and listened to the views of the film industry. I hope that we will be able to respond to it in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Corbett: Although we all rejoice in the brilliance and style of recent films such as "Shadowlands" and "The Remains of the Day", the Secretary of State will be aware that British investment in British films, and the jobs and profits that that can bring to the industry in this country, could be much more. I urge him, now that we have had these consultations, which we welcome, to put quickly on the table what he proposes to do to help the British film industry, to build on the success that it is trying to achieve, and to do even better in the future.

Mr. Brooke: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman paid tribute to the success of the films that he mentioned. I join him in that. The review that we have been conducting is necessarily one in which other Departments are involved, as the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) implied. Therefore, others, besides myself, must participate in our conclusions.

Tourism

12. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding a tourism tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: I have received representations on this subject, expressing a number of different viewpoints, from hon. Members, from local authorities and from tourism trade organisations and individual operators.

Mr. Waterson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree, however, that a tourism tax would be unfair, unworkable and damaging to tourism? All those factors would no doubt qualify it for inclusion in the election manifestos of the Opposition parties.

Mr. Sproat: Probably.

Mr. Tony Banks: Before rejecting the whole concept of the tourism tax, will the Minister look at examples abroad and see how they work? It seems that, as a marginal tax, the tourism tax will hardly act as a disincentive to tourists.

Mr. Sproat: No, I do not agree. We are already finding some difficulty in retaining the competitive edge of British tourism; I do not wish to add anything more to dull that competitive edge, and a tax might well do that.

Swimming Pools

13. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last visited a public swimming pool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend's visits to public swimming pools have been curtailed since he became Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. His last visit was to the pool in Basingstoke in August last year, which he greatly enjoyed.

Ms Hoey: I hope that both the Secretary of State and the Minister will swim the next time they go to a public pool.

I have an important question about the battle that seems to be going on between the Minister's Department and the Department for Education Does he understand the concern about swimming and young people, especially in regard to the national curriculum? As Minister for sport, what is he doing to ensure that all youngsters will not just be taken along to swimming pools and, once they can swim, told, "That is it: no more swimming", but will be able to swim regularly and properly as part of the national curriculum?

Mr. Sproat: I very much hope that they will continue to do so. As the hon. Lady no doubt knows, under the national curriculum, young people must now be able to swim 25 m by the age of 11. I hope that, having learnt to do so, they will continue to swim.

Mr. Spring: Given the importance of swimming as an excellent exercise for people of all ages, can my hon. Friend confirm that the national lottery is likely to enable the construction and development of many more public swimming pools?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend has made a very good point. The refurbishment of swimming pools, or building from scratch, will certainly be eligible for funds resulting from the national lottery.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that if he went to Bolsover, he would not be able to visit the swimming pool? A few years ago, a Select Committee investigating subsidence decided to visit the Bolsover pool and found that it was riddled with subsidence. The net result was its

closure. Now that the Government are talking about closing down the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, will they provide money from the new CISWO so that Bolsover can get its baths back?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman will know that CISWO is a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry. I very much hope that it will be protected. As for the Bolsover swimming pool, it would certainly be eligible for funds from the national lottery, either to refurbish it or to rebuild it in a place where there was no subsidence, but which was also in Bolsover.

National Lottery

14. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how he expects the national lottery to help the arts.

Mr. Brooke: By law, one fifth of the net proceeds of the national lottery will be distributed by the Arts Council towards expenditure on, or connected with, the arts, including film and crafts. That substantial amount of extra money will allow a major enhancement of the fabric of arts provision in the United Kingdom. The arts may also benefit from projects supported by the Millennium Commission.

Mr. Jessel: While the national lottery will help the arts, is my right hon. Friend aware that some arts items are so urgent that they really cannot be expected to wait for funds from the national lottery proceeds? For example, funds ought to be found in the very next year for items such as the repair of the Albert memorial.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, whose concern for the performing arts is known throughout the House. There has been a fairly constant canard that my Department has diverted money to the Albert memorial and away from the Arts Council. I assure my hon. Friend that I regard repairs to the Albert memorial as urgent, but my Department has voted no money for that in the next year.

Dr. Godman: Is it reasonable to expect a substantial contribution to be made from national lottery moneys for the building and staffing of the proposed Royal Scottish gallery of art while maintaining, given its excellence, the Scottish national portrait gallery?

Mr. Brooke: The distributor would be the National Heritage Memorial Fund, which relies on bids being made to it by the bodies seeking the money. It is not something which happens from the top down.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, important and welcome though the extra money from the national lottery will be, it is equally important to ensure that it is distributed fairly and sensibly? Will he comment on that in the light of some recent rather unpredictable decisions by the Arts Council?

Mr. Brooke: The Arts Council, like the other distributors, is preparing its plans for when it will have money available from the national lottery. I do not know how far advanced its plans are, but it will no doubt hear my hon. Friend's question.

Sinn Fein (Broadcasting)

19. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to enforce the ban of interviews by Sinn Fein representatives on news broadcasts uplinked from the United Kingdom and transmitted by satellite; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Broadcasters licensed in the United Kingdom, whatever the source of their interviews, must abide by the restrictions and it is for the appropriate broadcasting regulatory authorities to enforce them.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that certain broadcasters in the United Kingdom are uplinking transmissions to satellites, which are rebroadcasting "Radio France", the "Voice of Israel", "Radio Sweden" and the "Voice of America", and are experiencing great difficulty in extricating quotes from Sinn Fein? Can he think of some ways in which those broadcasters can be assisted?

Mr. Brooke: Enforcement of the restrictions and revocation of a radio licence would be a matter for the Radio Authority, but satellite broadcasting is nothing new: it has been with us since the restrictions were introduced.

Mr. Barnes: Is not this a case for removing the ban, because Sinn Fein would then have to answer the proper interrogation of broadcasters and defend its advocacy of violence?

Mr. Brooke: At the beginning of last month, I answered a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) in which I said that the Government would keep that matter under constant review.

Fine Art

20. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what measures he is proposing to take to retain more fine art heritage in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: Government measures aimed at encouraging the retention of fine arts heritage in the United Kingdom include the provision of grants to museums, galleries and funding bodies that assist in purchases, a number of tax reliefs that encourage support for the heritage and the Waverley system of export controls.

Mr. Carrington: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the considerable concern about the way in which the Waverley rules operate in practice? Will he look at the considerable pressure that is building up to extend the period allowed for fund-raising activities to purchase works of art identified under the Waverley rules for retention in this country?

Mr. Brooke: I announced—after consultation and in the context of an application in regard to "The Three Graces" by Canova—that I would be prepared, as from July, to consider a longer period for items of major importance.

D-day

21. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what programme his Department is arranging to commemorate the anniversary of the D-day landings.

Mr. Sproat: The Department of National Heritage is arranging a programme of civilian events nationwide and encouraging other events to run alongside those organised by the Ministry of Defence and to complement those arranged by local authorities, tourist boards and others. Details will be announced at a launch in April.

Mr. Orme: Is the Minister satisfied that those who participated in D-day—the foot soldiers—will be properly recognised? Many important events are taking place, with visitors from overseas, but the most important people are those who carried out the D-day landings.

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I agree 100 per cent. with the right hon. Gentleman. I shall make it my business to make absolutely sure that private soldiers, corporals and others get equal billing with generals, field marshals and presidents.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my hon. Friend recognise that there are a number of very active committees, including one in my constituency, whose members are doing a tremendous amount of work in their spare time to prepare for the 50th anniversary of the D-day landings? Will my hon. Friend be able to ensure that there is support for such committees in all parts of the country, including that which is working so successfully in Blackpool?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I gladly pay special tribute to what Blackpool has achieved. It has suggested a tremendous number of entertainments and events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of D-day. I hope that other places around the country will take a lead from that and not think that D-day involves only the south of England, because it involves all the parts of the country from which the soldiers, sailors and airmen departed originally.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Science and Technology Week

26. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the objectives of the national week of science and technology; and if he will make a statement.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): The objective of the national week, which starts on 18 March, is to promote a better appreciation among the general public of the invaluable contribution that science, engineering and technology make to our well-being as a nation.

Mr. Coombs: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the fact that Mr. Isambard Kingdom Brunel will be lecturing at the railway museum in my constituency on 26 March about his achievements in science and technology? Is not the promotion of greater awareness of science among the general public something which could usefully be undertaken by the research councils also located in my constituency?

Mr. Waldegrave: As a Member representing a Bristol constituency, I am astounded by the news that my hon. Friend brings, but it shows the wonders of modern science. I hope that all hon. Members will support the activities of this week. I have taken the liberty of sending a copy of the British Association's programme to every hon. Member today.

Scientific Inventions

27. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what new proposals he has to improve the application of scientific inventions to industrial use.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): On 2 February, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced a range of initiatives worth £15.4 million to focus our research and postgraduate effort on wealth creation and the quality of life. In addition, last Monday we initiated the latest stage of Technology Foresight when my right hon. Friend announced the sector panels that will carry out that foresight.

Mr. Flynn: Apart from the miracle of resurrection that has just been mentioned, the true miracle of science in the next few years will be the development of supercomputers and information highways. How can the Imperial Science college in my constituency take advantage of them when Mr. John Mulvey of Save British Science has said that, by cutting investment, the Government have proved that they have no faith in the future of British research? Why is it that one single campus in America—the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—has more supercomputers than the whole of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Davis: Briefly, SBS and Mr. Mulvey welcomed the foresight exercise—that speaks for itself.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that, to improve the application of scientific inventions, it is important for his Department, the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Trade and Industry to get together to ensure that inventions made in one sector are moved across to others so that the best use is made of them?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend raises an important point. I hope that he noticed, in the Central Statistical Office figures published last week, that the 1 per cent. reduction in defence research and development spending in 1992 was more than made up for by a 5 per cent. increase in civil research and development. That is the sort of thing which I hope to see more of in the future.

Dr. Bray: If the Minister has examined the strategic research activities of Germany, Japan and the United States, can he justify the effective closure of all the principal applied laboratories under Government control and, in particular, can he justify the type of review taking place in the National Engineering Laboratory in East Kilbride?

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman is wrong in talking about "the effective closure". The whole purpose of the review exercise is to improve value for money for the taxpayer and to deliver a better service in the national interest.

Mr. Dafis: Bearing in mind that industrial success springs largely from scientific research, does the Minister agree that Wales is seriously disadvantaged by the absurdly low level of funding—2 per cent. of the research councils' funding—for research establishments there? Is not that grossly discriminatory against Wales? Will the Minister ensure that the position does not get even worse by intervening to prevent the closure of the Welsh office of the British Geological Survey at Aberystwyth?

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman does not do Welsh scientists any service by suggesting that they should be funded on the basis of where in the United Kingdom the research establishment stands. The research councils rightly look for the best value for money, the best sites and the centres of excellence, all of which factors they will use in determining where the money is spent. That is the best way in which to determine where money goes. I am sure that Sir John Cadogan, who is himself a Welshman, would agree with me.

Charter Mark

28. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning the extension of the charter mark programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received a number of such representations, but, given the success of the charter mark scheme over the past two years, we believe that the basic purpose of the charter marks should remain the same.

Mr. Brandreth: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that there are businesses, services and others in my constituency that are still uncertain about what the charter mark programme will deliver for them and how they can become involved? What is my right hon. Friend planning to do to increase awareness of the value of the programme and accessibility to it?

Mr. Waldegrave: We have had thousands of contacts from public services throughout the country. I am sorry if those in my hon. Friend's constituency feel that they have been left out. I am sure that there are many potential winners in the Chester area and I look forward to receiving their applications by 30 June.

Mr. Enright: Can the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster explain how Yorkshire Water won such an award? Was it because it had the most unjust water metering system in the country or was it because it cut off one of the highest numbers of customers in the country?

Mr. Waldegrave: No, it was because the independent judges who assessed Yorkshire Water believed that it gave very good service to its customers.

Technology Foresight Initiative

29. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made in realising the objectives of the Technology Foresight initiative.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 28 February, I launched the latest stage of the Technology Foresight programme when I announced the 15 panels that will cover the subject areas examined.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that although the programme must have the support of Government, it must be taken forward and driven on the ground by scientists and technologists if the contribution to wealth creation and general competitiveness is to be maintained in practice?

Mr. Waldegrave: I would add two further groups to those mentioned by my hon. Friend—those in industry and those close to the marketplace. The whole purpose of the foresight exercise is to link those designing and selling products with those who have ideas for the development of future key technologies.

Dr. Moonie: Although I confirm our support for Technology Foresight, may I ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he agrees that the system of peer review used by the research councils is the best method of assessing the relative merits of basic research projects?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman raises a big question. I have studied the counter-examples such as Lovelock, which was mentioned in the newspaper today. There must be dual funding and there must be room and freedom for universities to back original ideas. None the less, peer group remains, and should remain, the underlying key basis for decisions.

Dr. Michael Clark: Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity to study the report on Technology Foresight prepared by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology? If he has, would he care to commend the work done by that body, with regard not only to the report but all the pamphlets, reports and publications that it is now preparing for parliamentarians so that they may better be able to understand science?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am very pleased to commend the office's work. The report was first rate and we have certainly benefited from it in my office. A number of its other reports are extremely useful.

Open Government

30. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further measures he proposes to extend the openness of government in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's proposals were set out in July's White Paper. The new code of practice on Government information comes into force at the beginning of April.

Mr. Mackinlay: Is not there an urgent need for opportunities to be given to hon. Members and to others so that they are able to probe and scrutinise the political conduct of the Law Officers—not only the conduct of the Attorney-General but, especially, that of the Lord Chancellor, in the light of weekend reports of him prevailing on Lord Justice Wood to resign early and what Lord Justice Purchase referred to as his "unconstitutional attack on judicial independence"?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is not a matter for me.

Mr. John Marshall: Is not one of the issues that concerns parents most the quality of education in local authority schools? Is my right hon. Friend surprised that the advocates of local government do not believe in publishing the facts about that?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is extraordinary how those who, under certain circumstances, are the loudest in their demands for open government do not seem to welcome it when it comes closer to home.

Mr. Meacher: What is the point of Ministers pretending to have greater openness in government when,

at the same time, they are signing public interest immunity certificates to prevent disclosure of what is embarrassing to them? Is not the automatic and blanket concealment of a whole class of documents on the ground of public interest, irrespective of content, a complete denial of open government? Will the Chancellor therefore secure a change in the rules so that Ministers are directed to use those certificates, if at all, solely when they believe that the national interest is genuinely at stake and not merely for their own sordid, political convenience?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman should know better. Public interest immunity certificates have been signed by Ministers of both parties over many years. I have no doubt that the debates that will take place in the coming week and after Sir Richard Scott reports will take the issue rather further forward than the ignorant remarks of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: How will the Minister publicise the new rights of the public to information? Will he make resources available to the ombudsman to allow any requests for work that may arise from those rights to be met?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to say again that we have doubled the resources available to the ombudsman. He is right that, for the new system to be given a fair chance of working, the ombudsman must have the necessary resources. I agree with the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) that it is quite right under the charter to spend resources on, for example, leafleting people to ensure that they know of their rights. Indeed, the hon. Member for Oldham, West said that we have not done enough of that.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Will my right hon. Friend remind the House and the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) of the words of Lord Justice Bingham on public interest immunity certificates? He said that Ministers had the right to waive rights but not the right to waive duties. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman and the press should pay attention to what the judges themselves have said on that matter.

Mr. Waldegrave: Not for the first time, my hon. Friend is rather better informed that the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

Mr. Barnes: Is not there a lot of work to be done on openness because privatisation has helped to close down a Select Committee of the House—that dealing with energy—agency arrangements mean that we cannot ask questions about certain matters and the closing of Parliament for vast periods again means that scrutiny cannot take place during that time? Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman's Department can influence other Departments and become involved in charters that say something.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not true that one cannot ask questions of agencies and it is absolutely essential that hon. Members should do so. As for the hon. Gentleman inviting me to draw having shorter recesses to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, I shall do so, but not in the certainty that he will be pleased with the idea.

Public Services (Competition)

33. **Sir Donald Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps the Government are taking to encourage competition in the provision of public services.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's policy was set out in November 1991 in the White Paper "Competing for Quality". Since April 1992, civil service activities worth £1.1 billion have been market tested or otherwise examined under the programme to see how value for money can best be improved.

Sir Donald Thompson: Will my right hon. Friend do his best to kill the myth that market testing is not worth the money involved?

Mr. Waldegrave: We shall shortly be publishing the details of the gains that have been made in quality and value for money when we publish the citizens charter White Paper for this year. The gains to the public and to the taxpayer have been great indeed.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Minister confirm that other Ministers in the Government have been told to apply the prior options test to every departmental activity for which they are responsible and that, under that test, they are required to consider direct privatisation—contracting directly to the private sector—before they even consider putting the activity out to competitive tender? Does not that show that the Government are not in the least interested in competition in the provision of public services, so keen are they to hand out big fat contracts to their friends in the private sector?

Mr. Waldegrave: That perhaps defines the difference between the two parties: we want to look at every activity of government to see, first, whether it needs to be done and, secondly, whether government needs to do it. The hon. Gentleman looks at matters from the other point of view and says that every activity should prima facie be undertaken by the state. That is the difference between our two parties.

Research (Women)

34. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has as to the number of women involved in research in science and engineering in (a) 1969 and (b) at the latest available date.

Mr. David Davis: There are no figures available centrally to indicate the number of women engaged in research in the private sector. University statistics show an increase in the number of full-time women postgraduates in science and engineering from 1,400 to well over 8,000; and in full-time academic staff from under 900 to well over 3,000. Those figures do not include the former polytechnics or the Open university.

Mrs. Knight: Although the numbers have evidently increased dramatically since 1969 when I went to university, women still represent a relatively small proportion of those involved in science and engineering. Does my hon. Friend agree with me about two of the reasons for that—first, the advice that girls receive at school, which needs to be improved and, secondly, the continuing lack of awareness of the fact that science and

engineering qualifications can lead not just to research but to a wide range of opportunities in business, industry and even politics?

Mr. Davis: I share my hon. Friend's opinion about improvements in the level of advice leading to more scientific careers being pursued. After all, it is clear that businesses where there are highly technically qualified senior managers do better. My hon. Friend referred to politics. She is a scientist, as am I, but perhaps the best example is to be found in the other place, where there is someone who, having dominated this Chamber for over a decade, would reinforce our view.

Mr. Miller: Given the importance of the question, will the Minister look carefully at the make-up of the teams governing the foresight exercise and ensure that the number of women increases? Hon. Members on both sides of the House recognise that it is important to appoint the best people to the teams. We welcome the fact that a woman has now been appointed to one of the teams, but will the Minister consider the matter carefully and seek to increase the representation of women in that sector?

Mr. Davis: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman recognises that a woman has been appointed to the Technology Foresight steering group, although I have to say to him that she was appointed because she was the best person for the job. Subject to that, I am entirely willing and happy to see significant improvements in the number of women involved in all aspects of science, including that which directs where we shall go in the future.

Megalab

35. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current state of progress of the Megalab experiment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We received some 350 ideas for Megalab. The judging panel has now selected a shortlist of possible experiments to be considered for use during national science week.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the promotion of Megalab on "Tomorrow's World" and BBC Radio 1 is a marvellous initiative to encourage interest in science among young people and children? Does he further agree that not enough people know about science? Will he commend the Megalab experiment to hon. Members?

Mr. Waldegrave: Let us not forget the other partner —*The Daily Telegraph*, which contains an account of these matters today. I agree with my hon. Friend. It is vital that we make science and engineering more accessible to more people.

Citizens Charter

36. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has to increase publicity for the citizens charter.

Mr. David Davis: Individual organisations in the public sector take the lead in making information widely available about their citizens charter commitments to improve the quality of service that they provide. We are continuing to drive the charter programme forward by the charter mark award scheme, the *Charter News* magazine, forums and seminars across the country and White Papers reporting on progress and commitments for the future.

Mr. Marshall: Is my hon. Friend happy at the publicity given by London Transport to the commuters charter?

Mr. Flynn: Answer.

Mr. Davis: I am tempted simply to answer yes and sit down, but I shall not. London Underground in particular, which is in the news today, publicises its standards in its charter, available at underground stations. Just about half its targets are now measured by customer satisfaction ratings. It publishes performance statistics against those standards on a four-weekly basis and they are available at all underground stations.

Mr. Tony Banks: How many calls have now been made to the charter lines, what is the total cost and what is the cost per call?

Mr. Davis: The total number of calls is about 5,500. I cannot, off the top of my head, say what is the cost per call. If the hon. Gentleman, before coming to the House, had ever done anything except make a mess of the GLC, he might have learnt something about how things are designed. In industry, anyone designing a new product starts with a prototype. The prototype may cost £1 million or £10 million, but the figure does not matter in so far as the product represents good value for money and results in better delivery of service.

Madam Speaker: Mr. George Foulkes. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] Mr. Barry Jones. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] Mr. Gordon Prentice. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] It is 3.30, so time's up.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should be very grateful for some advice on whether you are prepared to look into the operation of the rules concerning the use, for satirical programmes, of recordings of proceedings in the House. I should like to know whether recordings may be used other than in factual programmes such as the BBC's "Today in Parliament" and "Yesterday in Parliament".

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman obviously has some programme in mind, and I am not a mind reader. I am not refusing his request, but in the first instance he should refer the matter to the Supervisor of Broadcasting.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I may be able to assist you and the House by suggesting that the hon. Gentleman is probably referring to a programme called "Party Pieces", which is broadcast by Capital Radio.

Madam Speaker: "Party Pieces" is nothing to do with me.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing Order No. 127 deals with the Select Committee on European Legislation. May I, as a member of that Committee, ask you to give some thought to the fact that discussions will take apparently place tonight concerning papers under article O, dealing with the question of enlargement of the blocking minority? It appears either that, under Standing Order 127, there is no provision for such matters to be referred for scrutiny, or that matters that ought to have been referred have not been. I should be grateful if you would give some thought to a potential black hole in our scrutiny arrangements, and ensure that matters of such vital importance are capable of being drawn to the attention of hon. Members, either on the Floor or in Standing Committee.

Madam Speaker: It sounds to me as if the hon. Gentleman may have a complaint about the procedures of the House. I shall, of course, look into the matter, to see whether it is an issue for me.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that it is your concern that there should be balanced discussion during Question Time. Would it be possible on occasion to call consecutive questions from Opposition Members, especially when, as during questions to the Department of National Heritage today, important matters such as the film industry and football are being dealt with? No Conservative Member showed the slightest interest in those important topics today.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will have to leave to my discretion the question of who should be called, during Question Time as well as during debates.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Given the charm and the swiftness with which you conducted Question Time today, as well as the grave discourtesy of Opposition Members who did not turn up to put their questions, and given that, if it had not been for the fact that, had we reached 3.30, we should have run out of questions, might it be necessary to increase to 40 or 50 the number of questions on the Order Paper?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has the wrong impression. We should not have run out of questions; we should have returned to questions to the Department of National Heritage.

Mr. Fabricant *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. Of course I consider it a discourtesy if I am not informed when Members or Ministers are not to be present. Today, however, I was informed of a number of hon. Members who would be absent. The hon. Gentleman may not have been aware of that.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As we now seem to be moving very swiftly through questions, and as that seems to be very much for the convenience of the House, would you wish publicly to give any indication of how many times you intend to call the Leader of the Opposition during Prime Minister's questions? It seems to us that, when one considers the way in which the questions are laid and when the Leader of the Opposition knows that he is going to be called three times, they are spread out to ensure that there are enough to keep going for three questions.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I do not need any help with this.

As I told an hon. Gentleman earlier, I think that such matters might be left to my discretion. I am very pleased about the pace at which we are proceeding. It is important that hon. Members are called, and it is equally important that the Executive are held accountable. I want to see that that happens.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I think that you could also say, in response to the argument that the Leader of the Opposition has three bites of the cherry at Prime Minister's Question Time, that, in a very short time, Conservative Members will be glad that a Tory Leader of the Opposition has the same chance.

Madam Speaker: I think that we will now proceed to the debate on building societies.

Building Societies

3.35 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): I beg to move,

That the draft Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th January, be approved.

This order is made under section 14 of the Building Societies Act 1986, which allows the Treasury to designate countries or territories outside the United Kingdom where building societies may lend on the security of land. The order designates all the European Free Trade Area states: those which have joined the European Economic Area—Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden—together with Switzerland, which has voted against entry, and Liechtenstein, whose entry will be delayed.

The agreement on the European Economic Area, signed at Oporto on 2 May 1992, enables credit institutions authorised in any Member state of the European Community to extend their business to all the countries of the European Free Trade Area. A protocol signed on 17 March 1993 revised the agreement to take account of the no vote in the Swiss referendum, including the consequences that that has had in postponing Liechtenstein's entry.

The agreement has been implemented in the UK by the European Economic Area Act 1993 and regulations made under it. In particular, the passport available to banks and building societies under the second banking co-ordination directive has been extended to cover the European Economic Area by the Banking Co-ordination (Second Council Directive) (Amendment) Regulations 1993.

Building societies already have powers to establish mortgage lending subsidiaries throughout the European Free Trade Area, including Switzerland and Liechtenstein, by virtue of the Building Societies (Designation of Qualifying Bodies) (No.3) Order 1993, although they cannot undertake lending in those countries until this order comes into force.

This order completes the picture by enabling building societies to compete on equal terms with other financial institutions in the provision of mortgage services throughout the European Free Trade Area. Societies can already lend on mortgages in other EC member states by virtue of the Building Societies (Member States) Order 1992.

The order enables building societies to make full use of the extension, to those European Free Trade Area states which have joined the EEA, of the passport available to them under the second banking co-ordination directive. The passport allows societies to operate throughout the EEA on the basis of authorisation by the Building Societies Commission. For societies currently wishing to operate in Switzerland and Liechtenstein, separate authorisation by the host state will continue to be required.

The order represents a further useful and sensible measure to deregulate building societies' activities and to ensure that they can take full advantage of the expanded single market. I commend it to the House.

3.38 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): I am grateful to the Minister for outlining very succinctly why the order is before the House. However, I would like to ask him several questions, the most fundamental of which is why the order is being introduced now, as it is hardly urgent. As the Minister said, it first came before the House last summer, but it was hastily withdrawn when the Swiss referendum went in an unexpected direction. I understand that the Government withdraw it because they did not wish Conservative anti-Maastricht Members to take another opportunity to humiliate them over the difficulties they then had. The order was before the House last Monday, when it was unexpectedly removed.

My main question is why the order is before us now, when the Government have not completed the review of the Building Societies Act 1986 which they announced on 20 January. Before we give building societies any more powers, we are entitled to ask a number of pertinent questions about the way in which they operate, particularly in relation to the Building Societies Act. On 20 January, the Government announced that they would review the way in which the 1986 Act worked. It would be helpful to the House if the Minister would tell us whether the findings in the review will be made public.

The note to editors that accompanied the relevant press release—as far as I am aware, there has been no announcement in the House—stated:

"It is hoped that the first stage of the review will be completed by the early summer"—

I assume that that will be May or June. When can we expect the review to be available, and will it be brought before the House at an early stage? Many hon. Members are concerned about the way in which building societies operate, and building societies are concerned about a number of the restrictions presently imposed upon them.

As the Minister said, the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, which is in Committee, addresses in particular two problems about which building societies have complained. That Bill would make it be possible to grant third-party mortgages and to take part in syndicated lending, which I understand is of particular assistance in the funding of housing associations.

Building societies have long argued that if, banks are entitled to take part in syndicated lending, so should they. The Minister will be aware, however, that those two additional powers form just one small part of a submission—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but the scope of the debate covers empowering building societies to operate in the member states of the European Free Trade Association. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of that? Will he return to the subject of the debate, which is limited?

Mr. Darling: I am conscious of the fact that the debate is limited. I had assumed, perhaps wrongly, that, in advancing an argument about why the order might not pass through the House, it was permissible to canvass a number of reasons to support that argument. The fundamental reason to which I referred was that it seemed premature to pass the order before certain other matters were addressed.

Madam Speaker: I have no objection to brief references, but the hon. Gentleman was taking too long over those references when making his case.

Mr. Darling: I shall be brief, Madam Speaker, and no doubt you will be the first to tell me if I take too long.

As I said, there were a number of other matters relating to building societies' powers generally that seemed to be

important when considering whether or not we should allow building societies to participate in lending activities in the EFTA countries.

The Building Societies Association said in crude terms that it was looking for a relaxation of the constraints on buildings societies to allow them effectively to become banks. Clearly, that is a fundamental departure from the way in which building societies presently operate, but the Minister will be aware that the association's submission at the end of 1992 mentioned a number of difficulties that were curtailing building societies' ability to conduct business. It asked for primary legislation to relax the constraints under which building societies now operate.

As I understand it, one of the problems facing building societies is that they have insufficient funds available to lend money at rates that will compete with banks operating in the same sectors. Before we decide whether we should allow building societies to start to lend money in EFTA countries, we should address the problems they undoubtedly face in this country.

It would be helpful if the Minister could say whether he proposes to review the matters mentioned in the submission of the Building Societies Association, which was made two years ago and with which he will no doubt be familiar. If he is of a mind to allow building societies effectively to become banks, that is a matter of some importance to us.

Banks are becoming increasingly aggressive in their attempts to take mortgage business. They can lend in EFTA countries and other European Union countries, whereas building societies cannot. Banks can also compete with building societies in this country. Are the Government prepared to allow building societies to increase what are called "nature limits" from 40 per cent. to 80 per cent.? One of the constraints on building societies is that they can borrow only 40 per cent. of funds outside the money which they raise through building society deposits.

Are the Government prepared to deal with those problems? If so, it will have an impact on how much money building societies are likely to lend in the EFTA countries.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): This little order seems interesting. Will my hon. Friend, with his wide knowledge of the matter, say whether its implications are that money could be raised in low-interest countries and lent in high-interest countries? What are the implications of that for housing in the United Kingdom? Is that what this little proposal means?

Mr. Darling: Not quite in those terms. The order would allow building societies to lend money for the same purposes as they are currently allowed to lend money. The constraints on them for raising money in countries, whether high or low-interest countries, depend on the general constraints to which I was alluding. Basically, building societies have two main sources of income: first, from the money they take in through deposits; and, secondly, from the money they raise on the general markets. Where they raise that money is a matter for their judgment.

The question that arises is why building societies, given their problems with banks in this country, would want to raise money for lending in EFTA countries. It would be useful if the Minister told us the position on that. So far, he has not said why the order has been brought before us.

There is another fundamental problem. If building societies are to have wider powers, the House will need to look again at the prudential supervision of building societies. At present, they are supervised slightly differently from banks. In their submission, they make the point that they may reach the stage where it would be appropriate for their supervision to be carried out by the Bank of England, as opposed to the present regime. That is a matter for them, but the Minister needs to say a little about it.

In his brief introduction, the Minister said that EFTA states include Liechtenstein. The House will be aware that there is a problem with Liechtenstein. It is very well for the Government to say that, if building societies wish to invest in Liechtenstein, they now have a passport to do so in terms of the appropriate European directive, but Liechtenstein's regulatory regime is murky at best. We should not be satisfied with allowing building societies to operate in Liechtenstein or, on a reciprocal basis, to allow Liechtenstein building societies—if such things exist—to lend money in this country until we are satisfied that there is transparency, which does not exist at present.

I am not aware of the regimes in other EFTA countries or of any particular problems, but there is clearly a problem with the Liechtenstein authorities. If I heard the Minister correctly, he said that the Liechtenstein part of this order would not come into force for some time. If that is correct, it would be helpful to know when he expects it to come into force and precisely what the difficulties are.

On prudential supervision, it is important that, if the Government propose to change how building societies are regulated and, in particular, if they propose that they should be regulated by the Bank of England, the Minister should say whether that is part of his review.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As you have already pointed out, this is a narrow order relating to building societies. The hon. Gentleman has just referred to supervision by the Bank of England, which relates to a press release that went out in his name this morning. I seek your guidance on whether it is appropriate to discuss the make-up of the governing body of the Bank of England in debating an order on building societies in EFTA states.

Madam Speaker: Had the hon. Gentleman not been in order, I would have called the fact to his attention.

Mr. Darling: Madam Speaker, there are many ways in which matters can be raised in the House, not purely during a debate on a narrow order relating to building societies. I am sure that you would have been the first to stop me if I had attempted to go out of order.

My point is that there is concern about the prudential supervision of many financial institutions. If the Government propose to make a change with regard to building societies, we should know about it.

Also, if building societies intend to lend money to EFTA states or, indeed, other parts outside the United Kingdom, it is important to know what impact that will have on lending practices in this country. Some concern has been expressed about the discrepancy between the prevailing bank rate and the mortgage rate. Will this order affect that? Presumably the Minister must know the position, because I understand that the order was made in

[Mr. Darling]

response to representations by building societies. It is not something that the Government have brought before the House of their own volition or initiative.

Given that there is a differential of about 2.5 per cent. between the prevailing bank rate and the mortgage rate at present, can the Minister tell us whether the order will make any difference to that? Some concern has been expressed that building society mortgage rates are higher than they otherwise would be.

The order is extremely narrow. None the less, there are matters that concern us: the effect that increased building society activity in EFTA states will have on their activities in the United Kingdom, the question whether this order in any way pre-empts the wider inquiry that is being carried out by the Government, when we can expect to see the results of that inquiry and the whole question of prudential supervision which is crucial not only for building societies but for all financial institutions.

We are entitled to answers to those points before the House is asked to approve an order which may appear to be a comparatively small matter, but which may make a substantial change to the way in which building societies conduct their business. It is on that basis that I put those matters to the Minister. I hope that he will tell us a little more, rather than the bald statement that he made earlier.

3.51 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): This order has been generally welcomed by building societies, but I suspect more in principle than in practice. I know of little evidence of building societies preparing enthusiastically to operate in the EFTA states. Indeed, there has been little movement so far within the existing opportunities for building societies to carry on their activities in Europe. Bradford and Bingley is perhaps a rare example, because of its commitment in Germany. However, I believe that it had to obtain a German partner in order to carry out its activities.

For those of us who believe in free trade, the financial services sector still remains a minefield of obstacles, not least in some European countries. There are few signs that genuine free trade is taking place in financial services, and there are endless obstacles to doing so.

Any building society that contemplated taking advantage of the order could reasonably face a fair degree of debate among its members as to whether it was a prudent and wise step for the society to take. After all, building societies have expanded in various directions which have not proved to be a good idea. The expansion into estate agency proved to be a disaster for building societies. The development of various sorts of financial instruments—for example, home income plans—brought a trail of destruction in their wake.

Therefore, it is conceivable that some members of a society might well say that they did not want to see their society take expansion into EFTA states as the appropriate route. In that context, the increasing dislike of building societies for the processes of democracy by which a member could make clear his opposition to such a move is worrying.

The Financial Secretary will know that I spoke to the Building Societies Association last autumn and stimulated a bit of a debate in the trade press. For example, the *Mortgage Finance Gazette* referred to members who had a difference of policy with the board seeking election to it. The editorial said:

"The biggest question being what would happen if the membership voted onto the board an ordinary member with no business experience and no obvious qualifications for directorship . . . it is not beyond the bounds of possibility. Boards should have in place a contingency for such an eventuality. They must be prepared to explain to members voting at the annual general meeting, that patronising though it might seem, the incumbent board does not feel the membership would be best served by voting for this particular candidate."

The Minister must be made aware of the certain hostility towards the stirrings of democracy within building societies. That is rather worrying in this context. I hope that he will not add to it by, for example, releasing building societies from their obligation to notify their members of annual general meetings.

Building societies are quite ready to issue weekly circulars announcing new financial products or services. I am sure that the Minister's doormat is as littered as mine with letters from building societies offering such new services. If they could not be bothered to include in one of those mailings the notice of their annual general meetings, it would be a pretty poor do.

The accountability of building societies is important if they are to expand into new sectors such as the EFTA states. I am not sure that that is a live prospect at the moment for building societies, partly because of the obstacles that still exist in some of those states. Such major policy changes are surely what the building society democracy is supposed to regulate.

There are legitimate differences of interest between existing borrowers and existing lenders in a society, who might feel that consolidation is the most important objective and the professionals in the society, who want to be judged according to how effective they are in expanding it. They want to make it look bigger and more visible in a whole series of markets. Their careers and their ability to move on to a bigger building society may depend on how much of a record of expansion they can show.

That policy is not always in the interests of the existing members of a society, and those members should not be denied the means of expressing their particular interests when a policy decision of this kind, to expand into overseas markets, is considered.

I hope that in pursuing the order, which I support, the Minister will bear those considerations in mind.

3.55 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I shall make a brief contribution, because this is a comparatively unimportant order. It is just one of the automatic provisions that we must make because of the Economic Area negotiations.

I do not view with any great joy the extension of our building societies into Liechtenstein, although I know that they could have provided accommodation for the late Robert Maxwell on his occasional visits. I do not view with any great joy the extension of building societies into Europe. I am aware of the new venture of the Bradford and Bingley building society in Germany. As the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has just said, however, it has made it in partnership, because such ventures have implicit risks.

That is the problem to which I want to refer when I express certain doubts about the way in which building

societies have been allowed to function here. The Minister must consider whether those doubts should be of concern not only to him but to the regulators in the countries in which our building societies will be now allowed to operate under the order.

It is clear that the Government are going through one of their periodic deregulatory phases with regard to the building societies. It is less than 10 years since the Building Societies Act 1986 was passed, and already the deregulation task force has come up with a series of suggestions.

I wonder whether those suggestions for deregulation will incapacitate the building societies, because if they extend into EFTA countries or into the European markets, that might create a situation where they became unstable through being over-extended. That is my worry. I am also worried by the proposals in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill and the Minister's own announcement on 20 January.

We are only now managing to deal with the problem that the building societies got themselves into when they went in for a near frenzy of lending in the 1980s as part of the Lawson boom. That created a situation in which they placed themselves in unnecessary danger. I am therefore worried about the possibility of further danger, created by the order, which would allow them to lend on property in the EFTA states. We must learn the lessons from that frenzy and apply them to the lending institutions—particularly the building societies, but also the banks.

In his recent memoirs, Lord Lawson puts the blame fairly and squarely on the Bank of England for not stopping the frenzy of lending on property by the banks. We are talking about the building societies, however, and how they got themselves into a dangerous situation. It was not as bad as the savings and loan crisis in the United States, but it was still a dangerous situation.

I am worried about the order's provision for debt. We cannot presume that house and other asset values will increase for ever in the way they did in the 1980s. There could be periods in which property values in particular are stationary or perhaps even fall in this country, EFTA states and the European Union. Rather than relax regulations, we should think of imposing stricter accountancy.

The standards of recommended practice for banks on debt provision are much stricter than those recommended by Coopers and Lybrand in its report on building society lending three years ago and practised by building societies today. Societies make provision for repossessions, but they are not required to make the same automatic provision in respect of loans that are not performing, either because they have not paid out three or six months of the year or because they represent negative equity.

It follows as night follows day that loans that cease to perform will eventually become liable to repossession. The societies have discretion to decide whether to repossess, because they must make provision for repossession, but not for non-performing loans.

That situation could strain the societies' capital and financial base. As the number of repossessions has fallen and more people can keep up their mortgage payments, this is the right time to strengthen that financial base, and to ensure that societies can lend successfully in EFTA states, by tightening up recommended practice for non-performing loans.

Building societies are, in a sense, the people's capitalism. The number involved in the mutual principle is far greater than the number involved in banks. The majority of societies provide a better, more efficient service, and we do not want that endangered. As a concomitant of the societies' ability to lend in EFTA states, I hope that the Minister will consider stricter regulation —particularly in respect of non-performing loans debt provision.

I ask the Minister to rethink also the Government's current enthusiasm for the conversion of building societies to banks, which has not been a great success. The Abbey National is the only society that has taken the opportunity. Its loss provision on its estate agency business is substantial. Its decision to operate in that sector was disastrous.

Building societies are right to be cautious about converting themselves to banks. That would provide the freedom to be more irresponsible and to behave in a way that affronts the real role of building societies as popular capitalism and institutions to which the public en masse can entrust their savings and which provide help with property purchases. That is the real function of societies —not lending in Liechtenstein, Iceland or Norway.

At a time when the societies' ability successfully to lend in largely unknown areas and markets is unknown, such an order is irresponsible. I hope that the Minister will therefore deal with the issue of how we ensure the stability of the societies in this country before we encourage them in any of the overseas ventures that he is permitting by the order today.

4.4 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I shall be brief. When my hon. Friend winds up, will he make it absolutely clear, because it is important that people outside the House should realise, that the order will do nothing to make it more difficult for a person to borrow from a building society, or make it any less likely that the amount of money being made available for lending on housing by building societies in this country to encourage house purchase should be any less?

Those seem to be the two problems for which people outside the House will want direct answers. They are very simple, and I think that the answers are quite clear, but it would be useful if my hon. Friend could give answers, so that there can be no doubt in anybody's mind about those two problems.

4.5 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Following what my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said, if we can take it for granted that, in less than a decade, £6 billion of irrecoverable debt has been written off on behalf of the top four clearing banks—Lloyd's, Barclays, NatWest and the Midland—will the order in any way, however marginal, assist in the problem of irrecoverable debt?

That is important to the British taxpayer and the electors generally who have had to foot the bill for that debt by the top four clearing banks, which otherwise would have been paid for in tax. Since it has been written off, it has not been paid in tax, so the taxpayer of Britain has lost around £6 billion.

The last thing I want to do today is acknowledge that, at the periphery, there is a small area of extension of powers for building societies. Will the order in any way,

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

however small, add to the problem of irrecoverable debt? There are 55 million people in this country, many millions of whom are taxpayers. The last thing we should want to do is give them the impression that we are enabling building societies to over-extend to the point that at some stage they will be able to write off some debt, with the taxpayer to pick up the bill.

One thing is certain: the ordinary individual taxpayer cannot go to the Inland Revenue and say, "By the way, I have £20,000 of irrecoverable loans that I have made to other members of my family, friends or whatever. Can I write them off?" If they are not in business, they will not be able to write them off. Therefore, I want an assurance on whether the order can in any way, however small, extend the possibility of building societies over-extending themselves to the point at which the taxpayer has to write off irrecoverable debts by the Government.

4.7 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I wish to clarify one or two issues. As I understand it, no restrictions are placed on the amount of lending that the building societies will be able to organise. That is to say, in EFTA countries, as opposed to the United Kingdom, technically speaking—not for one moment would it happen—under this order, a building society could lend all its borrowings —in other words all its depositors' money—outside the United Kingdom. If I am wrong, I am sure that the Minister will clarify the position.

I ask that because, on the list of EFTA countries referred to in the order, without going into detail, the track record of some countries on inflation is quite appalling. I am looking at a particular country on the list where the levels of inflation in the past 20 years have been quite draconian, and where to some extent its wealth has accumulated only as people have been prepared to invest in property as a way of hedging against the impact of inflation. I would have thought that would have implications for lending institutions wherever they are in western Europe.

I am simply trying to establish in my own mind that there will be some, if not regulatory framework, discipline to ensure that a building society, by way of a negligent decision, might not place all its money in a risky market. It could be said that, at times—certainly in the 1960s and 1970s—it might have been risky to place one's resources in some countries on the list.

4.9 pm

Mr. Nelson: Right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have raised a number of pertinent points. I shall do my best to answer them, and to give the House the reassurance it seeks.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) asked why the order was being introduced now. The timing is partly due to the fact that many building societies hold their annual general meetings in the spring or thereabouts. Societies that qualify under the order—those with bookings of over £100 million—may seek the agreement of their members at those meetings to an extension of their activities in the way for which the order provides; the timing will facilitate that.

I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman raised a wider point, about the review of the Building Societies Act 1986 which I announced recently. The review will consider two of the proposals of the financial services task force: the raising of wholesale funding limits—which the hon. Gentleman mentioned—and the simplification of the procedures when societies merge. It will not, however, confine itself to those topics; all the main provisions of the Act will be considered.

This will be a two-stage process. First, officials from the Treasury and the Building Societies Commission will meet representatives of the industry, with the intention of putting a paper to me by early summer; secondly, if my colleagues at the Treasury and I think it worth pursuing the option of significant changes to the current legislation, there will be a more wide-ranging consultation process. It is hoped that that will be completed by the end of the year.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: May I ask a question arising from a point that I made in my speech? Will the review include a facilitation of the transformation of building societies into banks? That is what worries me. Where did that proposal originate? Did it come from the societies, which want it made easier to follow in the steps of the Abbey National, or did it come from the Government?

Mr. Nelson: We shall be considering fundamental questions relating to the legislation: I think it right to do so. As for where the calls are coming from, certain voices have been heard—particularly that of the banking sector, which is not surprising. The banks might prefer no legislation at all; they might want all building societies to become banks.

One building society has chosen to take up its legislative right to do so; the Abbey National obtained the support of its members for such action. Others—probably the majority of the building society sector—want to retain the so-called nature limits: they want to retain their identity as building societies. They want the protection of the Building Societies Act—or something like it—to remain, so that there is a demarcation between the activities of the sectors.

I shall consider all the issues very carefully. I shall also consider the representations that I receive. I am very conscious that building societies have a special place in people's hearts, as well as their pockets. It is no surprise that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is present: building societies strike me as very much a Yorkshire phenomenon.

It is important to remember the mutual history of building societies, which have provided both prudence and benefits, and the fact that historically—to a large extent, although not exclusively—there has been safety in bricks and mortar, which represent a nature activity or limit of building societies' activities. There must be compelling reasons for that to be abandoned—or, at least, for the removal of the legislative environment that protects or insists on it. Many people choose to deposit their savings with such institutions.

On the other hand, times change. When many of the building societies themselves are seeking liberalisation in regard to what they can do by way of advances, and from whom they can borrow—in the form of wholesale funding limits, for example—both the Government and, more especially, the Building Societies Commission, as the regulatory body concerned, have a responsibility to review matters from time to time, and to establish whether the legislation is up to date.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): The building society movement and Government policy for the past 15 years have increased the number of home owners in Britain from 56 per cent. to about 70 per cent. Will the order enable such progress to be made in Europe, with our building societies helping people in Europe to achieve the same? Is not the order part of a Conservative vision of Europe, and does it not clearly demarcate the difference between Conservative and Opposition Members?

Mr. Nelson: Given my strong sentiments about Europe and home ownership, I am tempted by my hon. Friend's grand design, but I cannot pretend that that ambition is embodied in this rather modest order.

Mr. Darling: The Minister seems to be saying that the Government have an open mind on whether banks should become building societies and vice versa. Does he agree that this fundamental question should be a matter of widespread public debate and not only ministerial debate? If he goes down that road, does he accept that he will have to review the regulatory regime governing banks? If it is proposed that the Bank of England should regulate building societies, we shall have to do something about the partisan nature of the court of the Bank of England.

Mr. Nelson: The hon. Gentleman goes beyond what I said. He must not put words into my mouth and suggest that I am intending to sweep away building societies, to remove their legislative base and to turn them all into banks. We are fundamentally considering the legislation — specifically, a number of provisions such as wholesale funding. It is right to do so from time to time. It is no part of my business or my intent to unsettle people who find security and favour in building societies, and I acknowledge and reiterate the importance that they attach to that.

A debate has been held not only in the House but in a Select Committee on the supervision of banking and building societies. I believe that one has been held on financial services more generally. I shall be interested to read the conclusions. That is certainly not the intention of the order.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central referred to the court of the Bank of England, or directors of the board of the Bank of England. I assume that he was referring to some of the recently announced changes to the directors. I know that he has complained publicly about the fact that the prominent trade unionist, Mr. Gavin Laird, who had two terms as a member or director of the court of the Bank of England, was not renewed in that capacity.

That does not reflect on Mr. Laird, whose contribution and standing in the Bank and elsewhere is extremely high, but it should be no part of policy on the boards of public bodies, on the Bank of England or on other institutions that automatic constituencies must be represented. I am not suggesting that the hon. Gentleman is saying that, but all such appointments are considered on their merits, and from time to time it is considered that changes must be made. In this instance, where somebody was brought in who has particular experience of small businesses, that was deemed to be of some benefit to the Bank of England.

Mr. Darling: I am arguing not that the court of the Bank of England has constituencies but that, for the first time since 1946, no one representing trade union interests has been reappointed. Other people have been on the court of the Bank of England for longer than two terms. The Prime Minister, for some reason—either weakness or prejudice—felt unable to reappoint Mr. Laird.

It is a matter of regret that the court should be the victim of such partisan behaviour. I am surprised, because it stands on its head everything that he has said about the new approach, that the Prime Minister has decided to take a partisan and prejudiced position on the court.

Mr. Nelson: I am naturally very sorry that the hon. Gentleman should feel that that is the case, because it certainly is not; nor was it the intention. Apart from the six executive directors, the court of the Bank of England will comprise six members, all with interests outside the south-east of England, who will represent industry, five people who have interests in finance and banking, and one accountant.

There is no intention to be partisan in this matter, as it is far too important for party politics to play a part. It is much more important that the right people are chosen for the job, especially in supervisory and regulatory bodies. That is what is done and what is uppermost in the mind of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when he advises the Queen on such appointments.

Mr. Beith: Lest the Minister should think that it is a knee-jerk reaction confined to the Labour party defending its trade union friends, may I tell him that it is widely felt that it was undesirable the Government should not continue a long-established practice of ensuring that at least one person on the court of the Bank of England was drawn from a trade union background?

Mr. Nelson: I hear what the right hon. Gentleman says. He at least used the phrase "drawn from", whereas the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central used the word "representing". I was trying to say that it is important that people elected to the boards of public companies are not delegates from constituencies but are people who will deliberate and contribute to important decisions in the public interest, not represent particular points of view. I happen to believe that there is sometimes a role for prominent trade unionists as well as others in this institution but that is not always the case. From time to time, there have to be changes and variations, and such there have been.

The order is a useful measure that will help societies compete in Europe. It will be some time before the review of the Building Societies Act 1986 is complete, so it is sensible to proceed with the order straight away. It has in fact been delayed, as it was originally intended to be made in 1992 but, when Switzerland decided not to join the EEA, the order was withdrawn until the position became clear.

At present, building societies have the power to provide financial services throughout the EEA and to undertake mortgage lending throughout the European Union. The order completes the picture by extending mortgage lending to the rest of the EEA and the other EFTA countries. If societies are to adopt it at their forthcoming annual general meetings, it needs to complete its passage through the House as quickly as possible.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central asked specifically about Liechtenstein. As he is probably aware, Liechtenstein's entry into the EEA has been postponed, but it has already signed up to the agreement in principle. Orders have already been made allowing building societies to carry on a range of activities in all EFTA states, so the order is consistent with them. There is no prudential reason

[Mr. Nelson]

to exclude Switzerland and Liechtenstein, and it will avoid the need for another order when Liechtenstein joins, and if Switzerland eventually ratifies the EEA agreement.

Several hon. Members raised the same point. There has been no reference to prudential notes. I tell the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) in particular that the Building Societies Commission, which is the supervisory body for building societies under the 1986 Act, promulgates good practice and the rules that must be observed by means of prudential notes.

There is a prudential note covering aspects of foreign lending, which is included in the Building Societies Act 1986 prudential note 1992/2. The prudential notes contain guidelines, requirements and quite detailed obligations for reporting, assuring capital adequacy, through-provisioning and other matters. They are the working tools that the Building Societies Commission uses to implement the requirements and the restraints of the 1986 Act.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) urged that there should be no relaxation of the restrictions and democracy of building societies. Indeed, many of the restrictions and responsibilities are laid down in prudential notes.

The right hon. Gentleman was quite right to say what he did, because the sentiment underlying his speech seemed to be that, if building societies were allowed too much freedom, either to change themselves without the agreement of their members or to engage in practices in an executive and unilateral way, they might over-extend themselves and bring not only risks to depositors with a particular building society but, potentially, a systemic risk to the movement as a whole.

Both the Bank of England, in its overall surveillance of the banking and financial markets, and the Building Societies Commission, under its statutory obligations in the Act, are extremely mindful of the fact that I, in my ministerial capacity, meet the chairman of the Building Societies Commission regularly to ask relevant questions about the implementation of those responsibilities and to ensure, as far as we possibly can, that prudential obligations are observed.

Some hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, asked about provisioning practice. Building societies have made provisions. Interestingly, they have made significantly fewer provisions in their latest reports than was the case a year ago.

The results of the building societies have been relatively good compared with those of many of the commercial banks in recent years. They have had a lesser exposure to provisions than many of the banks have. That may reflect the business they do, although there has been a serious recession in the property industry.

The fact that the societies have remained so solvent and strong, and have retained the affection and respect of high street depositors and the public generally is an interesting and positive reflection on their performance during a difficult period.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The measure seems to have the general support of the House. In the guidelines to which the Minister referred, is there adequate consideration of the political implications of lending in certain areas? I do not want to go into detail about what I think the fortunes of Finland will be in 10 or 20 years' time, except to say that they may well be difficult in the light of recent developments in the former Soviet Union, yet Finland is on the list.

I do not expect that, if one delved into the detail of the documents which, the Minister says, exist for building societies, one would find a specific reference to Finland. However, to what extent are the building societies taking into account the implications of political changes in this much enlarged area, which now includes the whole of the European Union and the EFTA countries? They are a large part of the world.

Mr. Nelson: There is already a general interest among building societies in expanding into Europe, although so far only three of the larger societies have gone ahead. The Halifax building society has established a subsidiary to carry out mortgage lending in Spain. The Woolwich has subsidiaries in Italy and France. The Bradford and Bingley has recently established a bausparkasse, which is the nearest German equivalent to a building society.

Societies cannot realistically consider plans to expand into EFTA states until the order is made. I am sure that, in doing so, they will take account of the political and economic risks that may be involved.

It is also important that the hon. Member for Workington and the House generally understand that, under the prudential note requirements, before building societies can go ahead, they will have not only to seek the agreement of their members—that is, 75 per cent. of those who vote in a meeting—but to adhere to the prudential note requirement of reporting and to comply with the requirements laid down by the Building Societies Commission.

The hon. Member for Workington and others were concerned that moneys raised might over-extend the building societies, or that risks might be involved. The prospects of that are extremely limited. We are dealing here only with the largest building societies, with more than £100 million. The building societies will have very small exposures or interests in these countries, if they have any at all. The building societies already have the right to undertake certain banking activities. The order will allow them to lend against the security of land.

If building societies lend in a particular country, which may involve foreign currency, there may be an interest rate differential. Some hon. Members mentioned interest rates. Equally, there will be an exchange rate differential. The point is that it is most unlikely that a building society would want, or that the Building Societies Commission would allow, a significant exposure to a foreign exchange risk, even where there was an interest rate differential.

Normally, a building society would cover its position in the derivatives market to match any currency risk which was involved. Certainly it is not the intention of the order to enable any building societies either to expose British depositors in sterling to substantial exchange rate risks and exposures elsewhere, or substantially to enhance or increase their activities in foreign currency countries compared to here, and I hope that the order will not enable them to do so.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) rightly said that the order will not make any difference to the savings practice or to the security of people in the country who deposit money with their building societies. It would be alarmist and incorrect to suggest that it would make a difference. It provides a fairly

modest, liberalising measure to enable building societies to do what banks in Britain are currently able to do—lend against securities in any EFTA state. Why should not a building society be able to do that against the security of land?

Mr. Austin Mitchell: It is not such a relief to my mind, because of the danger that those financial institutions have delusions of grandeur, see themselves as big players and want to get into currency speculation and all the rest of it.

Another danger is that lending which could usefully be pursued and which the building societies would have to pursue on the market with the developing, interesting alternative to the simple house purchase, such as becoming involved in housing associations or becoming landlords, would be curtailed by their desire to lend in Europe. Will the Minister tell us where the building societies will raise the money that they will be lending in the EFTA countries? Will it be raised in local markets or come from money raised in Britain?

Mr. Nelson: The building societies will be able to raise money to lend in the local markets. That will enable them to lend there, and they will be able to raise money there. Whether there is a net exposure in those EFTA countries is a matter for the overall policy of the building societies.

The extent of that exposure will be overseen by the Building Societies Commission, as will the extent to which that exposure may translate itself if there were not a derivatives cover of it into a foreign exchange risk. It would be quite wrong to suggest in any way that this modest order will suddenly or in the course of time result in massive exposures of risk to Finland, Liechtenstein or any of the EFTA states. That would be the wrong interpretation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Mr. Nelson: I shall give way for the last time. I know that we have time, but I am sure that the House has other business with which it wishes to proceed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister referred to net exposure. The right hon. Member for Honiton asked an interesting question. If I understand his original question, it was that the Minister give an assurance that no moneys currently available for investment in the housing market in the United Kingdom would be lost to other markets, and that the order would have no effect on the availability of moneys that a building society is open to lend.

That is not quite the case. The Minister assures the House that there will be no great shift. However, all that I am putting to the Minister is that, in the light of political developments in Europe, or in the European Union over the next the 10 or 20 years, a shift may well take place. It is possible to foresee conditions in which, to some extent, there may be a crowding out of the UK market.

The Minister cannot foresee that now, but is it not possible that that may happen under the arrangements being introduced? I support the arrangements, but I am simply trying to extract from the Minister an understanding that that could happen under those arrangements.

Mr. Nelson: It is a fair question, but I hope that I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton is, to all intents and purposes, right. It will not be the case that, in some way, deposits made in this country will be unavailable for lending here, and that the prospects for mortgages will be crowded out by the order. The order will provide for building societies, either by way of subsidiaries which they set up in the EFTA countries, or directly through branches, to engage in secured lending and to receive deposits.

Of course it is possible that, in an individual EFTA state, there may be a net exposure given the totality of the building societies' assets; but a small net exposure in a particular area of activities is quite different from the overall assets of the building societies being put at risk in some systemic way. So it will be business as usual.

There is nothing for building society depositors and savers to be worried about in this modest measure. To the extent that it puts building societies on an equal footing with banks, it is a good move forward. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th January, be approved.

Northern Ireland (Appropriation)

4.34 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): I beg to move,

That the draft Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.

The draft order has two purposes. The first is to authorise expenditure of £195.9 million in the 1993-94 spring supplementary estimates. That will bring total estimates provision for Northern Ireland departmental services to £5,688 million for this financial year. The second is to authorise the vote on account of £2,533 million for 1994-95 so as to enable the services of Northern Ireland Departments to continue until the 1994-95 main estimates are brought before the House later this year. I remind the House that the order does not cover expenditure by the Northern Ireland Office on law and order and other services and I shall be unable to refer to those matters during my remarks. Details of the sums sought are given in the estimates booklet and the "statement of sums required on account" which, as usual, are available in the Vote Office.

I now turn to the estimates. Many of the votes seek token increases only, because new pressures have been offset by savings elsewhere in the vote. To allow hon. Members the maximum time to contribute to the debate, I shall refer only to the main areas in which supplementary provision is sought.

In the Department of Agriculture's vote 1, which covers expenditure on national agriculture and fisheries support measures, a token increase of £1,000 is required. Some £7 million is for payments to compensate milk producers under milk quota arrangements. Some £800,000 is for additional commitments under a number of capital grant schemes and £400,000 is for expenditure under the 1992 crop potato support arrangements. Those additional commitments are offset by reduced requirements elsewhere in the vote and by EC receipts.

In the Department's vote 2, covering local support measures, some £5.3 million is sought. That includes £3.2 million for the disease eradication programme, including compensation and professional services. Some £2 million is for additional commitments under the agricultural development operational programme, where uptake has been higher than predicted. Some £600,000 will enable the Department to advance its information technology programme. Those increases are partially offset by reduced requirements in other areas of the vote.

In respect of the Department of Economic Development, increases are sought in four votes. In vote 1, some £14 million is required for the provision of land and buildings. That is to meet expenditure on new factories for recent inward investment projects and reflects the continuing success of the industrial development board in attracting internationally competitive companies to Northern Ireland. Also in that vote, £2.4 million is for assistance to Harland and Wolff Holdings plc. Those increases are offset by increased receipts and reduced requirements elsewhere, resulting in a token increase of £1,000.

Some £3 million is sought in vote 2. This vote includes £4.1 million for the industrial research and technology unit. This will enable the unit further to enhance the level and quality of its support for local industry. This aims to improve the competitiveness of Northern Ireland companies and to develop the region's technological infrastructure. The amount required for assistance towards the closure costs of the local gas industry is £2.3 million. These additional requirements are offset by savings elsewhere in the vote. This includes £5.1 million reflecting the Local Enterprise Development Unit's new strategic approach to financial assistance.

In vote 3, covering the Training and Employment Agency, some £700,000 is sought. The amount required to meet increased expenditure under the youth training programme, as a result of a greater number of young people pursuing higher level qualifications, is £1.6 million. For the job training programme there is a requirement of £1 million owing to an increased number of trainees undertaking programmes leading to a national vocational qualification at level 2 or above. Offsetting savings have been found elsewhere in the vote.

The Department of Economic Development's vote 4 covers the expenses incurred in the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in Northern Ireland. These costs have been met from the proceeds of the sale.

For the Department of the Environment, some £6.2 million is sought in vote 1. This includes £2.5 million for maintenance of the road network, new road schemes and the relocation of the Belfast urban traffic control centre. The amount required for expenditure on street lighting is £500,000, and £1.7 million is needed for the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency.

In vote 2, covering housing, token provision of £1,000 is sought. There are various reallocations within the vote, resulting in a net increase of £3.6 million for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, mainly for maintenance. Gross housing expenditure in Northern Ireland this year is now expected to be about £552 million—some £17 million more than in 1992-93.

Vote 3, which covers water and sewerage services, also shows a token increase. There are various adjustments in expenditure within the vote—notably, an additional £4 million for capital expenditure on sewerage services.

Token provision is also required in vote 4, covering environmental and other services. An additional £2.2 million is for Belfast action teams, and £1 million is for urban regeneration grants. This will help to stimulate private enterprise and investment activities in inner city areas of Belfast and Londonderry. These increases are offset by savings within the vote and increased receipts.

For the Department of Education, a net increase of £9.2 million is sought in vote 1. Some £7 million is for grants to education and library boards, mainly for school transport, maintenance and equipment, £1.1 million is for voluntary schools and £1 million is for grant-maintained integrated schools.

In vote 2, an additional £8.5 million is sought. Some £8 million is for mandatory awards and student loans, reflecting increased demand. There is provision of £600,000 for universities, mainly for equipment. The requirement of £400,000 for arts and museums includes increased grants to the Ulster museum and the Ulster American folk park.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Minister has referred to extra provision for student awards and loans. How much of this is earmarked for students coming from European countries to undertake tertiary education in Northern Ireland?

Sir John Wheeler: I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), who as the other Minister of State is to reply to the debate, will be able to give the hon. Gentleman the information that he seeks. If not, I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Increases are also required for the youth services and for departmental administration. There are reduced requirements elsewhere in the vote.

In vote 3, covering the teachers' superannuation scheme, almost £1 million is sought. This is due mainly to higher than anticipated levels of payments to retiring teachers and to a shortfall in estimated receipts.

For the Department of Health and Social Services a net increase of £18 million is sought in vote 1. The main increase of £14.2 million is for expenditure on hospital, community health and personal social services. The provision sought for health and social services boards' capital expenditure is £3.4 million. Net increases of £1.7 million are required for health and social services trusts, and £6.1 million for the family health services. These increases are offset by increased receipts and savings in other areas.

In vote 3, additional net provision of £4.3 million is sought. This includes some £7.5 million for administration costs and capital expenditure in the Social Security Agency. Increases are offset by reductions elsewhere, including an increase in receipts of £1.8 million from the national insurance fund.

Finally, in vote 4, which covers social security, £121.1 million is sought. This is due mainly to a greater than anticipated demand for income support and disability benefits—in particular, disability living allowance. This is offset by lower than anticipated claims in other areas.

In my opening remarks I have drawn attention to the main provisions of the order. In replying to the debate, my hon. Friend the other Minister of State will seek to respond to points raised by hon. Members. I commend the order to the House.

4.48 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): In this debate we turn again to the allocation of resources among the spending Departments in Northern Ireland. I have said before, but I shall say again, that the current Government's tenure of office has been punctuated by under-funding and by the freezing and cutting of public expenditure. As the Treasury now concedes, Northern Ireland's population will face taxation rises this year.

This is no exception for the people of Northern Ireland. It is appropriate that we should be debating the Government's economic record just a month before many people in that region who are already living in near-poverty face VAT increases and higher fuel and heating bills. It is ordinary families who are being sentenced to further hardship to pay for the Government's financial ineptitude. In Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, those families will have to pay about £10 a week extra in a combination of tax rises that will take effect in April.

Also this year, every time a hot meal is prepared for a family or a cold pensioner switches on an electric fire, a payment will be made through fuel and heating bills to reduce accumulated Government debts. Many of those families and pensioners receive income support. Indeed, the latest figure reveals that, astonishingly, 17 per cent. of Northern Ireland's population receives income support.

Those income support levels are wholly inadequate. For example, a couple in Northern Ireland with two children can meet only 74 per cent. of their basic minimum budget from current income support levels, and income support and child allowances were found to meet only 43 per cent. —less than half—of what was required to provide adequate family living standards.

The statistics for pensioner poverty in Northern Ireland are just as appalling. On average, there are already 1,000 extra cold-related deaths among elderly people in Northern Ireland each year. In spite of rebates which may be claimed for VAT on fuel, about which many people in Northern Ireland are not wholly convinced, what effect does the Minister believe the increase in fuel and heating bills will have on the shameful statistics that I have just relayed to the House?

A single pensioner in Northern Ireland spends more than 20 per cent. of his or her meagre weekly income on fuel. For pensioners on income support, the figure rises to 24 per cent. What effect does the Minister believe that the increase in fuel and heating bills will have on those shameful statistics?

One in three recipients of income support in Northern Ireland also receives a retirement pension. The average weekly income for a pensioner household in Northern Ireland in 1993 was £73.89, compared with an average of £282.35 for non-pensioner households. What effect does the Minister believe that the increase in fuel and heating bills will have on those shameful statistics? I must tell the Minister that many people in Northern Ireland believe that the shameful increases in fuel and heating bills will increase the number of cold-related deaths among the elderly. The Minister should pay particular attention to that point.

Unemployment has been a concern of mine in respect of my constituency and in relation to the Province. Unemployment in Northern Ireland is fluctuating at just below 14 per cent. where it has remained for a sustained period. Yet again, ministerial optimism has been misplaced and unemployment in Northern Ireland has risen from 13.4 per cent. to 13.7 per cent. of the work force. The Government's approach of merely hoping for recovery will give no confidence to the long-term unemployed. I remind the Minister that more than 50 per cent. of Northern Ireland's job seekers have been unemployed for more than a year. What help is he offering them today? What new and exciting initiatives can he announce to the House?

There have been some new and exciting initiatives of late. However, that is simply a pepper-potting of industry. It does not tackle the real issue of unemployment in Northern Ireland. I toured the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) last Thursday. There are people in Andersonstown, Ballymurphy and Turf Lodge whose fathers—and even sometimes whose grandfathers—and sons and daughters have never had work. One need only consider the fact that unemployment may provide one of the root causes for potential recruitment to terrorism in Northern Ireland. It is shameful that Northern Ireland's unemployment problem has not been tackled in the way in which we would have liked it to be tackled.

We know that no further help is available for the unemployed to enable them to seek jobs. The Government's response to rising unemployment figures has been to cut severely the budget allocated to industrial

[Mr. Roger Stott]

development. That budget has fallen from £480 million in 1989-90 to £141 million in this financial year and it will be cut even further to £115 million in 1995-96.

That complacency and short-termism has caused many of Northern Ireland's economic problems. Gradual cuts year on year, instead of long-term planning for the future, have been the hallmark of the past 15 years. The Government cut today to get themselves out of the economic hole they dug for themselves yesterday.

I refer the Minister to the very interesting economic report by Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte which was published in January and illustrates the point well. It states:

"many of the long-term structural problems remain. GDP per head is still only around 80 per cent. of the UK average, easily the lowest of the UK Regions. The problems of local labour markets remain with unemployment at 14 per cent. still well above the next worst UK region."

Instead of tackling the long-term structural deficiencies, the Government, particularly in the last Budget as evidenced in this evening's provisions, are simply creating further future difficulties through short-sighted and inadequate measures.

That was recognised in the Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte report:

"Given the size of the public sector locally—public expenditure is equivalent to around two-thirds of GDP—changes in public finances are particularly important in Northern Ireland. The fiscal squeeze imposed in the two 1993 Budgets therefore has potentially serious consequences for Northern Ireland."

In addition, we know that the fluctuating unemployment statistics, hailed by Ministers as the start of a recovery in Northern Ireland, are not the result of the creation of additional jobs in the region. That fall in unemployment, small as it was, has partly been induced by statistical factors such as people switching from unemployment benefit to invalidity benefit. While there has been an increase in employment of 2,200 in Northern Ireland, that increase, as Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte point out, has occurred in low-paid, female, part-time jobs in service industries. That is no help to the long-term unemployed and those men and women seeking full-time, secure work.

Sadly, Northern Ireland's jobless do not face a brighter future. Many of those lucky enough to be in work face equally uncertain times in the light of public expenditure restraints. In stark contrast to the quick-fix economic policies of the Government, we have constantly supported sustained training and investment in people and in the infrastructure of Northern Ireland.

In last year's debate I mentioned Sir George Quigley, the chairman of the Ulster bank. He has illustrated the point that the potential for an island of Ireland economy is there for the taking— *[Interruption.]* I hear the laughter from certain Northern Ireland Members, but I believe that co-operation between the Republic and Northern Ireland in economic terms, transport infrastructure and agriculture and tourism is taking place—

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stott: I will give way in a moment.

I believe that that co-operation is taking place and will take place irrespective of what politicians do because it is happening already on the ground. The border is not conceived to be there in terms of that policy. I agree that there is a difference of view in respect of sovereignty and I do not deny that for a moment. That is the big picture debate and the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev William McCrea) must be aware that I do not disregard that for a moment. However, in respect of the economic regeneration of the island of Ireland, it is very important that the ideas floated by Sir George Quigley should be considered seriously.

Mr. John D. Taylor: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way on this subject because it is of particular interest within the business community in Northern Ireland. However, I believe that the hon. Gentleman is concentrating on the wrong aspect. It has nothing to do with politics or sovereignty. It has to do with sound commercial trade and nothing else. Of course we want to increase trade within the island of Ireland, and that means improving transport connections from the republic up to the main ports of the island of Ireland, at Belfast and Larne. Will the hon. Gentleman not keep quoting Sir George Quigley, because many involved in business in Northern Ireland are publicly stating that his projection that there is potential for 75,000 extra jobs should be taken with a pinch of salt?

Mr. Stott: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's intervention. He asked me not to keep quoting the chairman of the Ulster bank, so I will quote someone else.

Alex Brummer wrote in the financial pages of *The Guardian* on Wednesday 2 February:

"With a settlement sketched in, a joint approach by the Northern Ireland Office and the Dublin government in Brussels could unlock funds from the European Investment Bank with its infrastructure funds worth eight billion ecus (£6 billion). What could be more supportive of a settlement than a fast rail link, a modern jet commuter service and a simplified telephone switching system between the two Irelands, and maybe an information highway to go with the new motorway? If there is to be a Belfast-Dublin economic corridor, the whole island will have to make it happen rather than relying on partners across the sea."

I agree with that and it deserves serious consideration. I was saying in the House last summer what *The Guardian* said in February.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman and I agree that there is potential for an increase in trade in the island of Ireland now that the trade barriers erected by the Dublin Government have to be removed because the republic, with the United Kingdom, is part of the European Union, but does he not accept that the main market for those of us involved in business in Northern Ireland remains elsewhere in the UK? Only 5 per cent. of our trade is conducted with the republic and it is not likely to increase very much more, even with better railways and roads.

Mr. Stott: I hear what the right hon. Gentleman is saying, but I do not believe it to be correct. The potential for economic and industrial growth in Europe's internal market will be fulfilled only if the advice of myself and the right hon. Gentleman is followed. As he knows, the island of Ireland is the most peripheral part of the European Community. If the perceived advantages of the internal market are to be realised, the action that we advocate must be taken. The right hon. Gentleman has put his finger on it. The economic and financial institutions in the island of Ireland recognise that they must work together to maximise the potential that lies in the European Community.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Sir George Quigley has a keen interest in developing new business in the Irish

republic: he has probably relocated to Dublin a considerable amount of Ulster bank's business. We recognise that there is potential, but does the hon. Gentleman agree that the natural trade and established route lies between Larne and the Stranraer-Cairnryan corridor to the south-west Scottish ports? Does he not foresee even greater potential if we had better cross-sea communications with the south-west Scotland ports and with north-west of England ports, through which our natural trade continues to flow?

Mr. Stott: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, who, as one would expect, is a stout defender of Larne port, which is doing very well. I accept that there is potential to penetrate the European markets through Belfast into Liverpool and through the channel tunnel, but that does not gainsay what I said earlier. It is important that the ideas that are beginning to grow and come to fruition in the island of Ireland should come about more quickly than has occurred hitherto.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Even now, trade on the island of Ireland must be seriously hit by the IRA, which disrupts rail traffic between Dublin and Belfast. In response, the Government have had to erect border controls, which make travel between the regions less easy than it would otherwise be. Yet even in current circumstances, without the other necessary developments, there is potential for improvement in Northern Ireland's trade.

Mr. Stott: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention. The IRA has a corrosive effect on every aspect of personal, industrial and economic in Northern Ireland. It is of significant interest that, if the electricity interconnector were restored, Northern Ireland Electricity Services could export some of its over-capacity to the south, which is under capacity. The interconnector would therefore serve the whole of the island of Ireland and make a profit for the Northern Ireland investor.

If the interconnector were restored, who knows whether the IRA would be as destructive as it has been in the past and whether it would blow up the interconnector? The IRA is supposed to want a united Ireland. The electricity interconnector and the Belfast-Dublin railway line unite the island of Ireland, but both have been subjected to IRA terrorism.

I spoke of shameful statistics earlier. The Public Accounts Committee issued a scathing report demanding urgent action to stop the carnage on Northern Ireland's roads. To add to the misery caused in Northern Ireland by the deaths of thousands of people through terrorism, Northern Ireland has the highest road death toll per 100,000 of population and per 10,000 vehicles. Already this year, 27 people have died through traffic accidents in Northern Ireland.

The evidence in the Public Accounts Committee report showed that the toll of fatalities in Northern Ireland rose by a staggering 27 per cent. in the 10 years to 1991, while the increase in Wales was 4.7 per cent., in Scotland 6.6 per cent. and in England 3.4 per cent. The figure for Northern Ireland is singularly worrying and those appalling statistics should provoke even the present Government into taking action.

I fully support the Public Accounts Committee recommendation that the penalty points system should be introduced in Northern Ireland. The Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland estimates that it would cost £1.2 million to introduce a similar scheme in the Province, but there is no cash available. The Public Accounts Committee concluded:

> "We accept that funds are limited but, in the light of an estimated cost of £300 million for casualties in 1992, there is the potential for significant net savings."

The Government want to save money; if they take action on this matter they will save not only money but, most importantly, lives.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the Department of Environment has plenty of money in its budget, but that it spends it in the wrong way? Roads could be improved throughout Northern Ireland, but the Department spends money improving the Newry-Dundalk road to give a narrow connection to Dublin. Would it not be better to use that money to reduce road casualties and fatalities in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Stott: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), who will wind up the debate for the Opposition, is a shadow Environment Minister and I am sure that he will take the hon. Gentleman's argument on board—*[Interruption.]* As I come from Wigan where we play rugby rather well, I can pass the ball as adroitly as the Minister.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) is right. If the statistics which the PAC has identified are correct and the introduction of that penalty payment system will cost only £1.2 million while the cost of accidents in Northern Ireland is £300 million, one does not need a degree in statistics to recognise that the introduction of some such system would reduce the terrible fatalities on the roads in Northern Ireland.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Gentleman is clearly well aware that the order contains a bit about road safety and the sums that are required both this financial year and next. He will have noticed that, when the Minister opened the debate, he dwelt only on the sums required for this financial year. Neither the hon. Gentleman nor the Minister has said a word about the expenditure required for next year. Will someone on one of the Front Benches do something about it so that we can know what they have in mind?

Mr. Stott: If the hon. Gentleman wants a more positive reply, I guarantee to give it when I speak from the Government Dispatch Box.

The Minister of State knows of my special interest in the Buddybear trust in Dungannon. If he has time in his winding-up speech, I should be grateful if he would say whether any progress been made in resolving that problem.

The words "democratic deficit" are often used in Northern Ireland debates, which are among the few occasions when Northern Ireland Members have a chance to debate what is happening in their constituencies or the Province generally. I shall therefore conclude my remarks, and my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) will pick up any other points made during the debate.

5.11 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I intend to raise just one issue during this debate. I hope that, by my putting just one egg in the basket, the Minister will feel able to

[Mr. Peter Robinson]

respond to that one issue in his winding-up speech. I expect that few subjects of greater importance will be raised during today's proceedings, for this is a matter of life and death proportions affecting tens of thousands of lives in the Province.

Before discussing the specifics of my concern, I should tell the House that I intend to sustain a charge against the Government, although I cannot be too scathing about the present holder of the office of Secretary of State and his part in the problem. The Government have been behaving in a careless—some might say reckless—manner towards the safety of those whom the nation employs as its servants. The lives and well-being of tens of thousands of people are needlessly jeopardised every day.

In hundreds of offices occupied by the Northern Ireland civil service, the imperial civil service and works units responsible to Departments, and in police stations where civil servants are also employed, the Government have been avoiding the necessity to meet fire certificate conditions under the cover of Crown immunity.

The Government say that they are so concerned about and acquainted with the need for safety that premises everywhere are, by law, compelled to have a fire certificate if, according to article 22 of the Fire Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1984, they are used

"as a place of work".

That is as it should be. Workers must, of necessity, be protected. Prevention is vital, and there is obviously no better alternative. To ensure that the proper standards of prevention are upheld in offices throughout the Province, regulations are set down and the vast experience of capable fire officers is used to ensure that new or altered buildings meet the accepted standards.

Naturally, there are a few exceptions, such as private dwellings and churches, and some other minor ones. I do not wish to discuss those, although the House may wish to return to them later. I wish to discuss one non-disclosed exemption, which takes out of the scope of the orders Northern Ireland's largest employer—the Government.

Last November I sought, through parliamentary questions, to gather information about this issue. I asked appropriate Ministers a series of questions, but the answers were evasive and misleading. For example, I asked for a statement

"on the application of the rules regarding fire certificates to Government offices in Northern Ireland."

The then Minister responsible for the Departments of the Environment and of Economic Development in Northern Ireland—this subject spans both those Departments' work and I am not sure which hat the Minister had on when answering my question—replied:

"Fire certificates for Government offices in Northern Ireland are issued by the Department of Economic Development under the provisions of the Fire Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1994. The standards which have to be met by Government offices are identical to those which apply to offices in the private sector." —[*Official Report*, 2 November 1993; Vol. 231, c. *134*.]

When I read that reply, I began to doubt the information that had started my inquiries, until I realised that the Minister had failed to give the most salient facts: how many Government offices had a fire certificate and what percentage were currently covered by a fire certificate.

I made my own inquiries within the Department and discovered that only 5 per cent. of Government buildings had a fire certificate and only 1 per cent. had a current fire certificate. The difference between those two figures is that, at some stage, a few Government offices had a fire certificate but had made major alterations since then and had not sought to have those alterations inspected for fire approval. In short, some 600 buildings in Northern Ireland, occupied by civil servants, do not have a current fire certificate.

Earlier, I defined the categories of offices that are avoiding meeting fire conditions as those occupied by the Northern Ireland civil service; the imperial civil service —the Inland Revenue and the like; works offices such as the DOE's roads and water services; and police stations where civil servants are employed. If no civil servants are employed, an exemption applies under the fire order. The first category, dealing with the Northern Ireland civil service, includes almost 350 offices housing the equivalent of more than 33,000 full-time staff; so some 40,000 staff are employed in those offices. When the other categories are included, the number of offices goes beyond 600 and the number of staff substantially increases.

What does that mean? I state the obvious: that not every building that does not have a fire certificate is a monstrous fire risk and has the potential to become a towering inferno. Undoubtedly, some buildings, if the owners applied for a fire certificate and the premises were inspected, would qualify without any alteration. Many buildings, with minor alteration, would also conform. However, there are still many other buildings where major improvements are required before they meet the necessary standards. I contend that in those buildings lives are being imperilled and safety is being compromised in a deliberately cavalier fashion.

I will not identify any specific buildings, although the men and women who work in them will know only too well the buildings in question. I will not attempt to aid the witch hunt for those who have given me the information by identifying more closely the areas of my concern. What is certain is that this "do as I say, not as I do" legislation must be changed and the Government must order immediately the inspection of all Crown-occupied buildings.

How has this come about? The legislation, by sleight of hand, gives the appearance that Crown offices are subject to regulation but then deliberately sets out to exclude Crown buildings by a process of legislative deception. Let me explain. As I said, article 22 of the Fire Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 outlines the principle that all places of work must have a fire certificate. Article 26 sets out the specific detailed requirements for applying for a fire certificate, and article 49 sets out the exemptions for Crown buildings. Article 49 says that articles 22—the first of the two articles that I mentioned—23, 24, 25, 27, 31, and so on, shall apply to premises occupied by the Crown.

A cursory glance at article 22, which says that all Crown-occupied buildings, as places of work, must have a fire certificate, would lead people to believe that the Crown is required to have a fire certificate. But by not including article 26 in the list of articles that apply to the Crown, that means that the Crown does not have to apply for a fire certificate, and it has constantly refused to do so. The few buildings that have fire certificates have them because of approaches by the fire service and probably because the officer responsible for them was not aware of the general trend within the Government to avoid making such applications.

The clear thrust of the order, which I believe was the intention of Parliament, comes under article 22, which is

included in article 49 as applying to Crown buildings: all Crown buildings are required to have a fire certificate. I do not believe that Parliament ever intended to exclude some 600 buildings in Northern Ireland from the scope of the order.

This seems to amuse some of the Minister's staff, and I hope that the people who work in those offices will be equally amused by the fact that they are at risk. Even if the law had been framed in the manner in which it clearly has, and, therefore, there was no compulsion on the part of the Government to apply for a fire certificate and have their buildings meet the necessary standards, a responsible officer within any of the buildings would still be capable of making such an application. I imagine that that is what the House would have expected them to do.

Whatever the intention of the House may have been in the order, and whatever it may have expected from the responsible officers in each of the buildings, Government offices have avoided—I might say, skilfully—making such applications. Indeed, they not only have been irresponsible in failing to have premises inspected but have engaged in a shameful cover-up of their neglect. When one looks at the answer to my question—

"Fire certificates for Government offices in Northern Ireland are issued by the Department of Economic Development under the provisions of the Fire Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1984"—

one could say that, looking at the legislation. It is just that no one ever applies for fire certificates. The answer goes on:

"The standards which have to be met by Government offices are identical to those which apply to offices in the private sector."

I suspect that that is not an accurate answer. The standards may well be what is required by the House, but Government offices do not have to apply for fire certificates, and have not done so. Indeed, I ask the Minister to give us some information about the training that is given to staff in offices occupied by the Crown.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Can the hon. Gentleman postulate whether they have not provided the necessary reports in order to save expense in the budget, to pave the way for promotion opportunities or for some other reason?

Mr. Robinson: I shall decline the offer to question motives; I prefer to question the Government's behaviour. What I can say is that a similar situation existed in Great Britain. When it was discovered, an arrangement was immediately entered into by the occupier of the offices and the fire service that they would have offices inspected, although it was not required by law. Indeed, I understand that new fire protection legislation is being prepared and will include that requirement.

In the case of Northern Ireland, there is no attempt, even without the requirement of the legislation, to enter into an arrangement with the fire service and the inspection unit of the Department of Economic Development. Nor is there any sign that the Government intend to change the legislation. We have the hypocrisy of a Government who tell those in Northern Ireland who are building offices, improving offices or making any alterations to offices that they must meet certain standards laid down by the order but who are not prepared to do it themselves. They wag their fingers at those whom they govern while they are prepared to refuse to apply the standards to themselves.

I ask the Minister to give an account of this ignominious behaviour and tell the House what the Government intend to do to afford the same level of safety to their employees as they expect from employers outside government.

Rev. William McCrea: Does my hon. Friend agree that this is a serious matter and, therefore, a simple answer from the Minister would not be appropriate today? The Minister must institute an in-depth inquiry into this matter and give us a detailed response, so that we can carry this matter forward in the interests of the safety of our civil servants.

Mr. Robinson: I hear my colleague's comments. If the Minister needs a longer period to repent, I am happy to give it to him, but he must repent. If he is feeling under conviction at present, I would not take away the opportunity for him to clear his soul on the matter.

Finally, I ask the Minister to give an undertaking that every building occupied by the Crown will be inspected by qualified officers of either the fire service or the inspection unit of the Department of Economic Development. Whatever those officers suggest is necessary to bring those building up to the required standard should be done. I confess, however, that I share the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) that the reluctance on the part of the Northern Ireland Office to meet its obligations may be finance related. I hope that the Minister will give an undertaking to the House that he will not place the lives of employees of the Crown in danger for much longer.

5.29 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I have listened with interest to what has been said. When I cast my mind back to the debate that was held on 18 February 1993, many similar problems were referred to—as they always are—relating to potholes, individual constituency problems and the rest. All such problems land on the Minister's desk purely and simply because of the intolerable system of governance in Northern Ireland.

I hope that, before this week is done, at least some measures will have been taken to call to account those who take decisions for the people of Northern Ireland, so that we know the reasons for those decisions and question intently and intensively those whom we believe have done so many things wrong in the Province for so many years.

The House will also recall that part of last year's debate centred around the bombs that had wrecked the centres of Magherafelt and Coleraine. Although I am happy to report to the House that quite a lot of work has been done to restore those town centres, an enormous amount of work is still to be done. It is also clear that severe economic damage has been done to those towns. I hope that when Ministers consider rebuilding those town centres they will be as generous as possible, because that will ensure that the damage is made good and that folk can get back into business as quickly as possible, rather than being left with gaping holes in those town centres for 18 months or more and not a brick being laid.

Unlike the Front-Bench spokesmen, I should like to consider what I hope will happen next year. Expenditure on school buildings has been frozen for quite a time, and no doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) will also discuss that matter. I hope that the preliminary change that we have started to see in some

[Mr. William Ross]

quarters is not a false dawn and that many funds will be unfrozen so that the necessary work to improve so many schools can go ahead.

One of the side winds, one of the unfortunate consequences, of the troubled situation in Northern Ireland has been a mass movement of population. Perfectly good public buildings, such as schools and churches, which served that population, have been left behind. Those people have either chosen to move or been moved because of violence. That hidden aspect of the troubles has caused an enormous amount of public expenditure which, if the situation had remained peaceful, would never have had to be spent.

I am particularly interested in the £4.5 million that is needed by Limavady grammar school. I must declare an interest because some of my children attend it. The needs of that school have been put on a long finger for many years. The school has now been at the top of the priority list for the past two years and it wants to get on with the work.

I am concerned because the sketch plans, which were sent to the Department of Education in the autumn, have not yet been returned. Unless the Department returns them with a note to say whether they are acceptable, in broad terms, it is impossible to prepare proper working drawings.

Will the Under-Secretary of State, who will reply to the debate, and the Minister of State, who will have to find the cash, be so good as to see to it that the Department of Education returns those sketch plans to the relevant authorities in the Western board so that the architects can prepare the proper working drawings? If that happens, perhaps Limavady will not lose yet again. The work is long overdue and the local people are getting rather incensed about it.

I have no doubt that other hon. Members will discuss rural planning tonight. I understand that, since the autumn, the rules governing the design of dwellings in rural areas have been tightened up. I had a recent case in my constituency where someone who had applied for planning permission was told that he could not have a certain archway in his house, although the countryside was full of them. He was also told that his hip roof was unacceptable, although his next-door neighbours had them, and that the gable proportions of the house were far too wide. He was told that his house had to be a metre narrower.

I understand that those requirements are related to the new regulations that are being prepared to regulate the design of houses in rural areas. Why do the planners want all those changes in proportions to be made? Perhaps it is because they do not have to live in those houses; those who do, however, are not at all happy.

I have tabled a question on the Order Paper to ask what discussions have taken place with local councils on that matter. I hope that something has been done about those new rules, because local folk would like to have a word in the planners' ears and in the ears of those who are planning the new design standards.

I am sure that many hon. Members will raise concerns tonight about the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I must draw to the Minister's attention one problem that will become acute in the town of Limavady. Last week, we had the happy announcement that a factory offering 300 new jobs is to come to the town. Not only will it provide work for those living in the immediate vicinity of the factory but, as usual, further jobs will be created as a spin-off. Such a spin-off normally means that incoming workers will be employed.

Those incoming workers at the factory will almost certainly be shift workers. If an individual lives within 20 miles of the place where he applies for housing, he cannot be treated as an incoming worker. The problem in Northern Ireland is that some people living just 10 or 15 miles away find it extremely difficult to travel that distance. If people do not have a car, they are stuck, because there is practically no public transport, certainly nothing runs at 2 am or 4 am, or even at 7 pm or 8 pm, when a worker is travelling either to or from work.

When such a worker asks the Housing Executive for a dwelling, he is told that he is classified as an incoming worker, that it would like to help him, but that it has a priority system on which that person does not figure. If that person manages to get on it, however, he is so far down the list of priorities that he does not have a snowball's chance of getting a dwelling. The Housing Executive will tell him that it has all the single mothers, the homeless and all sorts of other priority groups who are in need of a house, flat or similar accommodation. The mere fact that that individual has a job and may be the only person in the vicinity capable of doing it yet he cannot find a dwelling causes immense difficulties for him and his employer.

Often, a person on shift work simply cannot get lodgings. Landladies do not like folk who wander in and out at all hours of the day or night and who may sleep during the day. Those with a nice nine-to-five job will probably get lodgings, but a 24-hour shift worker will not. I hope that Ministers will draw that problem to the attention of the Housing Executive, so that we can consider the problems that are created by its points system.

The same difficulty does not arise with incoming nurses. The number of student nurses from the Irish Republic increased from 4.94 per cent. of the total student nurse population in 1990 to 11.36 per cent. in 1993, which I find astonishing. Given the number of unemployed people in Northern Ireland, we should have no difficulty finding among our native population a sufficiency of young men and women to enter the nursing profession, without having to take one in nine from the Irish Republic. What on earth is going on? What sort of selection procedures exist that allow that to happen?

Rev. William McCrea: How many people does the hon. Gentleman think would travel from Northern Ireland to take up posts in the Irish Republic?

Mr. Ross: As the hon. Gentleman raised that question, I will leave it with him. If the answer is not obvious to hon. Members who represent Great Britain constituencies, it is obvious to those of us who represent Northern Ireland.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is incredible that the Northern Ireland Office is encouraging student nurses from the Republic of Ireland to work in Northern Ireland, where they will be paid by Northern Ireland taxpayers, and take up 11 per cent. of nursing school places at a time when there is increased unemployment in the nursing profession in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Ross: I appear to have raised a hare that some of my hon. Friends may want to pursue. That matter is certainly of concern to many people, not least when more

than 1,500 nurses from the Republic are working in Northern Ireland. That is only the number that we know about—we do not have the total.

Mr. Barnes: Both the Irish Republic and the United Kingdom are members of the European Union, the terms of which provide for free movement of labour. If there is unemployment in the Republic of Ireland, presumably people there will look wherever they can, including Northern Ireland, to find employment—as people from Northern Ireland will look elsewhere. If the hon. Gentleman's hare is to be run, perhaps we should bear that in mind.

Mr. Ross: I should have thought that, if the Irish Republic was as successful as was thought, after 70 years it would not need to export its citizens to Northern Ireland or to this larger island. The fact that the republic has a surplus of people looking for work elsewhere shows that state's economic and social failure.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Ross: The hon. Gentleman disagrees, and I am not surprised. This is one of the few countries in the European Union that subsidises states whose economic system has failed. The Irish Republic is one such state receiving large handouts.

Mr. McGrady: So is Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ross: I hate to reply to sedentary interventions, but Northern Ireland is part of this unitary state, the United Kingdom. As such, it is entitled to share in the benefits of belonging to this state. That is one reason the people of Northern Ireland want to remain in it.

I refer to a further problem that will be created by the new Limavady factory and others that we hope will follow. The Minister will be aware that we have long been seeking a bypass. The factory will make the need for a bypass even more urgent. For my party, that has second priority. The first is the Larne-Belfast road, which needs to be enormously improved, and swiftly. At the top of my constituency priorities, however, is the Limavady bypass. When the Minister visits the town tomorrow, I hope that he can give us good news.

A few weeks ago, I tabled a number of questions on the abundance or scarcity of wild animals in Northern Ireland. It was plain from the answers that nobody has the slightest idea. We are constantly assailed from all sides by conservationists claiming that this animal or that is scarce and is in danger of being wiped out, yet no one has a clue as to the base number. I ask the Minister to commission a survey, so that we may proceed on a solid foundation, rather than be subjected to wild and unwarranted claims about the number of animals that are alive and well in the Province.

I am particularly interested in destructive animals, such as mink, grey crows and magpies. Anyone who has kept sheep knows the problems created by grey crows—particularly for hill sheep farmers. Most of those accursed birds are to be found in Minister of Agriculture forestry plantations. We wish that the Minister would accept some responsibility for the vast increase in those corvids over the years. That issue is of significance to everyone who takes an interest in conservation and wildlife, and I hope that the Government will do something about it.

5.46 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): At the beginning of this debate, especially after listening to the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), I began to question its purpose. It is apparently the plan or purpose of those who speak at the Dispatch Box for the official Opposition to get Northern Ireland linked in some way to the Republic, by hook or by crook. That forced link arises in every Northern Ireland debate.

We are told about the money that would come from Europe, but if it was really worried and concerned about the good people of Northern Ireland, and about suffering and deprivation in the Province, Europe would not tie its giving hand to a link with the Irish Republic. It would give gladly to the people of Northern Ireland.

There are those who want to help us, so they say, provided that we go towards Dublin. I make it abundantly clear—whether it is Sir George Quigley who is quoted or any other knight in shining armour—that although the Opposition, and the Government in recent days, want to get Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom, the people of Northern Ireland have no intention of leaving the family.

Unfortunately, we must bear the reality when the Government tell us that we have no selfish or strategic economic interests in staying in the United Kingdom. Down the years, Northern Ireland has suffered with the rest of the United Kingdom—rightly so, because we are part of it. We have paid with distinction and honour the price of being part of this free family.

Unfortunately, in recent days, some in high positions and in government have played with the enemy in seeking to thwart the will of the people of the Province and try to throw us from the family. But, tonight, in this United Kingdom Parliament, I raise matters that are relevant to my constituents. I do so having a genuine concern to see the condition and well-being of my people bettered.

At the commencement of the debate, I thought that we would be talking about dividing the financial cake and looking at the different Departments, until I heard the speech of the hon. Member for Wigan who speaks for the Opposition. I have to say that there are many day-to-day matters, some of which we dismiss, but they are very relevant to my constituents. Therefore, I want to raise them in the House on behalf of those who elected me to this Chamber.

I deal first with the vote for the Department of Agriculture. On behalf of my constituents, I urgently demand action by the Minister to save the pig sector of the agriculture industry. One matter that causes grave concern is the cost to my farmers of feedstuffs, which is beyond what the industry can afford. Surely the Department is aware of those difficulties. Therefore, assistance must be forthcoming, whether by subsidy or intervention grain.

Many pig farmers in the Province are in the quagmire of debt. Help must be given to save that sector. I mention in particular the Unipork factory in Cookstown. I am sure that the Department has been aware of the major problems in Unipork Holdings. I deeply regret the loss of producer control in the processing plants throughout the Province, especially in Cookstown, but my overriding concern is the survival of that factory.

The decline in Unipork's profitability over several years is to be regretted, but we cannot close our eyes to the need for a major injection of finance into that factory. The rescue

[Rev. William McCrea]

plan that was initiated by Bridgewater Food Holdings is, I hope, a genuine attempt to secure the Cookstown plant for the future.

It is my intention to meet Mr. Ronnie Wilson to discuss the situation in Cookstown. I personally trust that my constituents shall enjoy job security through an energetic development of Unipork in Cookstown, and that that will assist in safeguarding a significant portion of the Northern Ireland pigmeat industry. Perhaps the Minister will draw the attention of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the concern in my constituency about the cut in the hill livestock compensatory amounts.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Before my hon. Friend leaves that point, does he not feel that it is very unfair for the pig industry in Northern Ireland not to have a level playing field to play on? In other places, intervention grain, which is paid for and transported by EC funds, is made available in days of difficulty in sections of the agricultural community, whereas our people are losing out on quite a considerable amount of money for the price per tonne that they have to pay because of transport costs.

Why cannot there be an equalisation scheme whereby parts of the Community, such as Northern Ireland, can benefit from that intervention grain, and that grain be released? Does my hon. Friend not think that it is time that the Government took that on board? When one thinks of what the southern Government do for their farming community, and then thinks about the Northern Ireland Office dragging its feet, one is amazed that opportunities in the EC are missed.

Rev. William McCrea: I whole-heartedly agree with my hon. Friend. I mentioned that matter earlier, and asked the Minister whether he and his hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture would assist, either by subsidy to the pig farming industry or by intervention grain. That is vital to the pig farmers in the Province as a whole and in my constituency in particular.

The cut in the hill livestock compensatory amounts is causing concern in my constituency—a rural constituency. Many small farmers are farming on the hillsides of the sperrins. Therefore, it is vital that we give support to hill farmers through the hill livestock compensatory amounts. The Government have been rich in verbiage about their concern about the drift from the land and the rural development in the countryside. Unfortunately, much has been said but little action taken to back up their sayings. Surely it must be accepted that the farming community is the backbone of the rural economy, yet in reality little is given to encourage our youth to stay on the farms.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) mentioned rural planning. In my constituency, many of the young people are being forced out of the countryside by planners who seem not to have sympathy with farmers' sons, the backbone of the community, being kept within the community. I appeal to the Department to ensure a relaxation in the farming community being able to build in that community, and not to encourage the drift from the countryside.

I shall now deal with the vote for economic development, which is vital to my constituency, bearing in mind the massive unemployment there. The hon. Member for Wigan said that he was visiting west Belfast and talked about the deprivation and about many people not having jobs. I do not accept that that can in any way be an excuse for recruitment to terrorism; I totally deplore that connection. My constituency has the second highest unemployment level in the United Kingdom, yet the vast majority of my constituents have turned their backs on the terrorists.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm, though, that my hon. Friend, speaking from the Front Bench, made no such connection?

Rev. William McCrea: I do not think that the hon. Member was here when the speech was made, but if he reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will clearly find that association. I must say that I will not accept unemployment as an excuse for anyone joining a terrorist organisation, whether it be in the Falls or in the heart of Mid-Ulster.

Mr. Stott: What I said was that, while there might not be a direct correlation between unemployment and the recruitment of unemployed young men into paramilitaries, where young men have been unemployed for more than a year—perhaps two or three years—it makes it all the more easy for them to be recruited into either paramilitary wing in Northern Ireland, because those young men do not have the dignity and discipline that employment brings.

If the hon. Gentleman is saying that, in his constituency, unemployed people have not resorted to terrorism, I applaud what he is saying, but it cannot be overstated that the high levels of unemployment in Northern Ireland are a means of attracting young idle hands into paramilitary activity. I have no doubt whatever about that.

Rev. William McCrea: Those who read *Hansard* will see very clearly that an earlier statement has been redrafted. I stand by what I have said: Cookstown, in my constituency, has the second highest unemployment level in the UK, but we do not accept that that is any reason or excuse for anyone to join a terrorist organisation.

Interestingly, many of those who have been apprehended were financially well off; unemployment was not the cause. I remember a famous case outside Omagh. People throughout the United Kingdom saw pictures of the funeral procession, which began at one of the most massive and beautiful houses in the countryside. Clearly, that did not involve one of the depressed people who had been cited: it is obvious that the two factors should not be linked.

Many of those who have been stirring the pot and keeping it going are both well heeled and well educated. Let us not insult the good people of the Province, who, although they have endured the hardship of unemployment —I shall say more about that—totally reject the bomb and the gun. They do not believe that such action contributes to the well-being of any society.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East mentioned the bombs in Coleraine and Magherafelt. Can any hon. Member say what good blasting the economic heart of Magherafelt did the unemployed? How many jobs did it give those on the unemployment list? In fact, it put many employed more people on that list. There is no excuse for the vile terrorism that our Province has endured.

I hear hon. Members tell the House of neglect in their constituencies. I am sorry that the hon. Members for Foyle (Mr. Hume), for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) and for

Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) are not present; much of that talk has come from them. They have told us of the Government's failure to invest and provide grants.

Foyle is next door to my constituency. It is interesting to note that members of the SDLP—the party of those three hon. Members—go around my constituency telling my constituents that the way in which to secure grants is to instate an SDLP Member of Parliament; there has been so much investment in Foyle and Newry that that seems to be the only way in which to get it.

Let me say, with great respect, that the SDLP cannot have it both ways. On the one hand, its members say that their people are neglected in terms of grants; on the other, they say, "We are the party that can get you the grants." On the one hand, they say, "It is our constituencies that are enduring massive unemployment"; on the other, in the likes of Mid-Ulster, they say, "Ah, but if you had an SDLP Member of Parliament, you would secure thousands of jobs."

Those claims show the party's utter hypocrisy: the truth is that jobs are not provided in Mid-Ulster—or, indeed, throughout the Province—largely because of a lack of Government investment.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Was not part of the legacy of unemployment in Mid-Ulster the contribution of one of the hon. Gentleman's predecessors, who was lauded in the House and claimed to speak for the working class? She only wanted employment for the fire brigade; she said, "Burn the factories."

Rev. William McCrea: Indeed, that did not help the constituency at all. However, many hon. Members lauded and applauded that person when she was a Member of Parliament.

Mr. Peter Robinson: They called her Joan of Arc.

Rev. William McCrea: They did; others had other names for her, but it would not be appropriate to mention them now.

Mr. Beggs: It is important to clarify the position, to avoid any misplaced sense of appreciation in regard to that former hon. Member. The House should be reminded, even today, that that same person declared a recently murdered terrorist to have been the greatest republican of them all. She was referring to one Dominic McGlinchey—or "Mad Dog McGlinchey". That was a former Member of Parliament's opinion of a murdering rascal who is alleged to have killed more than 30 policemen and members of our British Army. How foolish can hon. Members continue to be?

Rev. William McCrea: A certain person—a former Member of Parliament—clearly stated that Dominic McGlinchey was the finest son that Ireland had ever produced. He was murdering scum; that is all he was. He has gone out and found, in one second of eternity, that he has reaped the harvest he sowed. I leave him to the Almighty.

Let me now deal with lesser beings: Ministers, who have a responsibility to which we will hold them tonight. I am sure that they would like me to talk about divine persons, and forget some of the issues that are relevant to my constituents, but I assure them that I am not so foolish.

My constituents are angry because certain constituencies claim a large slice of the financial cake, much to the detriment, deprivation and suffering of others. They are also aggrieved by the fact that, if an area can claim the existence of continued terrorist unrest, the Government will pour in grants to try to buy the people off; but they will not give an adequate portion of the cake to law-abiding communities that live together in peace and harmony.

My constituents in Omagh, in Cookstown and throughout Mid-Ulster abide by the law, and—despite vast deprivation—do not stoop to civil unrest. They feel that they have been penalised as a result of their civil behaviour, and they resent the way in which the financial cake has been divided. Many in the Province have cited as a glaring example the choice of a road from Newry to Dublin—to Dublin, as usual—and the rejection of the necessary road from Belfast to Larne. That was a clear and deliberate political decision, which the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland find repugnant.

May it happen soon! I am glad that there is another Northern Ireland debate this week, when Ministers will be brought to heel; they will have to answer for their decisions in Committee, and respond to Northern Ireland Members of Parliament. I am sure that certain Ministers will find that an unrestful experience—

Rev. Ian Paisley: They will find it exhilarating.

Rev. William McCrea: With respect, I think that some of them will find it very much the opposite. They will not be very happy to have to answer for some of the sins of the past—sins committed in all Departments, but especially in the Northern Ireland Office.

Mr. Beggs: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the public expenditure on road development between Belfast and the Irish Republic was unjustified and unfair, as the Larne-Belfast road already carries twice as much traffic as the Belfast-Dublin route? There has been political interference and injustice, which must be put right in future.

Rev. William McCrea: I agree with the hon. Member's clear statement of fact. The problem was that the Larne road did not lead to Dublin, so Ministers were not concerned. A Minister here cannot make an announcement without a Dublin Minister making it before he reaches the Dispatch Box. Ministers here cannot even acknowledge that fact and rebuke someone from a foreign country for interfering in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is there not a more serious aspect to the Larne proposal? There will be competition for traffic moving to the channel tunnel. As Larne is the second largest port in the United Kingdom, the Government have made a grave move by trying to cut the advantages to Northern Ireland of the use of the Larne port.

There is much alarm about what is happening in the Warren Point area of the South Down constituency. I was in that area the other day, and I received representations. Without a proper road into Larne, the Holyhead route will be exploited by the Irish Republic, which has received EC grants for new culverts for its roads. No such grants have been applied for by the Northern Ireland Office.

Rev. William McCrea: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I shall be interested to hear the Minister's reply, because he has heard that charge clearly made. These matters require a response. The Minister who opened the debate, the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir

[Rev. William McCrea]

J. Wheeler), avoided answering anything, but the Minister who must reply, the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), cannot avoid the questions that are posed. Plenty of time is available for him to give very detailed responses, and I am sure that the scribes to his left will get those ready answers for him.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that such responses must be given on the Floor of the House and not in writing or lodged in the Library, because many people outside the House would like a full answer?

Rev. William McCrea: We must have a detailed answer. I hope that the Minister will treat this matter with the same seriousness as hon. Members do. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed grave concern. They feel that, for mere political reasons, an injustice has been done to the people of and to the industrial future of Northern Ireland.

Ministers speak of the challenge of Europe, but they ensure that we cannot meet it. Decisions are made to help a neighbouring foreign country instead of assisting the industrial base of a part of the United Kingdom.

How many jobs have been created in the past five years in the 17 constituencies? It is vital that we can see the spread of the cake. It is time that we were aware of how much industrial development finance has been poured into constituencies because it is about time we laid some of the charges to rest. Such matters will be dealt with only by a free exchange of detailed answers to hon. Members' questions.

What civil servants' jobs will be reallocated from the central offices in Belfast to my constituency, bearing in mind that Omagh has an excellent office block, the former Tyrone and Fermanagh hospital, which is ready for occupation? Or do the Government intend simply to move those jobs to Londonderry? I believe that some were supposed to go to Downpatrick, which would assist and please the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), who is here, but certainly none have come in the direction of Mid-Ulster.

Instead of sending and attracting jobs to Mid-Ulster, I was astounded to hear that the works services department is actively considering options for change in respect of the Coleraine and Omagh office regarding architectural services to PANI, to court service office accommodation branch, to the Department of Agriculture, to vehicle inspection centres and to forestry services.

I am told that service management are considering organisational changes—what are commonly called saving proposals—with the consequences of possibly closing the Omagh and Coleraine offices and instead building up the central office in Belfast. Some employees will face a round trip of 160 miles a day. That is unbelievable, as it runs contrary to what is commonly known as the Government policy of centralisation.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I have been sitting here for the past hour listening to this. I sit for a north-western seat, and we get a debate on our region about once every Preston guild. Are not these speeches self-evidently an argument for a Select Committee, where all such matters can be dealt with, but are they not an even stronger argument for some sort of local government for the Province—devolution, integration or some other magic formula—so that we in this Chamber do not have to listen to arguments about a local bypass, pigs, electricity prices or whatever?

We in the north-west would welcome the opportunity of a debate on the Floor of the House. It is rightly and properly a local and provincial matter that can be dealt with there.

Rev. William McCrea: It is not the fault of the Ulster Democratic Unionist party that we are in this situation. It is the fault of the Government, who try to rig democracy. That is the problem.

Mr. Porter: I am doing my best.

Rev. William McCrea: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is doing his best, but the charge must be made of Ministers, who tell us that we cannot have democracy in Northern Ireland, except through some deal with Dublin. They hold the people of Northern Ireland to ransom.

That is what is so despicable and vile about this bunch. They are turning their back on democracy and are saying, "You can have a forum to deal with these matters." We would be delighted to have a forum in Northern Ireland, but the price of it is not that we should go to Dublin or be taken over by the Irish Republic. We want a forum on British democracy, on British democratic lines, and hon. Members will have to confirm that the Ulster Democratic Unionist party gave a valuable contribution—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Can we get back to the order?

Rev. William McCrea: I should be delighted to do so. I was led astray by someone who is connected with the Government. I was responding to that.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does my hon. Friend agree that it was the House that chose to discuss these matters, not the Northern Ireland electorate or the representatives of Northern Ireland? One day a year, we try to travel from Dan to Beersheba, discussing our grievances as public representatives, but we are being told, "Don't bring this stuff here; take it upstairs to some Committee"—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The fact is, we are discussing the order, and it would be helpful if we could get back to the debate.

Rev. William McCrea: I am happy to move on. Whether or not one believes it, such matters are relevant to my constituents, who elected me to this Chamber to raise these matters, and I shall raise them, whether they relate to pigs, goats or anything else.

Still on the Department of Economic Development vote, what steps are being taken to acquire adequate land for industrial development in Cookstown? I recently met representatives of the industrial development board and the divisional planning officer to discuss the availability of land. I was told that approximately 5 hectares of industrial land at Derryloran is currently underdeveloped and thus available for industrial development.

Most of the remaining land zoned for industrial purposes by the East Tyrone plan is unattractive for that purpose at this time because of poor access. In light of these difficulties, and in an effort to secure sufficient land to attract inward investment, the division of planning officers is currently in consultation with the IDB to identify

a possible short-term solution to the problem which will provide sufficient industrial land for Cookstown until the East Tyrone area plan materialises.

I am not looking for a short-term plan. My constituents have a right to have proper land set aside for proper development to attract inward investors to what is, after all, the centre of the Province. Some of the land does not have proper access, but it is vital that access is available, which can happen only if we have the bypass that has long been promised. The Secretary of State visited Cookstown a few weeks ago and was concerned. He met all the relevant bodies, so will he now take action and authorise the Cookstown bypass, to open up the industrial site? It is of great importance to my constituents, and I ask the Minister to give me a date for the commencement of the bypass.

What progress has been made in acquiring land in Omagh for industrial development? A former Minister acknowledged the urgent needs of Castlederg and accepted that it suffered great hardship because of terrorist activity. Reports were commissioned, and I wonder whether the Minister can tell us what action is to be taken to regenerate the area.

I deal now with matters relating to the Department of the Environment. I had a meeting with representatives of the chamber of commerce in the Omagh area. They have many concerns and one of the major ones is the lack of a road network. Omagh is a major market town with a population of 22,000. It is on the main A5, which has been recognised as a "trans-European highway". I love that term —it is a pity that it does not mean anything. We have fancy names and get carried away but, unfortunately, there is no money to do anything about the "trans-European highway".

People's lives are put at risk. As the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) knows, there is a link from Omagh to Ballygawley and from Ballygawley to the M1. That entire section of road needs to be dealt with urgently, and money needs to be made available. I appeal to the Minister to inform the House and to inform me, as the Member of Parliament for that area, what action the Government are taking.

On my way here today, I was asked by some workers at the airport what relevance the High Court judgment on part-time workers has to Northern Ireland, and whether we should be brought into line with the rest of the United Kingdom. Perhaps the Minister will deal with that matter, as it is causing great concern in the Province.

The Department of Education vote is also important in Cookstown. The high school there urgently needs two extra science labs. The Secretary of State's wife visited the school recently and saw the excellent work being done. However, visits are one thing: action and money to do something about the problem are another.

As for the vote on the Department of Health and Social Services, we recently had two good debates in Committee. One was on the proposal for a draft Children (Northern Ireland) Order, and we are still awaiting responses. Perhaps the Minister will have something to say, as he also spoke for the Government in Committee.

One issue that goes to the heart of my constituency is the decision by the Western board to remove maternity services from Tyrone county hospital. I raise the matter again because, in Committee, I was promised that, as the Minister was new to the job and wanted to know about our problems, she would be happy to meet us. Immediately following the sitting, I made a request to the Minister, but it was turned down. I ask the Minister here to discuss the issue with the Minister concerned—Baroness Denton—because it is a matter of life and death for children and babies in my constituency.

It is disgraceful that my constituents are being treated differently from those in the rest of the Province in respect of maternity services. All the health boards received a copy of a discussion paper on the future provision of maternity services. Considering maternity services into the next century, the Western board decided, with the agreement of the Government, that the Tyrone county hospital's maternity unit would be closed. Other boards were supposed to do likewise, but only Tyrone county will have to ensure such a closure because other boards have stepped aside, and some have not even considered the provision of maternity services.

My constituents are being treated differently from those in other parts of Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. That is not British justice. Surely the Minister will have to say that the Government must examine the provision of maternity services in the Province as a whole and not remove the little Omagh hospital, whose maternity services have been tried and proven to be excellent but are now to be taken away from my constituents. It is disgusting that the Government are treating a part of Northern Ireland differently from the rest.

When another board was examining the issue, and there was a hue and cry, the issue was sidestepped or put on ice, and decisions were put back. The Western board is the only board that has gone ahead. Surely the details of maternity provision should be the same in Mid-Ulster as they are in the other 16 constituencies.

It is right that the Government should answer that point. I demand a withdrawal of the decision in the Western board and Tyrone county hospital. Northern Ireland should be treated properly, as a unit, and not in piecemeal fashion, with one community being divided from another.

Mr. John D. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that County Tyrone Gaelic football team is one of the best Gaelic Athletic Association teams in the island of Ireland. Is he aware that, if the policy that he has criticised this evening is pursued to its finality, the County Tyrone GAA team will disappear? One of the requirements for playing for that team is to have been born in the county of Tyrone. If there are no more maternity services in County Tyrone, in time there will be no one who is qualified to play for that well-known Gaelic team.

Rev. William McCrea: I bow to the right hon. Gentleman's information. I am sure that he is fully aware that no one is less qualified than I to talk about the GAA. I believe that the GAA discriminates against my constituents who are in the security forces. Until it removes that discrimination, I shall treat it as it should be treated —that is, I shall cast it aside as the GAA has cast aside those who are protecting it.

However, I bow to the right hon. Gentleman's submission. I do not know whether he is speaking in an official capacity. One thing I do know is that I have absolutely no knowledge of the GAA. I do not want to go down that road.

I tell the House very seriously that my constituents have been denied rights to maternity services equal to those in the rest of the Province, and I assure the House that that is causing grave concern. I implore the Minister to honour his

[Rev. William McCrea]

pledge to me that he would make representations to Baroness Denton, the Minister with responsibility for health. I ask the Minister to encourage his noble Friend to receive a delegation and to allow us the right to put our concerns.

I do not know how anyone can say that it is British democracy or justice to remove maternity services and to treat my constituents differently from people in the rest of the Kingdom, when they are not given the right to make representations to the relevant Minister. I ask the Minister to further his representations to his noble Friend on that point.

The elderly in my constituency are also a grave concern; I mention here the Derg Valley hospital. There is grave concern that the hospital is to be closed. I do not decry the value of private nursing homes, but I believe that state-run homes for the elderly and geriatric units have a vital part to play. I appeal to the Minister to consider that provision.

I am also concerned about the Buddybear trust, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Wigan. I believe that the Government should give proper financial support to that trust.

On behalf of my constituents, I give my support to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor), who represents the area that takes in Belvoir Park hospital. The hospital stands out in its assistance in the treatment of cancer patients from the whole of the Province. I have been inundated with petitions and representations from my constituents asking me to give the hospital my whole-hearted support.

I assure the House that I did not need such representations, because I give the hospital my whole-hearted support. As a pastor, I know how people suffer from cancer, and I know the value of the environment of Belvoir Park hospital. To suggest that such an environment could be provided in a hospital such as the City hospital does not take into account the great needs of those who suffer from that disease.

I support the Shaftsbury Square hospital in its treatment of people addicted to alcohol and to drugs. I ask the Minister to ensure that the Department and the board give continued backing to the excellent work done in the hospital. Sadly, many of my constituents have had to rely on treatment there to bring them back to health.

6.35 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): On 14 December 1993, the Secretary of State announced details of new public expenditure for Northern Ireland for 1994-95 and the Government's three public expenditure priority areas. There is continuing concern that £931 million has to be allocated for the provision of law and order services in Northern Ireland in the next financial year, with the aim of defeating terrorism.

Citizens of the Province, taxpayers throughout the United Kingdom and members of the security forces have all paid a high price in cash terms for the foolishness of past appeasement policies. Many have lost their lives and many will never fully recover from the injuries caused to them by terrorism. If more public expenditure were properly used in a concerted campaign to end terrorism, most people would accept restricted expenditure in other sectors. A large part of the money devoted to law and order could then be reallocated more constructively to badly needed social and economic regeneration programmes in future. We are not satisfied that enough is being done to defeat the terrorist campaign and to protect lives and property in Northern Ireland.

I welcome the emphasis on strengthening the economy and the additional allocation of £5 million for industrial research and technology. However, although I note the provision of £23 million extra for factory building, I should like the Minister to tell us what he expects the likely uptake to be in 1994-95. Perhaps he will tell the House whether the major inward investment project that was blocked last year by the Governments of the Irish Republic and of Spain has yet been approved by the European Commission and whether it is likely to proceed in Northern Ireland.

One cannot take issue with the priority being given by the Government to targeting social need, to seeking to reduce deprivation and to ensuring greater equity throughout the community. However, some envy has been caused in Glenarm in my constituency. Glenarm urgently requires regeneration and proper recognition of the social deprivation and high unemployment there, which equate with those of neighbouring Carnlough, which is approximately two miles north on the Antrim coast. Glenarm would then receive additional funding. I should like to see more resources made available to Glenarm and I hope that the future public expenditure plans will be directed to encouraging speedy regeneration and employment creation on that part of the north Antrim coast.

Part of the moneys allocated for economic development is directed towards the development of tourism. May we have a review of the restrictions on hotel development in my constituency? The extent of areas of special control and areas of outstanding natural beauty are preventing job creation and additional provision for tourism. For example, a major project attracting inward investment for a hotel and chalet complex in Ballycarry, County Antrim, could not proceed and will not be able to proceed unless there is some relaxation and greater flexibility in the stringent planning regulations. How can we help ourselves if we are hamstrung by regulations? Some common sense must be introduced before too long.

The Secretary of State and Ministers will be well aware that the new Antrim hospital will open this month and that patients will be transferred there from Moyle, Larne and Waveney Ballymena hospitals. A few weeks ago, it took me almost an hour and a half to make my way from Larne to the airport. There was a sudden and heavy snowfall, but the journey took so long because there was not a single passing point on the road. Once we left the dual carriageway, it was single track all the way.

It is a matter of great concern that higher priority has not been given to the upgrading of the A8 from Larne to Belfast. Additional traffic is generated as people decide whether to use the Antrim or Belfast hospitals and we need to see improvement between Gingles corner on the Larne side and Corr's corner on the Belfast side. At the very least, there should be development between Gingles corner and Ballynure, where the road goes to Antrim. It is a matter of being properly concerned for the safety of all road users.

As was predicted, I defy an ambulance to travel from Larne to Antrim hospital in 16 minutes on the A8. At the risk of convicting myself, I seized an opportunity to travel faster than normal along that route and I thought that I made good time when it took me 26 minutes. For an ambulance to do it much faster would put at risk other road

users and the patients who are being conveyed. There will be more ambulances and increased private traffic as patients are conveyed to the new hospital or people go to visit them. It is important that, since the road serves the whole of Northern Ireland and parts of the Irish Republic, it be upgraded without further delay.

As has been said, it is bitterly resented that so much public expenditure has been directed towards Belfast and Dublin road and rail development. It is more bitterly resented that neither Northern Ireland Ministers nor United Kingdom Ministers responsible for representing Northern Ireland interests in Europe have successfully backed up the representations made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) as a Member of the European Parliament, his colleague Jim Nicholson, Alex Smith, the Member of the European Parliament for Scotland, South and myself for recognition of the fact that the Stranraer, Cairnryan, Belfast and Larne corridor is the second busiest ferry route in the United Kingdom.

Not a single map which emanates from the European Commission recognises that corridor as a Euro-route and it is about time that proper representation was made on our behalf in Europe, especially by United Kingdom Ministers. It is not too much to expect that Northern Ireland is recognised in that way on the map because it has, after all, the shortest sea crossing between the island of Ireland and Great Britain.

The second priority road to which I shall draw the attention of the House is the Belfast to Carrickfergus road. It is the second most congested road in my constituency. At peak periods in the morning and in the evening, there are traffic tailbacks of almost a mile towards Carrickfergus and Whiteabbey village. That is because there has been postponement of investment time and again and nothing of any significance has been done to that road. The problem is increasing because of the popularity of the Carrickfergus borough area and because there is so much residential development there.

Information given to members of Carrickfergus borough council suggests that the delays in undertaking that investment scheme are having a negative impact on further development in the borough. Examples can be quoted of companies that were interested in becoming established in Carrickfergus going elsewhere because of their dissatisfaction with the road network.

A scheme in the five-year programme shows that work to widen the road from the end of the dual carriageway to Silverstream should commence in 1997-98. I ask that due consideration is given to the priority of upgrading that road and, in advance of that time, that the congestion on the Carrickfergus to Belfast road be relieved. At worst, I hope that the Minister will give an assurance that that scheme is not likely to be postponed by any cut.

When will the moratorium on capital expenditure for schools be lifted? The Minister will be aware that there is tremendous pressure on capital expenditure in schools arising from the need to rationalise existing school provision. Will he try to ensure that appropriate funding is released to provide permanent accommodation where rationalisation or amalgamation of schools is to take place? It is essential that work at the receiving school should be completed before school closure and pupil transfer.

I am especially anxious that, when Rathcoole high school closes later this year, Newtonabbey community school should be capable of accommodating the additional pupils likely to enrol there, and that that new secondary school should get off to a good start and be as attractive to parents and pupils as existing post-primary schools in the area. Will the Minister assist the education and library boards by giving special support for capital projects arising from the rationalisation of school provision?

I hope that the Minister will be able to give his support and encouragement for teachers in Northern Ireland who willingly accompany school trips to the continent. Throughout my teaching career and as a member of an education and library board, I have encouraged those who organise school trips to European countries. I invite the Minister, both directly and through the appropriate authorities in the Foreign Office, to protest most strongly at the interference of rebellious French fishermen on 4 February this year.

A party of 32 pupils and four teachers left Larne in my constituency at 8 o'clock in the morning. They arrived at Dover at five past 10 in the evening and were told that all sailings had been cancelled because the authorities on the French mainland had no control whatever over the protesting French fishermen. Surely we are entitled to freedom of passage within the European Community. I hope that the Minister will register our protest so that that kind of thing does not happen again. I trust that the experience will not dissuade the same party from returning on another occasion.

The moneys voted to the Department of Agriculture provide for assistance to marketing and processing and for scientific and veterinary services. I invite the Minister to tell us whether greater use could be made of computerised records of cattle in Northern Ireland, on which we hold the details, from birth to slaughter or death, of every animal on a Northern Ireland farm. Those records have enabled the Department to control very efficiently the disease status of Northern Ireland cattle.

We should proclaim to the world the fact that we have that capability. We should make use of our computer records to demonstrate the disease-free status of our beef for export. We are probably unique within the European Community in having such information. We should not, then, be suffering disadvantage as a result of the minor and occasional outbreak of brucellosis, tuberculosis or even BSE, because we can identify every affected herd. I trust that that matter will be looked into.

A small number of beef producers threaten the livelihood of the great majority of small Northern Ireland farmers by unlawfully using growth-promoting substances. I ask that greater efforts should be made both to identify those people and to secure punitive action through the prosecution of those offenders.

6.54 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): May I comment on the last point raised by the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs)? In the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee, we heard from the Commission the amazing statement that it has no real checks on the use of hormones in beef coming into this country from the United States or third-world countries. When we pushed, the Commission told us that it had one inspector for the whole of the United States—and he has recently retired—and 12 inspectors to look after the whole of the beef-producing world which can put beef into our markets.

Punitive measures are taken against our own farmers, and rightly so—the agriculture interests and authorities,

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

decent farmers and the unions have all agreed that that should be so—but if there is access through the ports for meat from other countries that has been produced in that way, what use are all the regulations applied to farming communities in the United Kingdom and the rest of the European Union?

Mr. Beggs: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks on that issue. I hope that the Minister has taken stock and will ensure that there is fair competition for the Northern Ireland industry and more opportunities for Northern Ireland beef exporters to export throughout the world as a result of the excellent health standards of our livestock.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I fully agree with the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Northern Ireland Ministers who are present today should remember that Northern Ireland differs from most parts of the United Kingdom in that it has an agriculture-based economy. If agriculture does well, the Province does well. If agriculture does not do well, the Province will not do well. Our eyes should therefore be on agriculture.

I am not often encouraged by what Northern Ireland Ministers do, but I am greatly encouraged by the attitude of the new agriculture Minister, Baroness Denton, who informed me, at a meeting that I had with her last Monday with various agriculture interests, that she had approached the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and secured the assurance that when Northern Ireland agriculture interests are to be discussed at the Council of Europe, she will be able to be there herself to put the Northern Ireland case. That is something for which we have argued for a long time.

It is not enough for officials to attend, because officials can talk only to officials. The responsible Northern Ireland Minister needs to be present to talk to other Ministers; to be party to the trade-offs that take place at those meetings; and to put the case for Northern Ireland. I therefore welcome the initiative of Baroness Denton and the immediate action that she has taken in expressing her intention of being at the conference table when the Council of Ministers deals with matters relevant to Northern Ireland agriculture. I am sure that that will be welcomed by all Northern Ireland's representatives.

Northern Ireland's agriculture faces a very grim time. The European Commission has just proposed that milk quotas throughout the Union be reduced by 1 per cent. this year and by a further 1 per cent. next year. That is not intended to benefit the United Kingdom's milk industry; it has to do with problems in the Mediterranean countries of Spain, Italy and Greece and with the over-assignment of quota to the east German lander.

The Commission is about to hurt our industry in an attempt to rectify problems in countries that have not kept the laws of the common agriculture policy. I trust that the Minister of State who replies to the debate will be able to tell us that he has taken this matter on board and that there will be a strong effort to resist what the Commissioners have in mind. We need a solution to a problem created by other countries' breaches of European law.

There are many worries in the pig industry, which has already been mentioned, especially by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea). We are in a period of crisis. The market is very depressed. This year's prices are well down on last year's and well below the cost of production. No industry could prosper in such conditions.

Surely United Kingdom Agriculture Ministers, together with their Northern Ireland Office colleagues, should be seeking to ascertain what state subsidies are received by the pig industries of other European Union member states. At a time of pressure on the pig industries of Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom, it is entirely unfair that other European Union member states are exercising the right to subsidise part of their industries. It ought not to be beyond the ability of Her Majesty's Government to make inquiries through embassy and consulate officials. They should be able to find out exactly what is happening elsewhere—especially in France.

Mr. Beggs: The hon. Gentleman rightly draws attention to the decline in pig numbers in Northern Ireland. Does he agree that, bearing in mind the fact that, in the Irish Republic, pig farming is thriving and the pig population is growing, this is rather strange? There ought not to be much difference between pig producers in the north and those in the south.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Any industry that is encouraged through disguised subsidies has a very great advantage over one in a country that provides no support whatever. As the hon. Gentleman knows, our pig industry has never had state support.

Since the United Kingdom's accession to the European Community our intensive sector has been cut very badly. Farmers are unable to buy feed on the world market and, therefore, have to pay higher prices than previously. We have already had a cut in our intensive industry, but we are now going into a very deep trough. I hope that we shall be able to get out. The Government must accept responsibility. Have they really taken into account what is being said by farming interests across the United Kingdom, especially in Northern Ireland?

There has been mention of the good animal health record that Northern Ireland has had for many years; in fact, our record is second to none in the United Kingdom. We are proud of what our farmers have achieved.

I should like to refer to the current bovine spongiform encephalopathy problem. Last week, at a meeting of the agriculture committee of the European Parliament, an official admitted that the incidence of BSE was decreasing rapidly in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland's figures are indeed low. After the meeting, I asked an official whether the disease was called by another name in other countries of the Union and, therefore, was not subjected to the strictures that we impose.

I was told that I was absolutely right. In other parts of Europe, where the disease is given a different name, people can eat as much meat as they like. In contrast, the German Government now say that they will defy all European Union laws by shutting out meat from the United Kingdom. What are the Government doing about that? Do they intend to accept Germany's action?

The single market will lead to the removal of border controls, and our high animal health status will be put in jeopardy. An asset will be destroyed. What do the Government intend to do about it? Northern Ireland did not qualify this year for European Union beef promotion

funds. Will the Government push for such funds in the coming year? What steps are they taking to secure a level playing field?

If the competitiveness of Northern Ireland's specialist cereal growers is to be maintained, we may need some co-operation from European Union officials with a view to securing a satisfactory formula for the calculation of arable area payments under the arrangements for reform of the common agriculture policy. Northern Ireland is a specialist region in cereal production. The Government ought to be taking up these issues now if our farmers are to be helped during the grim days that I fear lie ahead.

It may be important that we have reform of the CAP, but that will have major implications for Northern Ireland agriculture. We have not yet seen the effects of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, but I have read in a farming newspaper that the United States Secretary for Agriculture has been boasting that, following the achievement of GATT, the United States will engage in agricultural produce flooding. What does the United Kingdom intend to do about that?

Is the hard-pressed farming community to become prey to a development arising from a deal made by Commissioner Ray MacSharry when he was about to retire? I am glad that I voted against that deal in Strasbourg. I do not agree with it and I believe that we will have a real reaping of a dreadful sowing. It is all very well for a Commissioner to receive a golden handshake and to say, "Goodbye, I've got the thing fixed up." But what will happen to our farming community?

The farmers of Northern Ireland need the help of Ministers at the Northern Ireland Office. I am pleased about the appointment of Baroness Denton. I am glad that she will attend Councils in Europe and I wish her every success. However, we must ensure that the Government are prepared to fight for the rights of the farmers of Northern Ireland in the same way that the Dublin Government fight for the rights of their farming community. I am afraid that we have lagged behind in that respect.

I want to mention fishing because fishermen joined us at the meeting to which I have referred. The fishing industry in Northern Ireland should be a priority for the Northern Ireland Office. According to figures that I have seen, it seems that because of the cruel quota system and because, under the fishing agreements, our waters can be fished by other European Union nations, at the end of the week one of our crewmen receives £100 net. That must spell the end of our fishing industry.

If there is no reduction in the number of boats and no proper decommissioning scheme, what will happen to Northern Ireland's fishing industry? I trust that the Minister will explain to us why other boats can continue to fish in the Irish sea while our boats must return to port and be tied up. Is the Minister absolutely satisfied that the quota system is in keeping with the fish available in the Irish sea? Why does Northern Ireland have such a very low quota?

I can understand why fishermen become very angry when they have to return to port while fishermen from the Irish Republic can continue to fish and to bring in their catches. I want to know what the Minister intends to do about that problem.

Representatives of the fishing industry met officials from the Northern Ireland Office last week. The representatives informed me that they were told that, under the structural funds, they are to receive £9 million. However, the Government official told them, "We are going to pocket £3 million of that and you will get only £6 million." Instead of there being additional funds, the Government will pocket £3 million because of what they say they have already done for the fishing industry.

Those funds are structural funds. They are supposed to be additional funds. Was the Government official right when he spoke to the Anglo-Irish Fish Producers Organisation Ltd. in Kilkeel? I assure the House that that organisation has nothing to do with the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Did that official tell the truth? Has £3 million gone? Has it been pocketed by the Exchequer or by a treasurer for the Northern Ireland Office? Will only £6 million be available? That is an important point about which the Minister should come clean when he replies to the debate.

I want now to consider the very difficult subject of rural planning. The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) and I were present for the publication of a booklet on rural planning. The strange thing about that booklet was that it contained nothing about the farming community. It seemed to be an amazing booklet to produce. Do farmers live in the country or do they not live in the country?

Farmers have two grievances that Ministers must consider. The first involves the almost complete inability of a member of a farming family, who no longer works on the farm because it can no longer support that person, to build on the farmland that that person's father or grandfather owns. That is a great difficulty.

I have visited many farms on which parents have said that they want their daughters to be close to them. They claim that the farm is their heritage and, after all, they are told to try to use their farm holdings to the best effect. The problem is great. Will the hard line adopted by planning officers, when they say no to farmers, be relaxed?

Many houses in Northern Ireland are tied up in agricultural agreements. Planning for those houses was granted on the understanding that they would be used and occupied by a helper on the farm. However, the farming community can no longer support those people. A parent who obtained a farmhouse when he or she retired may have died. There is no place for a farm worker, because that person is not required. Many people working on farms are now part-time farmers. However, the house to which I have referred is still held in the cruel net of that agricultural entanglement. It cannot be sold other than to provide accommodation for a farm worker in the area.

As a result of that problem, many houses are lying vacant in the country. No one can occupy them. We cannot break that jam unless we have regulations or legislation. That is the only way out of the problem. The problem has arisen because of a change in the nature of farming. I hope that the Minister will consider that point and have his officials examine the matter because the problem is recurring in the farming community.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The hon. Gentleman is making a very valuable point about property subject to agricultural occupancy conditions. I suggest that we do not require legislation. We simply require a change in departmental policy so that instead of having a condition relating to a person whose income is wholly or mainly derived from agriculture, the condition may relate to a person who is substantially or significantly engaged in agriculture. There could be a change of policy and, where necessary, there may simply be an application to vary the

[Mr. David Trimble]

existing conditions. There is no need, therefore, for legislation. The problem could be resolved by the Department, if it so wished

Rev. Ian Paisley: That makes it easier. The Department should take action; it should not allow houses to be vacated and not allow anyone to live in them. If someone who is not working in agriculture is allowed to live in such a house, the law is broken and violated. The Department can start to take action through the courts, which would be a serious matter. If the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), who is a lawyer, is correct in stating that the Department could resolve the problem, let us bury the regulations and find a way to release houses in the countryside.

Mr. John D. Taylor: The hon. Member raises a further problem. People cannot even afford to buy dwellings on which planning permission is granted on condition that the owner is employed on the farm land. No one can obtain a mortgage to assist him to buy such a house because of that condition.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The right hon. Gentleman may not believe it, but my next sentence was along those lines. The value of the home is restricted; hence the banks and building societies restrict the mortgage. The regulation perpetuates rural poverty because people cannot buy those houses. I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has found something on which he and I agree, because recently he said that he agreed with the President of the Irish Republic more than with me. I am glad that there is common ground between us on agricultural housing.

I call on the Government immediately to consider dealing with the restriction. If it can be dealt with in the way in which the hon. Member for Upper Bann described, so be it. Let us get on with it.

Why does not the Minister with responsibility for planning institute planning and advisory bureaux throughout his Department so that people can receive proper advice and readily ascertain the Department's attitude to building and house construction in certain regions? It would be far better if the Department set up proper advice bureaux.

Rev. William McCrea: Does not my hon. Friend agree that it would be more sensible if civil servants or those working in the Departments listened to elected representatives on district councils? They should have the final say on planning permission—officials should not dictate where one can or cannot build.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Elected representatives should have the final say. Instead of planning officers telling elected representatives what we should do—we should tell planning officers what to do—I agree whole-heartedly. But as we all know, that does not happen. We are tied by planning regulations. Planning officials in some regions grant planning permission, but, in the same circumstances, a planning official in another region will refuse it.

A constituent told me, his public representative, that he could take me to a site that ran parallel to another one in a different constituency. He said, "If you live in one constituency, you can get planning permission; if you don't live there, you will not."

As I have said before in the House, planning officers should be civil servants. I detest the attitude adopted. As a planning officer and I walked up a lane in my constituency to visit a site, he told me that the applicant would not receive planning permission for it. I wrote down the time so that I could then say that before the officer saw the site he had told me that planning permission would not be granted. The applicant happened to be a Roman Catholic. It was not the bigoted hon. Member for Antrim, North who had kept that man from receiving planning permission, but a planning officer employed by the Minister's Department who made the decision before he saw the site.

After a stiff and hard battle, we secured planning permission. But the applicant was first told to clear out the dunghill on his farm and build his house there. That is the sort of behaviour displayed by some planning officers. It is time that the Minister talked to employees in planning departments and told them that they should be civil to people. We need proper planning advisory bureaux where people can be met courteously and talk to planning officials about what they want.

Last week, I was informed of an officious planning restriction which, if passed, would rob Northern Ireland of £10 million-worth of business investment and the possibility of up to 300 jobs. Two years ago, a business consortium told me of an extensive plan to build a state of the art equestrian centre with conference and hotel facilities. That major project received backing from an enthusiastic American hotelier.

While the Prime Minister was in America, he asked America to invest in Northern Ireland. The American hotelier had said he wanted to invest, but what happened? The answer was no. Antrim borough council supported the planning application 100 per cent. If we elected representatives had had our say, we would have had £10 million worth of investment and 300 jobs. But officious planners said no. I have written to the Secretary of State on that matter. I hope that the Minister will reverse that tragic decision.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that I have discovered from the planners that equestrian activity is deemed to have no relationship to agricultural matters. One of my constituents wanted to adapt his farm to incorporate an equestrian site, but his plan was turned down because the use of horses for that purpose is not considered an agricultural activity—how ridiculous. I am not surprised by the hon. Gentleman's story.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I could understand the Government discriminating against asses, but not against horses. They had better put on their running shoes. The people of Northern Ireland put up with a lot of stick, but they are frustrated by planning issues. Hon. Members and Members of the European Parliament are told to try to win investment, but when an American organisation wanted to invest £10 million in Northern Ireland, it was not given planning permission.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Earlier today, I spoke to the business man to whom my hon. Friend referred. When the planners brought the application to Antrim council, they did not make any recommendations, but wanted the council's view. Yet when the council gave its unanimous view, the Department rejected it. Does my hon. Friend also

agree that, as part of that scheme, it is intended that a provision will be made for bloodstock, so the site would have an agricultural use as well?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Yes, I know that that is a big problem. I know about the matters that my hon. Friend has put before the House. To my knowledge, he has been given the same information as I have. I do not know why the Government are not prepared to do something to keep that investment in Northern Ireland.

May I give another illustration about planning? In the north of my constituency is a thriving market town called Ballymoney, with an exceedingly narrow main street, so the planners decided to make it partly pedestrian. They proposed to do that by narrowing the street even more, yet still allowing traffic to go down it. I was there a couple of days ago and met my constituents and the traders, who pointed out to me the absolute folly of the planners.

One would think that the planners would have done their homework before deciding to narrow a street. But they arrived with concrete blocks, which they laid out on the street to the measurements that had already been agreed in the planning office. They then hired an Ulster bus, which they tried to get to manoeuvre down the street. The Ulster bus knocked down the concrete bricks, so the planners pulled them back a little and made the Ulster bus try again and again until at last it could get through. But a low-loader came down the street and knocked all the bricks to pieces.

Before the planners had that madcap scheme, they said that they would build a new road at the back of the business properties so that the businesses be serviced at the back instead of at the front. That scheme has been scrapped because of lack of finance, but the planners are continuing with narrowing the main street.

The Minister has a full report on that problem, because one of his top officials met us at my request. I hope that he will tell us today that the scheme will not proceed and that the street will be kept as wide as possible. If the Minister can get us that new road to service those businesses, I press him to do so. The businesses would be excited at that prospect, but it is certainly not happening at the moment.

We have many problems to consider, but some developments are good for the community. I welcome the fact that, just this week, the Academy of Strasbourg has entered into an agreement with the North Eastern education and library board arranging inter-community projects.

But all is not rosy on the educational front. Northern Ireland educationists seem to want to do away with rural schools. Rural schools are part of the cement that holds the community together. They are a meeting place for parents taking their children to and from school and for the community taking part in social activities at night. The curriculum is now crammed to unmanageable levels, making both teachers and pupils alike suffer. Teachers have told me that it is impossible to do all the paperwork and still find time to instruct the pupils.

I am trying, without much success, to keep open Moyarget primary school in my area. Many other schools are also being closed. I hope that if the school increases its number of pupils again, we shall be able to hold on to it. The numbers went down because the previous principal could not attend to her duties. The school was sometimes closed for one or two days a week and once it was closed for four days.

The parents asked me to tell the education authorities about it. I did so, and they told me that they were having the difficulty of disciplining that principal. The problem continued for more than a year. Naturally, the parents took their children from the school and left it in the doldrums. The school now has a very good principal and has been helped out of some of its difficulties, but, because of the education authority's policy, the board has said that, as the pupilship has gone down, the school is no longer viable and must be closed.

The Government must look into the whole issue of closing rural schools. In the near future, rural society will be regenerated throughout the European Union. If we destroy our rural communities, we shall not benefit from the funds that will become available. So the Minister has some hard thinking to do on education.

On economic development, a business man came to me the other day to tell me that he had set up a business that was an economic success. The Local Enterprise Development Unit had given him a grant of £60,000 over an 18-month period. For security reasons, I do not wish to mention the town in which he has set up the business, but it is outside Belfast. All his employees are ex-service men who served in the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Ulster Defence Regiment or the Territorial Army.

Two weeks ago, LEDU officials told him that he could not have the grant unless he relocated in west Belfast. That was their ultimatum. We have heard in the House today accusations about consideration given to republican areas. Here is a case in point.

That business man is doing well in a predominantly loyalist area. The men who work for him could not do so in west Belfast without taking their lives in their hands. I have been in touch with the Department and I trust that I shall be in touch with it after today. Will the Minister look into those sensitive matters? Let us not destroy the good work which business men are doing.

I had an interesting happening today. When I first came to the House, a right hon. Member with an English constituency said that, in a Northern Ireland debate on an appropriation order, one could tour the land from Dan to Beersheba. That is a scriptural expression, with which undoubtedly those who know the Bible are acquainted. Enoch Powell said that—I have never forgotten it. I referred to that earlier when my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) was speaking. I got a note from Hansard asking whether it was the city of "Dun" and the city of "Masheba". I simply wrote back on the note: "Read your Bible!"

Mr. John D. Taylor: Which county are they in?

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), who led for the Opposition, might wish them in another territory altogether. What I am saying is that we have been moving from Dan to Beersheba today. It is our responsibility, as elected representatives in the House, to use this opportunity to deal with these issues.

I could continue for another two hours on the problems in my constituency—I have only scratched the surface. I welcome the fact that we will be able to question Ministers in a different forum about giving an account of their stewardship. I can assure them that those questions will be put to them in the spirit of the defence of hard-working people in Northern Ireland who deserve the very best service from Government officials and from Ministers.

7.40 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Judging from the earlier speeches, we could be forgiven for wondering whether we are having a political or a financial debate. I shall not be led down the path of answering the political remarks that were made, because it would not be fruitful to this debate and I would gain your disapproval, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, I shall address the problem of the financial situation in Northern Ireland in the most general terms.

My major concern and that of my party—and probably all the parties in Northern Ireland—is to enhance the general quality of life in Northern Ireland. Basically, that means to ensure that public moneys are spent in the best possible way to give a good standard of living—and any good standard of living begins with a good job and a good house.

Coming from a constituency with an unofficial unemployment rate of some 22 per cent., I know what unemployment does to the community, the family and the individual. I say "unofficial" because unemployment statistics are not available for the constituencies of Northern Ireland as they are for England, Scotland and Wales. The area that I represent in the northern section is dealt with under the euphemism of "greater Belfast". I do not know where the statistics for the southern part of the constituency are dealt with.

My calculations show that there has been between 21.5 per cent. and 22 per cent. endemic and continuing unemployment not only in years of recession but in years of plenty. I do not think that unemployment could be any worse without a total disintegration of the rural community that I represent.

It is appropriate that part of the first vote deals with agriculture and fisheries. As some hon. Members have said, agriculture and fisheries are the bedrock of our communities in Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, the industrial base is centred on certain conurbations. The rural communities, by and large, have been devoid of inward investment and therefore still depend entirely on agricultural income and fishing income.

Two of the three major fishing villages are in my constituency, the other being in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor). Many references have been made to the lower income of farming communities over the past couple of years and the increase in basic overheads that they must contemplate not only this year but in the years to come. In real terms, the net income has reduced substantially over the past few years.

Reference has been made to hill livestock compensatory allowances and milk quotas. I shall not repeat them, although I endorse them completely. I draw the attention of the Minister to the aspects of agricultural policy which relate to maintaining an efficient and updated structure for the farms of Northern Ireland. The farming community greatly regretted the withdrawal last year of the agricultural development scheme, the ADOP. Since that scheme was withdrawn, there has been little or no reconstruction of farm buildings and the provision of service houses has been restricted.

I tabled a parliamentary question on the matter, which was answered on 22 February. In reply, the Minister told me that negotiations were continuing with the European Commission under the auspices of the Northern Ireland structural funds. Hopefully, the outcome will be a new scheme called the community support framework. I hope that that scheme is implemented urgently and backdated, if possible, to the point at which the agricultural development scheme stopped.

The second structural fund grant—the farm conservation grant—related to farm conservation. Those grants still exist, but in June 1993 they were reduced from 50 per cent. to 25 per cent. as a result of a budget decision rather than an EC decision. It is ironic that many farmers who applied before the changeover date in June 1993 were penalised on two grounds: the new budgetary resolution, and—this is unforgivable—the high level of bureaucracy within the Department of Agriculture, which was unable to process the applications that were made in time and before the change in policy.

I have received innumerable representations from farmers who submitted applications before the closing date. They did not receive any acknowledgment, and when their claims were processed, they were granted only the 25 per cent. rate. That is a despicable and mean way to service the agricultural community, who did what was legally required.

I said that the second part of the first vote relates to fishing. All hon. Members who have participated in the various debates on fishing know the traumatic time that the industry is going through at present. Not only have the quotas and total allowable catches been restricted year by year; we also have the so-called Fish Conservation Act 1993 which restricts the days of fishing at sea. As the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) said, fishermen in the Northern Ireland ports will be able to go to sea for only 100 days per year if the Act is fully implemented.

Fishermen cannot and will not survive, for the simple reason that the economics of working only 100 days out of 365 is not viable. The upkeep of boats must still be maintained, and insurance must still be maintained. If a crewman is able to work only 100 days per year, obviously he will drift away from the industry, and the lifelong expertise of such people will be lost for ever. Therefore, the Act must never be implemented. It was introduced to the House under the guise of a conservation measure, but it is not a conservation measure because it does not apply to the other nationalities which fish in the Irish sea.

As has already been said, it is galling for the fishermen of Kilkeel to see, just a few miles away, boats from the Republic of Ireland going out to sea to fish for as long as they like. The fishing industry of the republic has a quota that it cannot catch. It has a surplus quota. In 1991, I was able to arrange for that element of the surplus quota to be transferred to the fishing industry of Northern Ireland. I should be pleased if the Minister responsible, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, Baroness Denton, would repeat that arrangement, so that the surplus quota not caught by the republic could be transferred to Northern Ireland's fishermen through a swap or a deal between the two Governments.

On a more mundane, but relevant, issue for Ardglass and Kilkeel, those ports are still awaiting the provision of small capital sums that would enable them to sustain their present fishing industries. Kilkeel needs such capital to build an ice-making plant, and I should like to think that the Department of Agriculture could assist the local fishing industry by providing immediate funding for that project. In Ardglass, an early start should be made to provide new market buildings which will contain chill rooms. They are

urgently needed to meet the new health and hygiene regulations, which require that the existing facilities should be replaced. If the fishing industry is to sustain its current level of activity, despite all the factors that operate against it, those modest capital projects should be implemented as soon as possible.

I am sure that the right hon. Member for Strangford shares my concern about the future of the lough fishermen who use Strangford lough. They are deeply concerned about the intention of the Department of the Environment to declare all Strangford lough a marine nature reserve. They maintain that their means of livelihood, which has been practised by generations of fishermen, would be greatly restricted. It would be appropriate for the Minister with the environment portfolio to hold a meeting with those fishermen—they are not unreasonable people—to try to work out a modus vivendi to accommodate all uses of the lough.

I thank the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) for the great tribute that he paid to my hon. Friends the Members for Foyle (Mr. Hume), for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) and for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) on the magnificent way in which they represent their constituents and on bringing inward investment, capital and enterprise to their constituencies. I noted that he did not mention me, because he obviously recognises that I am the exception that proves the rule. I cannot boast that I have been successful in attracting new inward investment to South Down, no matter what pressure I have exerted. As a result, my constituency, in common with many other rural constituencies in Northern Ireland, has a high level of unemployment.

On one occasion I remember when the Industrial Development Board, through the Northern Ireland Office, replied to a letter from me and said that my constituency was too far from the main port of Belfast. The northern part of the constituency of South Down is 10 miles exactly from the centre of Belfast and its harbour. Month by month, announcements are made about inward investment to parts of Northern Ireland that are quite remote from port facilities, and good luck to them, but my constituency is not only close to Belfast harbour, but the southern part is serviced by the harbour of Warrenpoint. That port is equally accessible and could handle the export and import trade that inward investment would entail.

The Under-Secretary of State who is to reply to the debate wrote to me to say:

"However, every effort is being made to encourage inward investors to establish their new businesses in the areas of high unemployment, including South Down."

That is a laudable statement, but is it borne out by the facts? For the three years ending 31 March 1990, 1991 and 1992, the number of visits from potential inward investors to Northern Ireland was 175, 231 and 240 respectively—a grand total of 646. Of that total, only 15 investors were asked to visit any part of the greater South Down area in those three years. I am bold enough to describe it as such because the figures given to me related to the district councils. Fifteen visits in total were made to Banbridge, Down and Newry and Mourne district councils. That does not represent a real commitment to the area.

Between April 1992 and 31 March 1993, no visits were made to Banbridge district; five visits were made to Down district council, with one repeat visit and four visits were made to Newry and Mourne district council, of which two were repeats. In 1992-93, the period for which the latest figures are available, a total of 333 first and repeated visits were made, of which nine were made to those three district councils. Surely any reasonable person would say that that does not represent reasonable endeavour in trying to attract industry to an area which has as high unemployment as any other area in Northern Ireland and which is convenient to the two harbours of Belfast and Warrenpoint.

The figures speak for themselves. I am dissatisfied at the way in which resources and endeavour have been allocated in this context. I am almost afraid to say that I have something in common with the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster, because I too complain about the way in which the cake, as he called it, has been distributed.

I must ask the Minister for clarification about a new proposal from the EC, which is causing great concern to the management of Warrenpoint harbour and docks. I have been unable to get a great deal of information about it. It is proposed to set up a new maritime zone between Wales and the Republic of Ireland for the purposes of committing grant aid in the Interreg programme for 1994 to 1999.

I understand that the introduction of such legislation would lead to the establishment of an irrational division of the Irish sea, which could seriously disadvantage the ports of Northern Ireland and inhibit their development, particularly that of Warrenpoint, which would be just north of that new Irish sea box. It is not a fishing box, but an Interreg programme box between Wales and the Republic of Ireland, running from Wexford north to Dundalk. We must consider carefully how that would effect the ports of Northern Ireland and the traffic to and from them.

Vote 2 deals in part with tourism. I hope that the Minister will encourage the International Fund for Ireland and give fair wind to the proposal to establish a Patrician centre in Down in the immediate future. That proposal is before the board of IFI and it would be an exciting venture in attracting tourists to South Down and Mourne.

The northern part of Mourne is, generally speaking, patrician country, with many churches, ruins and historic monuments relating to that period. The Patrician centre would at long last give a focus to the whole concept of the area. We have, rightly, the concepts of the north Antrim coast and the lakes of Fermanagh, among others.

The real concept of the Patrician country around Lecale and Mourne has never been fully developed. Its potential could reach not only throughout Europe, in which many villages and towns were developed by Patrician missionaries but also the north American continent. That centre will be absolutely crucial if and when we enjoy a peace dividend, when tourists will be able to visit our country without fear or inhibition.

Mr. John D. Taylor: I readily understand the hon. Gentleman's interest in a Patrician centre in Downpatrick and his loyalty to that area, because he is its elected representative in this national Parliament. However, the hon. Gentleman must acknowledge that several areas claim an attachment to St. Patrick. One of the great delights of life in Ireland is that St. Patrick was British. When he came to Northern Ireland as a Briton and landed at Bangor 1,500 years ago, he founded his church not in Downpatrick but in the ancient city of Armagh, which has the premier claim on anything to do with St. Patrick.

Mr. McGrady: I do not know whether to thank the right hon. Gentleman for his intervention, because it was riddled with historical inaccuracies beyond belief. St.

[Mr. McGrady]

Patrick landed in 432 at a place called Saul Brae, which is Gaelic for a barn. The local chief, Dichu, gave the barn to St. Patrick as his first church—and Saul Brae happens to be the townland in which I live. St. Patrick not only lived and worked there but legend has it, because there is no written history of the time, that he returned to Downpatrick and is buried on the hill of Down from which Downpatrick gets its name—Dun Padraig means the hill, or the fort, of Patrick. The remains of not only St. Patrick but Bridget, Colmcille and Malachy also rest there. In Downpatrick, you get four saints for the price of one.

On a more serious note, I urge the Minister to give fair weather and full support to that interesting concept of a Patrician centre, which will complement Downpatrick cathedral, St. Patrick's grave and the Down museum, all of which are within walking distance of the proposed site.

Vote 4 concerns the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity. I was disappointed that more attention was not given to the cost of energy in Northern Ireland in the fattening process prior to privatisation and after. To me as a lay person, Northern Ireland energy costs seem likely to increase significantly, which will be greatly detrimental to the area's economy in terms of production costs and, equally important, expense to the ordinary householder, who is paying more and more for the energy he uses.

In a written question, I asked the Minister what concerns the Government had, and was informed that it was a matter between two private companies. There is no competition for energy supply in Northern Ireland. There may be competition on paper for electricity generation, but not for its distribution. I can obtain electricity from only one supplier, and that company can charge me whatever it likes, despite the regulator's so-called powers. It was farcical for the Government to pretend that there would be competition. We shall pay the penalty in energy prices to industry and householders.

Mr. Beggs: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the high cost of electricity to industrial users poses a real threat as Northern Ireland tries to attract more inward investment? Is it not essential that the Government find a means of controlling the cost of electricity to domestic consumers and of reducing overall costs to industrial users?

Mr. McGrady: I fully agree. As the hon. Gentleman was a particularly interested member of the Standing Committee that dealt with the privatisation Bill, he will recall that one of the Minister's key arguments was that privatisation would reduce energy costs, particularly to industry. That was the thrust of the Government's argument. It was said that the big buyers would be able to negotiate a bargain basement price, but that has not happened. We never believed it would, but we lived in hope. We have totally abandoned that hope.

Mr. Barnes: My hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) mentioned the enormous problems that the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel would cause in Northern Ireland. The basic level of energy costs in the Province adds to that, because the VAT element will be even bigger in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McGrady: I thank the hon. Gentleman for emphasising the point made by the hon. Member for Wigan that Northern Ireland has always suffered much higher fuel costs than the rest of the UK. There is the added factor of the fattening of the calf for privatisation and subsequent increases. Another 17.5 per cent. will eventually be added by VAT, to fuel costs that are already inflated in the six counties.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Meekathara is seeking to develop lignite generating stations, which would provide for competitive prices, but that because of commitments made to the purchasers of the generating stations, there is no chance of that competition before 1997?

Mr. McGrady: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. There is also the question of competition from the Scottish interconnector project, which will cost £175 million.

There is an absence of competition not only in generation but in distribution. The company that buys electricity as a wholesaler can retail it at whatever price the company likes. Consumers have no redress except the nebulous regulator. From current statistics on energy costs, the regulator does not seem to be doing a very good job.

There is not much point in hon. Members coming to the debate and arguing, as I am now, for inward investment if the infrastructure is not there. We are told that there will be enormous cuts in the funding available for roads. The problem with many rural areas is that, in these times of plenty, they were not developed any way, so in times of scarcity there is little hope of getting a reasonable share of the cake.

I hope that the Minister will take on board a suggestion that was made to his predecessor—that the budget for roads should be split in some balanced way to enable those areas that have not had reasonable road development to have such development now whether or not they have the traffic capacity by which they are now judged on priority, because if we continue to allocate in the order of strict traffic priority, the roads that were not developed in the years of plenty will fall further into disrepair and any chance of providing a reasonable infrastructure to them will have gone forever.

It was interesting to note that Professor Austin Smyth, who heads the transport research group at the University of Ulster, said that Northern Ireland already suffered because it was a small peripheral state on the edge of Europe, and warned that the north would seriously lag behind even the Republic of Ireland on transport spending. He went on to say that the Irish Government will spend about 15 times more than the Northern Ireland Office on infrastructure during the next seven years. Apparently, the Republic of Ireland has agreed to spend £1,950 million on roads, rail and port facilities, but the Northern Ireland Office said that it will spend less than the £125 million that it spent during the last round.

An interesting book was issued by the Department in November last, called "Transportation Programme for Northern Ireland 1994 to 1999". On page 15, paragraph 124 states:

"Northern Ireland's agricultural producers stress the importance of the region's green image in marketing their products in GB and mainland Europe. Investment in facilities which sustain the disease-free development of Northern Ireland's agricultural industry, together with the swift transportation of fresh produce, is crucial given the importance of the agricultural sector to the

region's economy as a whole."

If the Department is saying that and believes it, then it has not put its money where its mouth is. The programme contained in the transport programme for Northern Ireland does not give effect to that particular sentiment.

That is to be seen in the context of the overall spending of some £189 million on transport generally—ports, airports, railways, Ulster Bus, DUB, Northern Ireland Transport Holdings. Of that, some £14 million has been spent on roads, and of that, £8.5 million is coming by way of grant. The Department appears to be spending some £5 million net on a four-year programme. It is not a very ambitious programme. We must take out of that the priority programmes. Once that has been done, the rural communities and road services will suffer more and more.

The irony of that is that those communities are totally dependent on the provision of roads, as there are no railways in South Down, the bus service is inadequate and the roads have been neglected. Not one penny of capital expenditure has been spent on a major programme in the entire constituency for the past 14 years. That is the type of misallocation of resources about which I complain from time to time.

I shall now deal briefly with planning. Several hon. Members have quite correctly and eloquently touched on the question of rural planning and all the problems pertaining to it. A new influence is coming aboard in rural planning where the planners dictate the type of brick, the colour of the roof, and all that nonsense which we had hoped they had forgotten about 10 years ago. It seems to be coming back into vogue again. It is an enormous irritation to people who have gone through the whole planning process only to be beaten at the end of the day by the colour of their roof or walls. I am not talking about houses that are painted pink or yellow, but ordinary red-brick or white-finished houses, which are appropriate to the countryside that is Northern Ireland.

One of the most frustrating aspects of planning is the double permissions that are required. In theory, planning is a one-stop shop; in practice, it is a two-stop shop. One goes to the planning office and, with luck, it will give planning permission, subject to approval by the roads people. The roads people stay right in the background, never surfacing in public. They never go to individual cases to the district council, or to anybody else, yet it seems to have the authority to say whether a planning application goes through.

I make a plea to the Minister to pass on to his ministerial colleague the need to harmonise the permissions that I suggest are required from the planning officer and the roads officer. It should be a one-stop shop for that, instead of people getting the go-between and run-around between those two departments. One would think that they were separate departments of government, but they are in the same building—perhaps different corridors, but actually they are usually in the same building.

One has to go through a whole rigmarole to get a planning application past the roads people. Will the Minister take on board the comments already made about agricultural dwellings and other qualifications attached to housing, where the rundown of the agriculture work force makes those redundant? I do not know whether it would be legal or whether it requires legislation, but I suggest that, as in the first instance when the Department of Agriculture was asked by the planning office if there was an agricultural need, in which case it gave permission, surely that process can be reversed.

The Department of Agriculture could be asked whether the house is any longer required for agricultural need. If it is not, surely the qualification can be immediately withdrawn regarding farm worker dwelling or whatever it may be. I agree that a number of houses that are built in the countryside are not capable of being sold with the restriction attached to them.

Like many other hon. Members, I deeply regret the apparent moratorium or freeze in the Department of Education on further development, particularly on schemes which were well up the pipeline and which the schools and the boards of governors had planned to bring to fruition. Those now seem to have been stalled. I will not run to the parochialism of naming any particular one, but they are all on the Minister's desk. There is, however, one particular aspect of education regarding my constituency that I would like to address, because it has an impact on industrial development as well.

That is the amalgamation which took place between the further education colleges of Newcastle and Downpatrick after considerable pressure for both colleges to amalgamate. The Minister then responsible originally indicated that he would not grant recognition to the merged college as a provider for the new higher level work for 1994-95 and beyond, but the governing bodies of both colleges have now submitted additional information which they believe would and should lead to the college being granted what is called category 2 status, and thereby being permitted to progress its development plans for higher education.

Those joint colleges are in a relatively rural area and it is very difficult—indeed, impossible—for pupils to travel regularly to the other proposed centres, which would probably be Belfast or Newry. In some instances, security risks are posed to pupils travelling to some of the colleges involved. I ask the Minister to grant category 2 status to those amalgamated colleges.

With regard to the vote of the Department of Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) referred to the Belvoir hospital on the outskirts of Belfast, which has a fine tradition of treating patients with cancer, including leukaemia. I endorse that wholeheartedly: as a personal beneficiary of the hospital, I cannot but give the highest possible praise to its environment—I think that that is the best word to use.

Its care, understanding and general feel could not be replicated in the event of transfer to a general hospital; it is a specialist hospital which deals with a very difficult disease—a disease so heart-rending for those who suffer from it that it requires the special environment to which I have referred. I urge the Minister to reject any attempt at amalgamation out of hand as amalgamation with any of Belfast's large acute hospitals would result in a complete loss of the Belvoir hospital's special ethos.

I also make a plea for increased funds for community care. Currently, a great debate on the subject is taking place in Northern Ireland. No one is opposed to the concept of caring for a person in the community for as long as is humanly and physically possible, but there is no point in saying that we should care for people in the community if the care is not there. It is not a question of whether someone should be in a statutory or private nursing home, or in the community; what is most important is what is best

[Mr. McGrady]

for the patient. The elderly and infirm must have that choice, but choice can exist only if funds are available to provide back-up services in the community. Those funds are not there now.

An Order in Council inexplicably imposed 12 trusts for social services provision in Northern Ireland. We do not know why; that does not apply to England, Scotland or Wales. We have a fully integrated health and social services system, but the aim seems to be to tinker with something that is already working well. I do not know how the trusts will work—I hope that there will not be 12 different standards of provision—but, whatever happens, there is not enough money in the "care in the community" project to justify the massive change that the Government appear to be making in keeping elderly people out of residential care. The whole basis of assessment of the elderly is fraught with dangers for such people, who can well do without further trauma and stress.

Your tolerance and guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have enabled me to raise a number of subjects. Let me say to the Minister that what we are all trying to do tonight is raise the standard of living in Northern Ireland. Every day, a horrible mantle of violence falls on all of us. We all pray that it will end sooner rather than later, but in the meantime we must continue to live in the practical, factual world —and try to make living standards just that wee bit better than we left them yesterday.

I am not just trying to claw back money, or to get a bigger share of the cake. I want to secure a small rise in the tide, which will lift all the boats in every part of Northern Ireland. I hope that the Minister will take some of my suggestions on board.

8.24 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): The debate has been interesting and wide-ranging. I wish to raise a number of points in the remaining three hours or so, but I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I shall not compete with earlier speakers. I do not intend to take up all that time, beating records that have already been set.

Last week, we discussed matters relating to Scotland and Wales on the Floor of the House. Now it is Northern Ireland's turn. Let me say in passing that, when Scottish matters were raised, many hon. Members waved coloured job application forms issued in the Monklands constituency—I believe that they were red and green. Apparently, it was a reference to sectarianism in the area. Filling up a form of a certain colour lets the town council know that the applicant belongs to a certain religion, and he therefore has a better chance of obtaining a job.

A few days later, in the Welsh debate, such was the temperature that I later found I was the only Opposition Member present. A Conservative Member had made some very hard statements, which eventually resulted in all Labour, Liberal Democrat and Welsh Nationalist Members walking out of the House.

Given that performance in debates relating to Scotland and Wales, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think you will agree that this evening's debate has featured a great sense of responsibility and decorum, which reflects well on Northern Ireland and its representatives from all parties in this, our national Parliament.

This may well be the last debate in which we can range widely around all the subjects affecting Northern Ireland. We can discuss everything in this debate, from the filling of potholes to the most important issues. I hope that the Minister will not simply palm us off by saying, "I will write to the hon. Member." I hope that we will be given proper answers. That, after all, is the purpose of the debate: the civil servants give the answers, and the Minister gives them to us on the Floor of the House.

If we are not given those answers tonight, however, the good news is that—if we get our Select Committee on Northern Ireland—Ministers and civil servants will become answerable to Members of Parliament from the Province.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Ancram): I do not want to disappoint the right hon. Gentleman, but this is only one of two debates on appropriation orders this year. We shall have the chance of another gallop around the same course some time in the summer.

Mr. Taylor: I hope that, in return, the Minister will take my point: he will be given a greater chance to answer in detail when we have our Select Committee.

Several hon. Members have mentioned agriculture. I am surprised that the one aspect of agriculture that has not been mentioned so far is Northern Ireland's milk industry, which is the biggest sector of our agriculture industry. I hope that the Minister will answer some questions about the future of the industry. As he will know, a complete reorganisation of the milk marketing schemes is taking place throughout the United Kingdom, involving the milk marketing boards of Scotland, England and Wales and Northern Ireland.

We have heard recently that the proposed reforms in England and Wales have been postponed—put on hold. We want to hear the Northern Ireland milk marketing board's latest proposals to reform milk marketing. It submitted its proposals to the Department, which gave 18 February as the closing date, for people to comment on the board's proposals.

We have passed that date, but still have not heard when the Department intends to issue its response. The responses of interested people were to be made available for public inspection once the consultation period had ended. Are their responses now available for inspection, and when do the Government intend to respond to the proposals of the Northern Ireland milk marketing board? Its proposals for a new co-operative to market milk were due to take effect as from 1 April 1994, but it is obvious that that will not be achieved, so will the Minister please update us on the progress that has been made?

A few weeks ago, I was at a large dairy producers' rally in Banbridge which was attended by about 500 dairy farmers. It was a successful meeting, which was organised by the milk marketing board. There is tremendous concern throughout the milk industry about its future. I was impressed by the number of young farmers who were present, asking good and intelligent questions, thereby expressing their concern about the future of the greatest sector of the milk industry.

My next point is about pensions for small farmers. A new early retirement scheme for farmers has been announced by the European Community. It is meant to apply mainly to smaller farmers. The issue was raised

about eight weeks ago by my colleague and the Member of the European Parliament for Northern Ireland, Mr. Jim Nicholson. He has discovered that there are 6,620 farmers in Northern Ireland between the ages of 55 and 65 and that they own a total area of 174,800 hectares. Of those 6,620, about 5,960, who own 120,000 hectares, could benefit financially from this scheme.

The scheme is important to small farmers because it means that a farmer over 55 could have an annual pension of about £3,730, plus £233 per hectare, up to a maximum of £9,300 a year. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has said that it will take little interest in the new scheme because most farms in Britain are quite big and would not qualify for it, but the situation is entirely different in Northern Ireland, which has thousands of small family farms. It is an ideal region for the new early retirement scheme for farmers, which would enable the sons of our farmers to take over farms and get involved in agriculture. At the moment, they cannot do so because their fathers must hold on until they are unfit to continue.

Will the proposal be considered seriously by the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture? Let us use Northern Ireland as a trial to see how successful the scheme would be and what its take-up would be by smaller farmers. I believe that there would be a good response from small farmers from all sections of the community in Northern Ireland.

My final point on agriculture, about which the Minister can write to me because it is somewhat detailed, is on sheep annual premium scheme quotas. The Department issued notes and guidance to sheep producers on how the quotas should be applied. Paragraph 38 of its document contains a phrase that seems to be causing much confusion. It says:

"You may transfer or lease all your quota rights."

Many sheep producers have transferred all their quota rights to several producers, but unfortunately the Department is now saying that they misinterpreted the document and that it should have said:

"You may transfer or lease all your quota rights to one person."

It did not say "to one person", and that is the problem. Many people are caught in a trap created by this misunderstanding. I therefore ask the Minister to pursue that matter further, because I know that the situation facing many sheep producers would be eased if that misunderstanding were removed.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) referred to fishing—and rightly so, because he and I represent the two fishing areas of Northern Ireland. Portavogie is in my constituency. The situation in the fishing industry is more serious now than I have known it in my 15 years as its representative in the European Parliament and now here in our national Parliament. On Saturday evening, a young fisherman from Portavogie, who is married with one child, rang to say, "We are sitting here in the house freezing; we cannot even afford to buy a bag of coal." He was telling me the truth; I know the chap inside out. The skipper of his boat rang me this morning with much the same story. He, likewise, was in despair.

A serious situation is developing in the fishing industry. Of some 90 boats in Portavogie, 18 took part in the decommissioning scheme, but the position still remains dire. Weather conditions have been poor for fishing so far this year and fish prices have collapsed, which is causing unemployment in the Portavogie area. I join in welcoming Lady Denton as our new Minister with responsibility for agriculture in Northern Ireland. I have had a meeting with her about various other aspects of her responsibilities, and I look forward to the day when she comes to Portavogie to see the problems for herself.

In that rural village on the east coast of County Down, which has no other sources of employment, nearly 1,000 people are involved in a fishing industry that is now in decline. Some 300 work in the processing plants and 700 in the fishing fleet.

I ask the Northern Ireland Office to impress on our national fishing authorities and Ministers responsible for fishing the need to find out whether national aids are given to rival fishing fleets in the European Union. It has been reported that France is giving such aids to its fishermen. That is unfair competition for the fishermen of Northern Ireland.

Portavogie is a village with only one public building —the toilets. No public facilities exist other than the WC. We tried to get a community centre for Portavogie but the then Minister responsible for community relations, who left us a few months ago, wrote to say that it was not possible because there were not sufficient people from the two sections of the community living in Portavogie. In other words, Portavogie was discriminated against in terms of Government funding because too many people of one religion live there.

When Portavogie applied to the International Fund for Ireland more than a year ago, it was turned down again, but for a different reason. On this occasion, it was turned down in a letter which stated, ridiculously, that although the project was recognised as interesting and worthy of consideration, a similar proposal had, however, come from Greencastle in County Donegal. That proposal was proceeding and, instead of building a second structure of a similar type in Portavogie, it was recommended that fishermen from Portavogie travel to Greencastle. There are a variety of reasons why the fishermen of Portavogie would not be happy travelling to Greencastle in County Donegal —I shall not spell them out tonight—but it was the most ridiculous reply that I have ever heard from a public authority, if one can call the International Fund for Ireland a public authority.

As a result, I raised the matter in Washington, of all places, this time last year when I met representatives of the Irish lobby there and, especially, board members of the International Fund for Ireland. I said that there was discrimination against the village of Portavogie because it was overwhelmingly Protestant. I followed that up by writing a firm letter to the new chairman of the International Fund for Ireland—in fact, I wrote to the previous chairman, but he resigned shortly after receiving my letter and the reply came from Mr. William McCarter, the new chairman. The reply was reasonably promising. I see that the hon. Member for South Down has now returned to the Chamber, perhaps because I am now discussing fishing.

In the past few weeks, the International Fund for Ireland has announced a scheme for Annalong, Kilkeel, Ardglass and Portavogie. I put it on record that I greatly welcome the scheme and I hope that all our fishing villages will benefit from it. In Portavogie we are already in a good position to take advantage of the programme because, as I said, we have been working on it for the past few years. The Portavogie and district community association produced a report on what was needed in the village. Portavogie is, in fact, a small town with 3,500 people. I hope that the

[Mr. Taylor]

Northern Ireland Departments of the Environment and of Agriculture are reading the association's report and taking it seriously.

The report suggests that Portavogie should have a multi-purpose centre which would provide many facilities. As I said, we have only the one public building—the toilets. We need a multi-purpose centre to provide a location for health facilities and the training of fishermen and to provide a community hall. It would also provide accommodation for people connected with the fishing industry who have to stay in Portavogie overnight. I hope that the International Fund for Ireland, in co-operation with the Department of the Environment, will concentrate on the project now proposed by the local community in Portavogie.

The third paragraph of the press release of the International Fund for Ireland states:

"This programme will be run in conjunction with the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland and will provide a major cross-community economic based project."

I emphasise the fact that 90 per cent. of Portavogie's 3,500 population are Protestant. There is cross-community co-operation but, obviously, it has to be limited in the context of the balance of the population. I hope that the fact that Portavogie is mainly Protestant will not be held against the village and prevent it from receiving benefits.

The hon. Member for South Down mentioned Strangford lough. There is an important meeting tonight about the future of Strangford lough in the main town of my constituency in Newtownards. I had hoped to attend the meeting last Thursday in Killyleagh in the hon. Gentleman's constituency but I could not because of the "Newsnight" programme on the Select Committee for Northern Ireland. I cannot be in Newtownards tonight either, but I underline the concern of the fishermen in and around Strangford lough about the Government's proposals for a marine nature reserve. It is suggested that dredging, trawling and dive collection will be forbidden and that the maximum boat length which is currently allowed will be reduced from 15.23 m to 12.19 m.

Families have been fishing in Strangford lough for generations. The hon. Member for South Down would perhaps claim that they have been doing so since the day St. Patrick arrived in South Down.

Mr. McGrady: Long before that.

Mr. Taylor: We come from two different traditions, but we are agreed that it is important that Strangford lough is preserved. It is, however, also important for the livelihood of the people who live in and around and work on the waters of Strangford lough.

There have been three great meetings—the first was in Portaferry, the second in Killyleagh and the third is in Newtownards tonight. I understand that the meeting at Killyleagh was quite noisy. I am glad to hear it—it was a typical Ulster meeting at which everyone made known their views, forcefully. I hope that the officials from the Department who are present will report back to the Minister and that, having undertaken a consultation process with the local people, the Minister will now decide to hold a public inquiry about the proposal for a marine nature reserve for Strangford lough before a final decision is made.

The hon. Members for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) and for South Down paid tribute to Belvoir Park hospital. As it is in my constituency, I am very aware of the problem facing the hospital and I appreciate the hon. Gentlemen's cross-community support. In its report on acute hospital services, the Eastern area health board recommended in three lines the closure of Belvoir Park hospital and its transfer to another site in the city of Belfast —that was the effect of its recommendation, but I do not have the exact words with me.

The important thing is that Belvoir Park hospital, which has been praised by hon. Members on both sides of the House and which is respected and appreciated by thousands and thousands of people in Northern Ireland who suffer from cancer and other diseases, has been dismissed in three lines without one reason being given for the board's decision. The way in which public bodies override public opinion in Northern Ireland at the moment is scandalous. There is no answerability under the system of government in the Province.

I have met the chairman of the hospital trust that controls Belvoir Park hospital and I have discussed the matter with Baroness Denton, the new Minister with responsibility for health. She was due to visit the hospital last Thursday and I hope that the visit took place. I understand that it would take £30 million or £40 million to relocate the hospital—which is recognised as a good hospital—in the centre of Belfast.

It would be a total waste of public funds when other hospitals throughout Northern Ireland need money. We should spend some of that £30 million or £40 million on improving Belvoir Park hospital and we should allocate the rest to other hospitals in the Province. The road system from all parts of the country to the hospital is excellent. The interesting point is that, although the Eastern board is suggesting closing down the hospital, none of the other boards that use it has reached the same conclusion.

As I have mentioned in previous debates, one has to watch the political pull—I do not mean party political—of those connected with the hospitals in the city of Belfast. The population there has fallen from 500,000 to only 290,000. If one followed what was happening in Great Britain, one would reduce availability in the city of Belfast and one would increase availability in areas such as North Down and Strangford where the population is increasing.

The reverse is happening in Northern Ireland. There is a political pull by those involved in hospitals in Belfast to try to get more into their area at the expense of those who live outside Belfast. In the case of Belvoir Park hospital, I ask the Government to pay no attention to the report by the Eastern health board and instead to consider the wishes of the people in this matter. Each hon. Member, no matter which party he comes from, is receiving letter after letter, day after day from his constituents saying, "Please save and support Belvoir Park hospital."

I now turn to roads and ports. Some of the subjects to which I wish to refer have already been touched on by other hon. Members. I simply want to lend my support in some cases because points need to be underlined. A few weeks ago, I attended a one-day conference at Belfast castle, which was organised by the university of Ulster. The subject was the problems of peripherality in the European Community in terms of roads and ports.

Unfortunately, the Northern Ireland Office Minister who attended the conference and gave a short address had already left when an important paper was delivered by the

European Commission spokesman. The spokesman referred to ports in Europe and he showed us many great maps on the screen. Four important ports were shown for the island of Ireland: Dublin, Waterford, Dun Laoghaire and Rosslare.

I could remain quiet no longer. I said, "Mr. Chairman, may I intervene? Why are the two largest ports in the island of Ireland not on this map?" I did not mention what the two ports were at that stage. The Commission man looked shocked and he did not know what I was talking about. To help him, I said, "Belfast and Larne." He then coughed and muttered, and finally said, "Oh, this map is not finalised yet. Those ports could still be added."

It is a total disgrace that, after years of public debate, the Government, through the Northern Ireland Office, and the United Kingdom representation in Brussels—UKREP—have failed to get the European Commission to recognise that Larne and Belfast are the two biggest ports in the island of Ireland and should get priority treatment from the European Community ahead of any other port in the island.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Despite the fact that the Conservative Government have gone for privatisation, could it be that they are penalising the private ports of Larne and Stranraer and supporting trust ports, such as Dublin?

Mr. Taylor: I cannot answer that; it is up to the Government. Perhaps the Minister will take up that matter when he replies. The interesting thing is that market forces in Northern Ireland and, to a considerable extent, in the Republic of Ireland have dictated that Belfast and Larne shall be the two main ports in the island of Ireland. The present policy of Northern Ireland Ministers of trying to divert traffic away from Belfast and Larne down to a new port in Dublin and other ports in the Republic runs contrary to what market forces require in the island of Ireland. I must tell the hon. Member for South Down the bad news; he touched on it himself and he was perfectly right.

During the conference, I spoke to many transport people from Dublin; I will not mention them by name because it would embarrass them. I said, "This Northern Ireland Office of ours is spending money on roads and railways between Northern Ireland and Dublin and you now intend to spend a lot of money—£50 million—on improving Dublin port. Will that not be a great waste of money? Would it not be better to put that £50 million into improving the transport system to the ports that Northern Irish and southern Irish business wants to use?" The man to whom I was speaking laughed and said, "You are probably right, but we want to have a big port ourselves."

I said, "If you get a big port in Dublin for £50 million from the cohesion fund of the European Community and if, in the meantime, we build these lovely roads and railway lines down to Dublin, what will happen to our ports?" The Dubliners replied, "Belfast will be okay and Larne will be okay, but we are afraid that Warrenpoint will probably die a natural death." That is the way they see it. Warrenpoint will lose because of the way in which money will now be spent in Dublin at the expense of Warrenpoint harbour.

Mr. McGrady: For the purposes of accuracy, I refer to the report issued by the Department of the Environment on its transport programme. Table 4.6 shows traffic in and out of the various ports of Ireland, both north and south: Belfast has 8.1 million tonnes, Dublin 7.7 million tonnes, Larne 3.7 million tonnes and Warrenpoint 1.5 million tonnes. Those statistics were correct at November 1993. The largest port is Belfast, followed by Dublin and then by Larne.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman was referring to freight only, but we are considering passengers as well. Larne is the second largest passenger ferry port in the British Isles, never mind in the island of Ireland.

Mr. Beggs: Surely, if there had been any fairness in the way in which that matter had been approached, due reference would have been made to the four important ports in Northern Ireland. That includes the service that is provided through the modernised port at Londonderry. It is in our interest, in the interests of commerce in Northern Ireland and in the interests of all those users of our present facilities to ensure that proper recognition is given to all four ports in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. We have four important ports, as he says. The hon. Member for South Down, the Ulster Unionists and the Democratic Unionist Members should be uniting to save Larne, Belfast, Londonderry and Warrenpoint. Warrenpoint has a shaky future if the present developments on which the Northern Ireland Office and the Dublin Government are co-operating proceed without a challenge from the elected representatives of Northern Ireland.

I shall now turn to the issue of the roads leading to those ports. My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) mentioned the importance of the road to Larne. I underline what he has said and shall quote one simple fact which, as a civil engineer, certainly makes sense to me. Road traffic and civil engineers decide road strategy on the present and projected use of road systems. Therefore, one would expect that a road that has a high level of vehicular traffic would have priority over other roads with less traffic. That is not the case in Northern Ireland, and certainly is not since the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Before that agreement, priority on road projects in the Department of the Environment estimates was decided on traffic density. Since that agreement, there has been a change of policy and road schemes are selected for roads that cross the border into the Republic of Ireland. Those roads are given priority over roads that are used more.

I shall state some facts. The road to Larne, the second largest port in the island of Ireland, carries 16,000 vehicles per day. The road to Dublin carries only half that traffic —8,000 vehicles a day. Yet Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office, for reasons known to them and for reasons arising from the Anglo-Irish Agreement, have decided to downgrade the road to Larne, which is twice as busy, and instead upgrade and give priority to the road to Dublin.

The same happened at the Foster Green junction, which is near the boundaries of Belfast, South and my constituency. The Foster Green junction carries 50,000 vehicles per day—not 8,000 to Dublin, but 50,000 to Belfast—and the scheme there was supposed to begin in 1992. The tender documents were drawn up to go out to contract, but the new policy emerged in the Northern Ireland Office and, because of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, priority had to be given to transport systems to Dublin. Suddenly, the great scheme proposed for the Foster Green junction was postponed for another four years and the money that was to be spent on it was transferred to the bypass at Newry.

[Mr. Taylor]

Those facts cannot be denied. I assure the Minister that people in the borough of Castlereagh, whether Unionist, Democratic Unionist or alliance, are all agitated at the loss of that major road scheme and on their behalf I ask for it to be brought forward as a matter of urgency.

In my European context, I want to back plans for the road to Carrickfergus, mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East. I have a vested interest because I go to Carrickfergus every week, where I have a small business. From personal experience, I know of the dreadful traffic conditions on the A2 from Belfast to the borough of Carrickfergus, just past the university. Suddenly, instead of a dual carriageway, one is trained into a single track.

Carrickfergus is the fastest growing town in Northern Ireland. Perhaps due to the problems in Belfast, many people are moving to live in that most attractive town. It is the fastest growing town in Northern Ireland, with the greatest traffic chaos getting into it and out of each day. The road is right beside our biggest university and it certainly needs to be improved quickly. I ask the Minister who is responsible for roads—I know that he will not be replying to the debate—to recognise the importance of Carrickfergus as one of our fastest growing towns, as my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East said, and to give priority to that road scheme.

The Comber bypass in my constituency, a scheme which was due to commence two years ago, has been postponed. Yet again, the £2 million to £3 million that had been allocated to that bypass has been reallocated to the route to Dublin as a result of the present policies of the Northern Ireland Office.

The final matter that I want to mention in relation to roads is a very local one. After all, it is to air such matters that we have these debates. It is a reflection on the whole system of government in Northern Ireland that the Secretary of State and his Ministers demand that they decide which potholes should be filled and which minor road schemes should be carried out. They do not allow local authorities to deal with those matters, which they could do most effectively—and probably much better than central Government because they have the local knowledge. While the present system pertains, however, I am forced to mention some points which, although they may seem small to hon. Members, are certainly not small to the local community.

In the Comber area, we have two examples of what I regard as lack of consultation between the road service and the local community. A third example has arisen recently in the Ards peninsula between Greyabbey and the Roman Catholic chapel at Kircubbin. I have visited the road outside the Roman Catholic chapel and seen the problem there. I have been to Castle street in Comber to inspect the problem there. The other problem, which was drawn to my attention only on Thursday and which I have not yet seen, is at Lisbane outside Comber.

The road service is closing roads to carry out minor works, and in doing so is quite unnecessarily putting local people and workers going to work in the morning and returning home in the evening to great inconvenience. Two Mondays ago at 10 o'clock, I visited Kircubbin on my way to Portaferry to see the great new aquarium that is about to be opened there. The sign said "Road closed".

I had already heard about this nonsense, so I said to the chap who was with me, "We'll drive on and see what this is like." We drove on and discovered that, the whole way from Greyabbey to Kircubbin chapel, there was not a workman or a machine on the road—yet the road had been closed to the public all weekend. Imagine the inconvenience caused to farmers, to workers going to Belfast, and so on. There was nothing on the road. One could have driven along it quite easily.

The same happened in Comber. Admittedly, they are laying a pipeline down the middle of Castle street; it is certainly a larger scheme, which needs to be controlled more tightly. The Department of the Environment put up signs at each end saying "Road closed". We are talking about the main street in the town of Comber, both sides of which are lined with shops. A new petrol filling station has just been built at a cost of £500,000.

For three months, a sign was to be in place saying "Road closed". That would have meant that no one could get into a shop or the filling station for three months. No business man could survive for three months without people calling into his shop or his filling station. All that was needed was an arrangement whereby, instead of notices saying "Road closed", we had notices saying "No through road" or something of that nature. People would then have known that they could still drive into the street and go to the shops although they could not get out at the other end.

I gather that the same is now happening at Lisbane. I cannot comment in further detail until I have been there, but I have received complaints from constituents there to the effect that the road is closed and damage is being done to businesses. I appeal to the road service in the Comber and the Ards area to show a little more understanding to the business community and the public and not to inconvenience them in this way.

Mr. Maginnis: Does my right hon. Friend accept that those of us who live in the west of the Province and who depend on the M1 motorway for access to Belfast—where much of our constituency work has to be done as we visit the various Departments—are not at all surprised by what he says? The M1 is in a constant state of contraflow or lane narrowing because of work that is supposedly being done. But if one drives down the motorway, one finds that there are comparatively few people working on it. No thought is given to the convenience of those who travel from the west of the Province and are totally dependent on that motorway.

Mr. Taylor: I certainly understand the point that my hon. Friend makes. The reason for the contraflow is the current motorway bridge improvement scheme. I am sure that, just as in the case of the Greyabbey-Kircubbin road, motorists must endure a contraflow or even leave the route altogether. In fact, people travelling along the M1 towards Belfast sometimes have to leave the motorway at Lisburn. If, in those circumstances, it is found that no work is going on, people become upset.

I should like to conclude with a reference to education. During this debate we have heard about the increasing unemployment of nurses in Northern Ireland. As has been said, the Northern Ireland Office encourages people from southern Ireland to come to the Province for training and sees that they are given all the benefits. It is ridiculous that, at a time when our own nurses are being thrown out of

work, 11 per cent. of student nurses in Northern Ireland are from the republic. That contradiction requires the serious attention of Ministers if they are really concerned about the people of Northern Ireland and about the provision of jobs in Northern Ireland for nurses from the Province.

In our universities one finds a similar contradiction. Northern Ireland's two universities now have 2,000 undergraduates from the republic. I understand that the education of those people costs the British taxpayer £5 million a year. It may be argued that that is forced on the Northern Ireland Office by new European Community regulations, but that is too easy a dismissal. This situation has serious consequences for Northern Irish 18-year-olds who have just obtained their A-levels and want to pursue a university education.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that a higher proportion of young people in Northern Ireland than in other parts of the United Kingdom are capable of going on to university? Is not that a result of Northern Ireland's retention of its grammar schools, where young people get a thoroughly sound and structured education? Such an education makes people more eager to go to university, and it is a great pity that they should be crowded out.

Mr. Taylor: I always like to agree with the hon. Lady. She and I have worked closely together for many years. On this issue, as on many others, she is right. The standard of education in Northern Ireland is very superior to what is found in Great Britain, especially England and Wales. I hear someone whisper that the people of Northern Ireland, too, are very good. Our grammar school system has resulted in the maintenance of a very high level of education. But my main point is that the higher chances that should result from better A-levels are diminished by the invasion of 2,000 southern Irish students, who, I repeat, are being paid for by the constituents of the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman).

If I introduce a note of religion, it is to explain that education in Northern Ireland is divided along sectarian lines. The Roman Catholic Church—perfectly within its rights—demands control over its own schools. It is a tradition that many Northern Irish Protestant students go to university in Britain, especially Scotland. Indeed, 40 per cent. of the undergraduates of Dundee university are from Northern Ireland. I am glad to report that there is even a pretty strong Ulster Unionist presence at Dundee university today.

It has not been the tradition for Catholic students to leave Northern Ireland. They normally studied at Queen's university and more recently, at Ulster university in Jordanstown and in Coleraine. However, over the past four years, instead of just 5 per cent. of Catholic students leaving Northern Ireland for university, the percentage of Catholic students having to leave Northern Ireland has increased to 30 per cent.

That has happened for two reasons. First, there are fewer places available in Northern Irish universities because of competition from applicants from the south of Ireland. Secondly, as thousands more students from the Republic are applying to enter the two universities in Northern Ireland, in response to supply and demand, the Northern Ireland universities are raising their entrance requirements.

It is becoming more difficult for students to gain entrance to universities in Northern Ireland. As standards are much lower in English universities, they can gain entrance to those universities much more quickly. It is easier to enter an English university now than it is to enter a Northern Irish university because so many southern Irish students are applying for entrance to Northern Irish universities.

The result of that cycle of events is that the working class population of Northern Ireland—and a very large percentage of the Catholic community is working class—are suffering severe discrimination with regard to the availability of university education in Northern Ireland. Working-class parents are forced, because of the lack of places in Northern Irish universities, to spend more money to send their children to universities across the water in Great Britain.

I mentioned that severe problem a year ago. It has become worse over the past 12 months. Roman Catholic parents agree with what I said a year ago. They are losing in relation to the availability of university places in Northern Ireland.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that there is resentment within the Province, which I have heard expressed increasingly by students in the west of the Province, about young people not being able to gain entrance to what they term their own universities in the Province? Does he agree that there is suspicion that there is a plan to get the young people of Northern Ireland to leave the Province in the hope that many of them, especially those from the Protestant community, will not return?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman may well be right. Northern Ireland is full of suspicion and innuendo. I began by saying that this dreadful situation has arisen from a European Community decision. I conclude that it is hurting the less well-off people in the community, who include a large section of the Roman Catholic minority. Those people, who had been gaining much from university education at Queen's university and Ulster university over the past 20 years, are being placed at a disadvantage and must pay to send their students across the water. Thirty per cent. of all Catholic students are leaving Northern Ireland as a result of the new pressure to which I referred.

I should have liked to say much more, but I am afraid of beating the record set by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). If we had our own say in the affairs of Northern Ireland, the money that is spent on educating southern Irish students could be used to provide nursery school facilities throughout the length and breadth of the Province.

There is a dearth of nursery school facilities in Northern Ireland. At the moment, only 5,000 children receive nursery school education in Northern Ireland, when there are 55,000 children who should be at nursery schools. Of course, the Northern Ireland Office says that it has no money and it cannot provide nursery schools. We can find £5 million every year to educate southern Irish students and we can throw millions of pounds at educating southern Irish nurses, but we do not have a penny to spend on nursery schools in Northern Ireland.

I raise those issues in the hope that the Minister will give a fuller response to them. He may say that he has no

[Mr. Taylor]

time and that he will send us some letters. I warn him that a letter will not satisfy the Select Committee for Northern Ireland when we get it.

9.19 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Northern Irish colleagues do not often have an opportunity to debate their affairs, so I shall not take up too much of their time. I think, however, that they will appreciate comments from a Scottish Member. Scotland and Northern Ireland have close social, cultural and economic links. I should like to give the House the benefit of an outside view. I know that another Scot will wind up the debate for the Government, but I do not suppose that my Northern Irish colleagues will be as happy with his speech as with mine.

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) mentioned his presence at Scottish and Welsh debates and said that today's debate was being conducted with much more decorum. Perhaps that is connected to the fact that, unlike hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland, the majority of hon. Members who represent the fellow Celtic nations of Wales and Scotland do not support the Government.

The debate is about money, which is important. It is also important that there is closer scrutiny of spending in Northern Ireland, which has a unique position in the United Kingdom. There is a danger of apathy and non-scrutiny resulting in officials and Ministers taking decisions that do not have the support of the public or of Northern Irish Members.

It is appropriate to mention the costs of violence when debating estimates and the appropriation order. As a Scottish Member talking about Northern Ireland I shall give no moral lectures, but it is relevant to discuss the costs of violence. I am not anti-spending in that sector. The rest of the United Kingdom, Britain, owes a debt to Northern Ireland and the island of Ireland on which we have depended for support, not least in the first world war.

I have with me an independent report that traces expenditure in the British Government Departments in Northern Ireland. That expenditure is expressed in constant prices. The figures are derived primarily from the Government's expenditure plans and priorities for 1993-94 to 1995 published by the Department of Finance and Personnel and Her Majesty's Treasury. The report includes a graph which shows how the spending percentages in the total cake in Northern Ireland have changed. Between 1987-88 and 1995-96, the percentage of the cake spent on law and order will have moved from 11 to 12 per cent. That is the cost of the violence. That money could be much better used to deal with some of the problems mentioned by my Northern Ireland colleagues.

The percentage of the total to be spent on industry, energy, trade and employment initiatives by the Northern Ireland Office between 1987-88 to 1995-96 has dropped from 8 to 6 per cent. Housing spending has dropped from 7 to 3 per cent. of the total. I was impressed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive officer, who happens to be called Mr. McEvoy—spelt with an "e"—and who is a competent official.

Spending on social security increased from 31 to 33 per cent. of the total now. Spending on health and personal social services increased from 17 to 19 per cent. The increase in health and personal social services and in social security is the price not of violence but of unemployment. It is the price of failure, which the Government have imposed on the people of Northern Ireland. The Government have failed to do something about those conditions.

I realise that the Minister must have a long list of points to answer but I should like to add one or two to that. The Compensation Agency has received a number of new claims because of the new emergency provisions. Claims have risen from 3,560 in 1990-91 to an estimated 4,600 in 1993-94, which is an increase of more than 1,000 claims. What is the background to that increase? The Compensation Agency's total expenditure for the period 1993-94 amounts to £94 million. What a waste that that money must be spent as a result of violence and not used positively on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland.

The report shows a notable decline in the planned expenditure on compensation in the period from 1991-92 to 1995-96. Given that position, how can the Government plan a reduction in expenditure on compensation? The report includes a line about trade, industry and employment, to which I shall return later, with regard to incentives to commercial enterprises to expand.

Legitimate fears have been expressed about the risk of terrorists attacking the interconnector between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It has been mentioned that the cost of installing the interconnector from Scotland to Northern Ireland will be £175 million. Apart from the fact that many parts of rural Ayrshire will be devastated, I am not convinced that that interconnector will be safer from terrorist attack than the interconnector between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The Department of the Environment spent £1 million between 1987 and 1988 but the report does not show how much was spent on ports. I have heard the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs), time and again, raise the point about Larne, on which I support him. Why is there no specific spending on ports?

A number of hon. Members have mentioned the rural nature of many parts of Northern Ireland. I notice that spending on housing is to be reduced over a period of years. The Government may argue that they have almost completed their job in inner cities, which is where most of the problems have been, but the level of unfitness and serious disrepair in private sector rural housing still stands at 65.3 per cent. How can the Government reduce spending on housing from 7 per cent. of the total cake in 1987-88 to 3 per cent. in 1995-96, when rural housing is so important to many people in Northern Ireland?

Another item in the report gives current and future estimates by the Department of Finance and Personnel and other public services. In 1987-88, £10 million was spent on financial administration and central management of the civil service and other services. By 1994-95, that figure will have almost trebled to £29 million. It will be interesting to hear why a Conservative Government dedicated to reducing the number of civil servants has trebled spending on the financial administration of the civil service during that period. If only grants and other employment measures had trebled, too.

My colleagues have also rightly made the point that the level of health is poorer in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. One of the officials from the Northern Ireland Office who gave evidence to the Public

Accounts Committee said that Northern Ireland is comparable to Scotland in that respect. I do not think that we can underestimate or totally ignore the effect of unemployment on people's health, as the Government seem to do. That conclusion has been resisted by the Government for years, but they now seem to accept that unemployment and deprivation affect people's level of health. It is the classic situation that, if one does not spend money, it costs money in the long run.

Expenditure through the European regional development fund dropped from £46 million to £34 million in the period that I mentioned. The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) referred to the operations of the European Community. My colleagues, especially my Unionist colleagues, mentioned doubts about co-operation with the Republic of Ireland. When I look at the job that the Republic of Ireland has done in getting some of its money back from the Common Market, it makes me envious, and I wonder why this Government cannot get some of their money back from the Common Market.

I shall spend a few moments on the record of the Republic of Ireland, which comes from a journalist who is not unknown to the Minister and not unsympathetic to his ideology. Today in the *Glasgow Herald*, Murray Ritchie said:

"Well, guess which EU state these days has a growth rate miles ahead of the rest and whose manufacturing sector is booming compared with all its partners. Which state has enjoyed the lowest inflation in the past five years? Fastest rise in exports? Biggest external payments surplus in the EU? Lowest level of borrowing?"

And what is regarded as an indicator of wealth—

"Proportionately more home owners in the EU than everyone except the Portuguese?"

That is how the Republic of Ireland operates the system. Why does the Northern Ireland Office not operate the same system? Why do not the Government ensure that Northern Ireland gets its share of the European Regional Development Fund the way that the Republic of Ireland is getting its share?

Mr. John D. Taylor: I have already spoken and I do not want to take up any time, except to say that the hon. Gentleman has left out one of the other things which the Republic of Ireland has as the biggest in the European Community—its emigration rate.

Mr. McAvoy: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I know that he thinks that people from the Republic of Ireland are all heading for the north. I am not sure whether he has any figures to prove that, but I shall accept what he says.

My point is that this small country, which is just across the border from part of our country, is more successful in getting more of its money back from the Common Market than Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maginnis: It is your money.

Mr. McAvoy: I am talking about the Republic of Ireland's money. I am certainly in favour of the United Kingdom taxpayer getting more money back from the Common Market. The Republic of Ireland is conning money out of the Common Market which has been paid for by the British surplus. The blame lies with the British Government, not with anyone else.

Before I deal with the next item, I shall declare an interest of some sort. Unlike my hon. Friends, I am sponsored by the Co-operative movement. Of course, there is no personal gain in that. The Co-operative movement —the CWS, the Co-operative Retail Society and the Belfast Co-op—has expanded its retail operations, which has meant an increased share in the retail trade. In common with other commercial operators and shops, it has suffered bomb damage from the terrorists. What incentives has the Minister offered to commercial operators who are willing to develop and expand their field of activities in Northern Ireland, as the Co-op has done? I should like more positive incentives to be given to them.

The Co-op pursues an own-brand sales policy and a large percentage of the brands sold are made in the island of Ireland. although I am not sure of the specific details. Anything that affects the economy of the island must surely be of benefit to all. The Co-op ensures that 15 per cent. of its total lines are Irish brands, and that can only be good.

The political philosophy of co-operation can be helpful. I will not hear any moral lectures from anyone outside Northern Ireland. According to that philosophy, people come together for the common good to ensure that trade operates to the benefit of ordinary people, but that philosophy of co-operation can be extended through all facets of life. I suggest humbly that the principle of co-operation has much to offer to the people of Northern Ireland.

9.35 pm

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): It was just a short time ago that I attended the funeral of a constituent of mine, Police Constable Johnston Beacom. I was subsequently present at the graveside when his body was interred. He was a young community police officer and a deeply committed Christian, who harboured no ill will for anyone in the entire island of Ireland. It was his greatest wish to do good whenever he got the opportunity.

That man was slaughtered, like so many others before him and many more to come, by Irish republican terrorists, who believe that, by killing and destroying, they can force the people of Northern Ireland to capitulate and the British Government to engage in further clarification of the Downing street declaration.

I was deeply moved at the service when I saw his young wife. I realised that he had left behind tiny tots who are now fatherless, and parents who have been left with a tremendous void in their lives. I compare the sacrifice that he and many others like him have made in the past 26 years with the evil men who skulk around Northern Ireland and elsewhere doing their evil deeds and engaging in carnage.

The sad thing for the people of Northern Ireland is that, at present, those terrorists and their political wing and political sympathisers are basking in the limelight of publicity. That has followed the entreaties made to them to engage in the peace process. I hope that peace comes to Northern Ireland; certainly the people of Northern Ireland deserve it.

When I heard tonight that the high unemployment in west Belfast was the fault of Britain, I could only laugh at that claim, because unemployment—certainly the greater part of it—in west Belfast, and elsewhere throughout the Province, is due to the machinations of the Irish Republican Army and all the other terrorists in Northern Ireland. They are the ones who blow up businesses and destroy factories.

[Sir James Kilfedder]

The IRA is adept in the United States, through its political organisations, at trying to dissuade business men from investing in the Province. It is the terrorists who are creating unemployment and driving young people away from Northern Ireland. It is a matter of deep regret to me thatm the media in the United States gave so much publicity to Mr. Gerry Adams on his recent visit there.

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) rightly criticised the financial aspect of students coming to Northern Ireland universities. I was glad of the opportunity to study at Trinity college in Dublin. The value of attending a university is not just obtaining a degree but the opportunity for young people of different religions, cultures and races to meet. The more that people get together, the better for Northern Ireland. I think in particular of my own constituency of Bangor, whose abbey and college were destroyed 1,300 years ago by Vikings, who came in their hordes and slaughtered the monks and students.

Those Vikings subsequently travelled farther down the coast and created the modern city of Dublin. Bangor was already ancient when Dublin was created—a centre of learning for students from all over Europe, which was good for them and for the people who lived in that part of Ireland centuries ago. I am all for the movement of people and the exchange of ideas, because the more that young people get together, the better chance there will be of creating understanding and harmony.

It is lamentable that some bureaucrats play down unemployment in my constituency from the safety of their offices, pensionable jobs and statistics. They ignore the fact that unemployment causes great hardship for people of all ages but particularly for the young in North Down. I doubt that the bureaucrats who treat that information just as statistics and not as the records of human beings know what it is like to be on the dole.

Those bureaucrats, and perhaps Ministers as well, ought to call at homes in my constituency and talk to the unemployed fathers, mothers, sons and daughters who are robbed of the dignity of going to work and bringing in a wage or salary, to allow them to provide for the necessities of every family and home and to give their children the opportunities they themselves did not have when they were young.

I make a particular appeal in respect of school leavers and college graduates in my constituency, who may have to abandon Northern Ireland to find work in England or elsewhere. Northern Ireland needs its young people—they are its real wealth. Young, talented people with idealism and fervour, who are anxious to work and to make a career for themselves, are needed if the Province is to be transformed into a prosperous and vibrant society.

A society can only be judged by how it cares for its senior citizens. Many elderly people in North Down, as in other parts of Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom, live isolated lives, and some experience financial difficulty. I urge the Government to do more to help them. I think particularly of the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel.

I ask the Government to encourage others to offer their services in caring and looking after the elderly. It is much better if the elderly can stay in their own homes among their treasured possessions and in a neighbourhood they know, rather than be put in a residential home.

I am worried about the standard of care offered by a number—albeit a minority—of the private residential homes in the United Kingdom. Greater inspection is needed rather than less to protect those vulnerable people who, the moment the relatives leave, are at the mercy of those who control those homes. The vast majority are dedicated staff—I know a number of them in residential and nursing homes and can speak highly of them—but I worry about some of the homes and how the people are cared for. The Government must provide better and greater inspection.

That brings me to the subject of the Banks residential home, with which I link Enler house, a residential home in Dundonald. They are statutory homes and must not be sold off. Speculators are waiting in the wings to purchase them. I have certainly heard it suggested that the Banks would be purchased under the guise of saving it as a residential home. No doubt in the course of time it would be closed, divided up and sold off, with considerable profit to the speculator.

I recently had a meeting with the new Minister at the Department of Health, Baroness Denton, at which I made a passionate plea on behalf of the three hospitals in the North Down area: the Ulster at Dundonald and the Bangor and Ards hospitals. She listened sympathetically. I hope that, in due course, she will respond in the way that I suggested.

I had called for the reopening of the ward that had been closed at the Ulster hospital. It is scandalous that, under recent cuts, some patients are being diverted from the Ulster hospital in Dundonald to hospitals in the centre of Belfast—the Royal Victoria and City hospitals. I urge the Minister to keep in mind the needs of the people of Bangor. Bangor has a population of some 75,000, which continues to increase, yet Bangor hospital has been run down.

I demanded of the Minister then—I repeat that demand now to the Minister who will be replying to the debate in great detail and at great length—that the services provided at Bangor hospital should be enhanced with the provision of a maternity ward and casualty department. The people of Bangor desperately need a hospital suitable for the size of the community, a hospital that is worthy of the area, a hospital to look after all the people, young and old, who live in Bangor or the surrounding area.

The Ards hospital is a former workhouse and needs a replacement. The ideal solution is to provide a new major hospital between Bangor and Newtownards. But since that is not likely in the foreseeable future, the people of North Down are entitled to have the existing hospital services enhanced and increased to meet the needs of the people living in the area. I pay tribute to the doctors, nurses and staff at all those hospitals. They and the people of Bangor, Dundonald and Ards deserve a fair deal from the Government.

I conclude by making reference to St. Patrick, whom we shall be celebrating—at least some of us will—on St. Patrick's day on 17 March. St. Patrick seems to have been hijacked by Irish Republicans, but he was a Briton, kidnapped and taken to Northern Ireland, or what is now Northern Ireland. He returned of his own free will and landed, as I claim, in Bangor, in my constituency. His holy footsteps are no doubt there to be followed by many others. Without doubt, he was a Briton—and presumably, if he

returned today to Northern Ireland, where he landed before, the Republican terrorists and their political sympathisers would tell him to go home: "Brits go home," they would say.

St. Patrick is an Ulsterman by adoption. I think that all the people of Northern Ireland should recognise him as a person whose life is worthy of celebration, and I like to think that everyone there will celebrate his name day on 17 March.

9.49 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) spoke of treading from Dan to Beersheba—covering all the ground open to us. I intend to speak—harshly, unfortunately—about only one aspect of life in Northern Ireland.

Much of what we are considering today will have a far-reaching financial effect on the day-to-day lives of the people whom I represent. That may appear to be a fairly self-evident truth, but I do not necessarily mean a beneficial effect. Sadly, although those who administer our affairs in Northern Ireland live and work no more than 100 miles from the furthest extremity of the Province, some of them might as well live halfway around the world, in terms of their understanding of our rural population.

Rural Northern Ireland—and we are, or at least were, a rural community—is being gradually but ruthlessly decimated by the conduct of our affairs under the direct-rule system of government. To live in a rural area is to be a victim of blatant social engineering. The most culpable in that regard are the planners, who are, in practice, a cabal of the most arrogant, unreasonable, dictatorial and conniving bureaucrats whom one could ever hope to avoid. They operate an unrestrained victimisation of the rural community. We used to have an impartial Planning Appeals Commission, to which we could refer; it has now been packed with, and dominated by, planners, losing much of its independence as a result.

Let me tell the House about the attitudes of those people. One applicant living in one of a small cluster of houses in a rural area wanted to develop what would have been an infill site to provide a home for his elderly sister, who badly needed family support. The planner refused permission; when I argued the case for the limited development, I was told, "No. She is nearly 80 years old" —in other words, "If we give her a year or two, with a bit of luck she will be dead and will not need a house."

Another constituent was eventually given permission to build his new bungalow, adjacent to a self-feed cattle silo and a slurry lagoon. When I argued that he should be allowed to move 20 yards away from the smell, the same planner told me, "Remember, it is a farmhouse." With apologies, I would interpret that as meaning "If you are a farmer, you should expect to have to live in cowshit."

I do not accept that. I have held my tongue for too long; let me now put on record a few more planners' decisions that have caused grief to the applicants and to me. It must be realised that people who have worked the land for perhaps 50 years or more do not want to be banished from it—banished from the community to which they belong and the church that they have visited with their children on Sunday after Sunday, close to where they hope eventually to be buried—just because they have reached retirement age or are making way for a son or daughter to succeed them.

At the other end of my constituency, I argued for planning permission for an aging retiring couple in indifferent health, who could no longer work the land and who, having no one to succeed them, intended to sell all of it except a plot where they wanted to build a bungalow. The planning officer, for no good reason, would not approve their choice of site but suggested his alternative, which was in a low-lying field that each winter, almost without fail, lies under 2 ft to 3 ft of flood water. How am I expected to be able to deal with such pigheadedness?

The same planner recently refused to allow another farmer who has 450 acres of land and hundreds of head of cattle, whose son is married and intends to occupy the main farmhouse, to build adjacent to his extensive farmyard. Unlike his colleague whom I mentioned earlier, this one wants to move the applicant away from his farmyard across and down a main road. He probably does not know that cows sometimes calve during the night and that a farmer cannot afford to be out of touch with what goes on at any time of day.

I could cite literally dozens of perverse decisions such as that. A farmer wanted to build a retirement home for himself and was refused permission on the ground that his proposed site was too prominent. With photographs, I produced evidence to show that this was not so, but the planner's decision was upheld by the planning directorate —a cabal within a cabal. On inquiry, I discovered that someone in the planning department had submitted alternative photographs to mine and had cheated by contriving to gain elevation at the point from where the photograph was taken to prove their point about undue prominence of the site.

I took the matter to the Planning Appeals Commission and proved to the satisfaction of the presiding commissioner—an ex-chairman of that body and a thoroughly decent man who visited the site—that planning approval should be granted. When he submitted his positive findings he was overruled by the other commissioners, too many of whom are ex-planners whose first objective is to protect the system but too few of whom have any affinity with things rural.

If one reaches the point where deceit must be employed by planners and where the decision is so finely balanced that the presiding commissioner and his fellow commissioners disagree, should not the benefit of doubt be with the applicant?

We all know that the latter decision went the way that it did because planners could not be seen to be beaten by a Member of Parliament. That could be the thin end of the wedge for them. It is not that I am paranoid, but I challenge the Minister to set up an independent inquiry into how the system works. I promise that I shall bring him dozens of such cases and I am sure that colleagues and Members of other parties from Northern Ireland will agree about what needs to be done.

That is probably the only alternative to our arriving at a stage where people such as myself will be forced to encourage those who are desperate to ignore the planners. Even at this stage, and having had to deal with this most perverse and destructive cabal for years, I am reluctant to do that. It is not in my nature or in that of the rural community to flout the law, but we will have no other redress unless the Minister does something now.

It is time someone took an in-depth look at the destruction of rural life in Northern Ireland and asked, for example, whether it is in anybody's interest to close our

[Mr. Ken Maginnis]

rural primary schools and decimate happy, stable little communities like the one at Carnteel near Aughnacloy, where I grew up. I went to a school there which had 72 children on its roll, but there are no children there today. What has happened? Carnteel school has gone and so have the neighbouring Mullycar and Loughans schools, and neighbouring Lisfearty school is currently under threat. Next week, I am going to plead with the Southern education and library board to reprieve that school until the board can provide a new school to cater for the area that was once served by Carnteel, Mullycar and Lisfearty schools.

Are the planners oblivious to the change? I think that the answer is no. This is social engineering—the type which, in the past 30 years, has encouraged people from their traditional, self-sufficient, rural way of life and thrown them, without thought or adequate provision, into housing estates in the nearest towns. We cannot rewrite history, but we could cease compounding the folly.

Yes, there was a real need to improve the standard of the housing stock in Northern Ireland, and I give full credit to the Housing Executive for what it has done. Yes, it is easy for me to be wise after the event, but I am convinced that less money—that is what we are here to discuss—would have been required if we had allowed people to upgrade their rural properties, instead of destroying a way of life that had survived for generations.

Ministers understand that many things have conspired to cause the terrorism in Northern Ireland over the past 24 years, but its continuation owes much to the search for identity among those who have been thrown into what are little more than urban ghettos. I would be the last to excuse violence, but a way of life has been eroded by the depopulation of rural areas and it will be difficult to replace that ethos. In what is left of our rural communities, there is an integrated society. We must stop the planners in their attempts to destroy it, and we must stop them now.

The problem is not only the refusal to permit rural development but the madcap idea, on which the planners are now working, that all new rural housing should somehow take on the design features of cottages built in the 18th and 19th centuries. Successful farmers are to be denied the right to build houses with adequate space and are to be restricted to smaller rooms, smaller windows and smaller everything. "Traditional houses" are the buzz-words and the planners are having a field day imposing their concepts on the community.

More often than not, the planners have no architectural qualifications. These are the people who, a few years ago, thought that electricity pylons should be shoved up mountains where they are eyesores on the skyline instead of tucked away among the contours of the valleys where they are at least less obtrusive. I am not suggesting that country houses should have large balconies and balustrades or that they should be built on the skyline, but a farmer should be allowed the same amenities as everyone else.

One old tradition that I want to support is that a farmer should be able to have his family around him. Planners refuse to acknowledge that the family factor has any place in their deliberations. No one wants to protect the countryside more than those who live in rural areas—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, Madam Speaker. I am being distracted.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman who has the Floor is having difficulty being heard because the voices of those beyond the Bar of the House are carrying. I can almost hear what they are saying, and that will never do.

Mr. Maginnis: No one wants to protect the countryside more than those who live in the rural areas do, but we must have some sanity in dealing with the issue. As was said earlier, there is no consistency between one area and another. I assure the Minister that there is no consistency in decision making within areas. Not just anger, but deep resentment, is building up in the countryside towards the planners. I hope, therefore, that the Minister will agree to an inquiry into the abuse by the planners of their almost absolute power.

10.4 pm

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): I hope, Madam Speaker, that you will forgive me if I preface my remarks by objecting to the way in which appropriation orders are taken through the House, which allows no opportunity for amendment. Northern Ireland Members are elected on the same basis as other hon. Members, so why are we treated as if we come from some banana republic? Northern Ireland is still a part of the United Kingdom and, unless and until its people decree otherwise, the Government should face up to their responsibilities and should rule it accordingly.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) mentioned a business man who was trying to locate in Northern Ireland and who wanted to bring in considerable investment from the United States. The business man mentioned that the Local Enterprise Development Unit had encouraged him to relocate in west Belfast. The hon. Gentleman objected to that and said that the work force of this gentleman friend of his were all Protestants who came from a security background. The hon. Gentleman's friend can still come to west Belfast—to the Shankill road—where he will have an excellent and willing work force comprising Protestants, if that is what he wishes, to help him with the promotion of his business.

As my party's spokesman on environmental issues, I am naturally concerned about that important aspect of our everyday lives. I am especially critical of the elements in our society who would expose our population to dangerous levels of pollution through either ignorance or greed. The Government know very well the deep distrust felt by Northern Ireland Members about the activities at Sellafield, which is on our eastern seaboard. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) for their sustained opposition to the threat that the nuclear plant poses to the people of Northern Ireland.

There is now a further development by way of the controversial thermal oxide reprocessing plant which is likely to come into operation in the near future. It is extremely scandalous and dictatorial to proceed with this diabolical, radioactive cesspool against the express wishes of the local county council, which asked for and was refused a public inquiry. Ministers exceeded their powers when they ran roughshod over the people most affected. The air over the Irish sea will now be further polluted when the radioactive emissions caused by uranium and plutonium being separated from nuclear fuel are released into our atmosphere.

There is always the possibility of human error in such operations which many countries would not touch with a barge pole. A despicable example in recent times was the deliberate leaking of radioactive gas into our atmosphere by Nuclear Electric on Anglesey, which is within striking distance of our shores. The human error factor was ably demonstrated when staff at the power station released that gas without considering the information available to them. They did not know or check the wind direction at the time. No one knows what harm has been caused to our environment by such accidents.

We have heard about concern over Strangford lough. As recent comment indicates, there is continuing disquiet about the future development and management of that lough. That continuing unease underlines the inadequacy of existing structures and raises grave issues in respect of a vital and threatened natural resource. Local media comment shows that none of the conflicting interests are satisfied with present proposals or structures.

It is not my purpose to campaign on behalf of any one grouping, yet I understand the concerns of each of the conflicting interests. The commercial fishermen who are under attack for allegedly fishing across nursery beds may claim that they are following a way of life that has been pursued for generations. They can point to the fact that the discharge of sewage and agricultural effluent has a more damaging effect than their activities.

That internationally recognised waterway provides a diverse wildlife habitat and a sanctuary to numerous bird species. Some observers argue that there should be no shooting on the lough, yet wildfowlers could argue a sound case that their controlled activities pose no threat compared with recreational activities such as jet skiing and power boating.

Those limited examples may show the range of conflicting demands on that resource. It seems that the vital missing ingredient is a proper unitary authority, with power to consider the whole picture, which will take appropriate action without fear or favour. Simply, that is not happening with the existing division of responsibility between Departments and the Strangford lough management committee. I remind the House that, although the first report of the Environment Select Committee under Sir Hugh Rossi made but one specific recommendation regarding Strangford lough, numerous other recommendations applied to the welfare and preservation of the area.

I return to what, for me, is a core issue. On recommendation 26 of that report, I maintain that the need for an independent environmental protection agency for Northern Ireland is vital and I reiterate that my party is committed to achieving that end. I maintain that, in spite of minor delegations of powers, the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland has not met the spirit or the letter of that report and, until it does, the unsatisfactory situation will continue.

Of course, various designations, be they areas of special scientific interest or marine nature reserves, are valuable, but the continuing piecemeal approach does not resolve any fundamental criticism that the gamekeeper, who is also the poacher, cannot provide the satisfactory solution which is required.

On those matters of special scientific interest which relates to welfare of wildlife, our airports could do a lot more to provide grass cover during the breeding season. There are vast areas of grassland at our airports, which is the natural habitat for ground-nesting birds and animals, but, unfortunately, the grass-cutting programme destroys that habitat at the most vulnerable time. Airport authorities will say that their operations are based on fire risk, but during the growing season there is little of risk of fire. Fire risk increases as grass dies down, in the autumn when all breeding has ceased.

My other responsibility is for housing, which in Northern Ireland relates mostly to the responsibilities of the Housing Executive. Several concerns deserve the attention of the Government. One of the most important, which is causing physical and mental anguish to the elderly, is the operation and condition of many of the glass-fronted fires installed in most of the pensioners' dwellings across the Province. Many senior citizens live in great fear of what is known as the silent killer. I refer to the fumes from those fires, which are not detectable and which can result in death from carbon monoxide poisoning. Many people are physically unable to look after the fires. They cannot manage the effort involved in removing the throat plate or handling the ashpan—two extremely dangerous operations for the frail elderly.

Furthermore, many elderly people are living on the standard pension and cannot bear the cost of the expensive fuel that the fires require. Consequently, some coal merchants are supplying chemical fuels, which are not suitable and which can aggravate the problem. The Housing Executive insists on frequent chimney cleaning —which is, of course, necessary—but, quite apart from the cost, elderly people do not always remember such things. I state categorically that, were it not for home helps, voluntary workers and caring neighbours, many serious accidents and even fatalities would result from the operation of glass-fronted fires in pensioners' homes.

The exceptionally high cost of maintaining the fires and relining chimneys is of concern to the Housing Executive. As the appliances become older, the costs escalate dramatically. There is also a serious lack of liaison between the executive and the coal advisory service in relation to repairs.

There is medical evidence that the fumes from the fires have an adverse effect on the health of children and of elderly people alike. For three years, an eminent paediatrician in a large Belfast practice has been monitoring the health of children where such children live in homes with glass-fronted fires. The conclusive evidence is that they are suffering from asthmatic and other respiratory problems. During the past year, a survey of 300 households with such fires was undertaken in north and west Belfast. Some 56 of those questioned were asthmatic and a large proportion of them were children. A large proportion of the adults were suffering from catarrh.

The Province has more coal-burning appliances in proportion to the size of its population than any other area in the British Isles. Consequently, it has greater air pollution problems. The executive should seriously consider the provision of an alternative form of heating system. Children and the elderly appear to be the most vulnerable. An environmentally friendly Economy 7 system would particularly appeal to senior citizens, especially those who live on their own.

I am also concerned about the response times for Housing Executive repairs. The simplest repairs are now taking weeks to complete. Since the direct labour organisation was disbanded, the quality of work has also

[Mr. A. Cecil Walker]

suffered, largely because some of the contractors now employed are in the cowboy category. They get away with shoddy work because of the lack of supervision.

It is said that only one in 20 jobs is inspected. That gives rise to fraudulent claims against the executive by some disreputable contractors. Honest builders who act responsibly are penalised by not being paid on time. The executive is supposed to honour invoices within 21 days of the beginning of the following month. In many instances, however, contractors do not receive any money within eight weeks. That could be part of the reason why contractors are taking short cuts or adding fictitious amounts to their invoices.

I am concerned about the low level of improvement grant approvals, which affects the housing stock. I should be interested to hear how many such grants have been approved in each of the Belfast regions in the past two years. Applicants are experiencing delays of months in obtaining confirmation—so much so that, in many instances, costs have increased dramatically. I also query the unfitness criteria, which seem to vary between one inspector and another. The local building control office is best placed to make efficient decisions on interpretation.

I should like to turn to a few constituency matters relating to the Department of Economic Development and the Department of the Environment. Among public representatives and community workers there is concern about youth training schemes. Because of the lack of funding, many schemes have been forced to close, leaving many young people on the streets and vulnerable to the influences of the gangster element.

The youth training programme has been further eroded through a proposal to slash participants' wages by 30 per cent. Under the job skills scheme, the Training and Employment Agency will cut by £10 the fee paid to second-year YTP trainees. Those affected—mainly 17 and 18-year-olds—will be given just £25 a week instead of the current £35, with training centres, workshops and management expected to make up the shortfall.

The intention behind the Training and Employment Agency's proposal is to encourage the programme's trainees to move into employment, where employers are expected to meet the shortfall so that a young person may receive at least £35 a week. That will fail. Young people will simply leave the scheme, thereby putting in jeopardy the whole concept of youth training. I hope that the Minister will look carefully at this matter, which is causing such concern and dissension in the community.

In my constituency, many elderly people suffer ill health of various degrees, requiring medical or surgical attention. The patients charter was introduced to limit the waiting time for operations. On the surface, that is commendable, but consultants are concerned at the fact that, in many instances, the charter's effects are iniquitous. Under the charter, a consultant cannot admit a seriously ill person with a deteriorating condition if other patients have been waiting for more than a year and must, therefore, have their operations before 1 April 1994.

Consultants are thereby frequently forced to operate on patients who, although they have been waiting longer, are suffering little—people who, although their condition may require surgery, are not in urgent need of such a procedure. By virtue of Government policy, including the patients charter, consultants are not allowed to use their clinical judgment in respect of those matters. I believe that such circumstances were not envisaged when the patients charter was drawn up. There should be latitude to enable consultants to operate on people with serious and deteriorating conditions.

My constituency suffers dreadfully from deprivation and unemployment, which lead to problems involving the welfare of children. Young people who are brought up in such an environment need all the help and assistance that are available. There is a serious literacy and numeracy problem. As a result, teachers face almost insurmountable difficulties at primary level. The Government should provide resources to enable schools to staff their intake classes adequately to provide the individual attention that children need if the proper groundwork for future success is to be laid.

There is a serious lack of nursery school provision. It is important that children are provided with such opportunities in their formative years and are thus prepared for primary education. Teachers criticise the requirement that children undergo a formal assessment procedure at key stages. That procedure can label children as failures.

I am concerned about the current legislation on historic monuments, which was formulated before the advent of the metal detector and was designed to deter people who resorted to excavating on ancient sites or mounds. Time and progress have overtaken the Northern Ireland legislation. It should be replaced by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, which has worked in Great Britain and, in fact, is the envy of many European countries.

10.24 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I appreciate that my colleagues have ploughed much of the ground and sometimes have harrowed it as well. The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), who moved the order, kept very tightly to his notes. At one stage, he reminded me of one of the black jokes in Northern Ireland about someone on the Magnus Magnusson show. As that person received quick-fire questions, he replied, "Pass, pass, pass, pass," until one of his friends in the audience stood and shouted, "That's right, Gerry, tell him nothing."

I hope that tonight, and after tonight, we will receive more specific answers to questions. The Minister of State told us where large sums of money were to be spent. He then said that there would be savings. However, we do not know where the savings will be made or what impact that might have on different aspects of services. It would be helpful if we were aware of that.

I reiterate the points made by several right hon. and hon. Members about education. It would be helpful to know what reciprocal funding is being spent in other European Union countries on tertiary standard education for young people from the United Kingdom. I realise that we will not obtain much information about that from the Republic of Ireland, where that money is not even spent on Republic of Ireland students so our students would not benefit if they went to the Republic.

There has been pressure on the education budget in Northern Ireland, to the detriment of all sections of the community. Only this morning, I received a letter from the Belfast education and library board in response to an issue

that I raised about nursery education. I was told that the board could not cope with that provision, as it did not have the necessary funding. While the board believed that nursery education should be funded, it said that, if funding were brought forward, it would have to be spent in the first instance in what the board termed "areas of deprivation".

The Prime Minister has placed nursery education on the agenda. I should like to think that it will be carried through in Northern Ireland to all sections of the community. As the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), who is to reply to the debate, will be aware, we are waiting for a response in my constituency in relation to Wellington college.

It is bad enough to have a moratorium on spending, but when we go through the mythology of saying that boards are responsible for spending the funds allocated to them and when they have a list of priorities, the Department steps in and says, "No, you must take that one out." It is monstrous that a school that comprises prefabricated buildings and has occupied inferior premises for a long time should be pushed further down the list in an area of social deprivation.

Mr. Beggs: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is reprehensible that school principals can go over the heads of their area boards and appeal directly to the Department for funding and that the boards are then instructed by the Department to allocate priorities to meet the requests from some principals?

Rev. Martin Smyth: I take that point. While other Departments pass on the money, they do not direct how that money should be spent. The grapevine suggests where that money should go.

A Roman Catholic maintained primary school in my constituency called St. Brides has faced a similar problem over the years of obtaining the capital funding necessary for a school that is over-subscribed. Other schools could take the children, but parental choice means that some schools are flooded while other parents are told that their children must go elsewhere.

Is the Minister satisfied with the information technology available to the Department of Health and Social Security? It seems strange that figures for a small area like Northern Ireland are regularly unavailable centrally. If they were available, it would help us to assess the needs throughout the Province. The boards have difficulty in assessing needs. With the advent of the trusts—community trusts are particularly pressured—is the Minister satisfied that there is sufficient funding? That question is especially relevant in the light of the suggestion that the boards might be amalgamated or scrapped.

According to my understanding of the trust system, community trusts should provide, rather than purchase, the services. Will they be able to carry out the role that is strictly within the boards' remit? Would it be possible for one central board to carry out that function with greater effect? The boards and trusts—particularly the community trusts—in Northern Ireland deal with social services as well as health needs.

I confirm what my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) said about the use of the patients charter. In the sphere of orthopaedics, thousands have been released to cut the waiting lists. With transit funds, the orthopaedic surgeons have been told that they cannot take anyone on the emergency list until they have removed everyone who has been waiting for more than a year.

I sympathise with those who have been waiting for more than a year, but I sympathise more with a woman of over 80 years of age who fell and smashed her hip bone. The specialist said that she needed emergency surgery, which could not be guaranteed under the new regulations. She is alone in her home, confined to bed, unable to walk and, because of the pressures and the pain, has not been eating. That form of medical treatment might be fashionable in some places, but was never part of this nation's national health service and does not match the sort of care that the people of Northern Ireland expect from their specialists. Therefore, will the Minister look at the impact of some of the guidance?

If more funds are to be put into the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, why is it not possible to allow someone to be trained there, particularly in the examination of public service vehicles? Wrights of Ballymena, which supplies coaches for London Transport and other firms, could then have them tested in Northern Ireland without the added expense of bringing someone across and having to pay not only his or her flights, but hotel, boarding and other incidental expenses.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency could use that person to enhance its own testing facilities. That would not cost the nation anything other than the money needed up front before the fees came in. Fees would have to be paid, but they would not include the extra expense of travel and hotel accommodation.

I do not want to prolong the gathering, but I must underline planning problems. It is said that I sometimes become perturbed by some of the responses that we are given when issues are raised in the House or directly with Ministers. Some Ministers are assiduous, but some Departments show a great facility for using word processors. The Government regularly respond, "You might like to know what goes on." We get the same churned-out response time and again. Ministers will know that a Member is foolish to ask a question if he does not already know the answer. He is trying to probe, so to receive a civil servant's letter telling him what he already knows without dealing with the issue is detrimental.

The way in which some developers have ridden roughshod over planning decisions and victimised innocent people is beyond my understanding. I refer specifically to a case affecting a dwelling in Rathfriland road, Dromara, on which I have had a continuing battle with successive Ministers. I have not yet had a satisfactory answer on why the plans laid down by the Department have not been carried through, to the advantage of a developer and the damage of a neighbour.

Does the allocation in the appropriation order reflect the relief funds agreed in the Budget to ease the pain of VAT increases on fuel? Some people believe that a con game has been played and that some of those who most need extra help may not get it. Furthermore, does the allocation fully reflect the additional training costs which the draft Children (Northern Ireland) Order will introduce? That will be one of the big items of expenditure and the order does not say whether it will go in that direction.

I urge the Minister, when he replies to the debate tonight or in the coming days, to help us to be more specific. Why was the Department caught with its pants down when it was amazed at the demand on the disability living fund?

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

Given that Northern Ireland, with 2·5 per cent. of the population of the Kingdom, received 16 per cent. of the previous fund, there must be something wrong with the Department's records if it did not realise that more would be needed than was allocated.

10.36 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I wish to respond to a question put much earlier by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), who asked what was the purpose of the debate. He then went on to produce his own argument about it, but the question is worth considering.

A clear technical answer was initially spelt out by the Minister and is contained under various headings in the order. We are dealing with matters under appropriation, which, under Consolidated Fund provisions for Northern Ireland, are now to be adopted or rejected. That allows a wide-ranging debate on many bits and pieces, and many useful items are raised under that heading.

Another possibility is that we could have a wider and more integrated debate because this is probably the nearest item to a Budget for Northern Ireland. Were we having a Budget debate, we would expect Front-Bench Members to set out clearly their differences in attitude and position, which would be reflected in the speeches of Back-Bench Members. Although, to an extent, Front-Bench Members do that, Members representing Northern Ireland, whose major concern this is, deal only with bits and pieces, although they are often of considerable interest. Interestingly, their position appears to be interventionist as they seem to want to be involved in many areas and to seek developments in their constituencies where there is unemployment, deprivation and the need to keep open and extend various services.

I have been in the House for many appropriation debates, because we have two each year. We will continue to have two such debates each year, even when a Northern Ireland Select Committee is set up, because that will be an investigatory Committee, not a legislative Committee. Therefore, we shall need to go through that process.

Although I hear such interventionist and rather collectivist views from Northern Ireland Members representing the Democratic Unionist party, the Ulster Unionist party, the Ulster Popular Unionist party and the Social Democratic and Labour party, what I do not get from those speeches is any clear understanding of the economic and social position and programmes of those parties, partly because they are obviously tied to the politics of persistent opposition. Being in persistent opposition, they must fight their own corner and sometimes they end up fighting in ways that are not always consistent. I do not necessarily see hon. Members from all the parties to which I have referred trooping in the Lobby in a rather interventionist way with the Labour party, which is still slightly more interventionist than the Conservative party.

From those debates, I should like to understand not only the massive problems that can be listed under the various headings but the general idea among the different political parties about how to handle the economic and social problems that exist in Northern Ireland.

I shall quote briefly from the citizen's inquiry, the Opsahl report, which dealt not only with constitutional and political matters but economic and social concerns. Unfortunately, we have had little discussion about that document, although there was a two-hour debate about it in another place recently. The submission of the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust suggested how we should look at the economic and social problems of Northern Ireland:

"The notion of the mini Marshall Plan of recovery for Northern Ireland could captivate the imagination and build upon the ad hoc approached to date. Northern Ireland currently operates in a planning vacuum totally dependent upon the exigencies of the British economy. Without an indigenous economic and social strategy, we restrict ourselves to a peripheral dependent status with little impetus for change and development. A broad-based regional strategy with challenging goals and targets set within a realistic timescale could transform our political economy. The process of compiling a recovery plan, symbolic of the collective response to adversity and opportunity, could intrinsically be an important part of the healing process that urgently needs to take place in Northern Ireland."

If it were possible for discussions about a recovery plan to take place in Northern Ireland, that could help the political process. The beauty about economic and social issues is that comprise can work within them. Arguments can be put forward in negotiations, say, between trade unionists and employers. What can happen is that a temporary compromise solution for today is reached so that people can involve different tactics to achieve an improved position for the future.

When discussions are political, about boundaries and the flag, those matters are not subject to compromise and reflect the problems that exist widely in Northern Ireland. Therefore, the more we can involve ourselves in discussing bread and butter issues, and tie them to an overall strategy for Northern Ireland, the better that will be. I appeal to hon. Members on both sides of the House to take the appropriate debate seriously.

My hon. Friends on the Opposition Back Benches do not take the debate seriously enough. Besides my speech, we have had a speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy), but we are the only two Back Benchers who have been here throughout the debate. The debate does not pull in other Labour Members, apart from our Front-Bench spokesmen and those who are on duty.

If we managed to pull our hon. Friends into this debate they would probably be alienated by much of it, which is technical, detailed and limited. We need to extend the scope of the debate, but without extending the length of speeches, to consider other matters. I know that hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland have difficulties because the House offers them no decent procedures to enable them to discuss their concerns. This is one of the few opportunities for them to express their constituency concerns, but that distorts the nature of the debate.

The debate is a good opporunity to talk about matters of key concern to Northern Ireland. It could be fruitful in terms of improving the situation there. Nothern Ireland is about not just violence, boundaries, flags and borders but the day-to-day life of the people and the conditions with which they live—for example, high unemployment. Every year, 8,000 new people come on to the labour market, but just 4,000 jobs are found for them. Those who fail to find a job have either to take unemployment benefit or move to Britain for employment opportunities. In the past 20 years, Northern Ireland has witnessed a far greater decline in its industrial base than that experienced in Britain.

We must not consider Northern Ireland as a spin-off of the British economy, because 44 per cent. of its work force is dependent upon the operation of the public sector. The Government's attitude to the public sector and the restraints that they impose on it in Britain are not only entirely inappropriate for Britain but especially inappropriate for Northern Ireland. The Government must adopt a different approach, which offers a strategic plan for Northern Ireland and which does not rule out the position in the island of Ireland.

According to some of the views presented today, it is as though a fixed prosperity exists in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Member is criticising hon. Members who have spoken according to the confines of the draft appropriation order. All the speeches—I have listened to a great many of them because I have been in the Chair twice this evening—have been entirely focused on the varying elements of the order and entirely correctly. Had hon. Members broadened that to a strategic debate involving the whole of the isle of Ireland, I would have had to bring them to order—as I am doing the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Barnes: I am not denying that all the speeches have been in order. I was not complaining about that, but questioning whether they were, at all times, relevant to the major problems in Northern Ireland. One can argue against people's speeches on political, economic and social grounds without arguing that those speeches were somehow procedurally incorrect.

Developments within Northern Ireland, which link it with the island of Ireland, are also appropriate to the debate.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): The hon. Member seems to be arguing that the situation in Eire is much better than that in Northern Ireland, yet is it not correct that it has an unemployment rate of 19 per cent. compared with 14 per cent. in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Barnes: That reinforces the view that, sometimes, economic and social matters should be considered not just on a regional basis with Northern Ireland, but on an all-Ireland basis, because prosperity is not something that is restricted to specific areas. Overall conditions, which allow trade to develop between different areas, produce prosperity——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his views, and if this were a general debate on Northern Ireland, such comments would be entirely appropriate. This evening's debate is clearly drawn within the appropriation order. The hon. Gentleman must confine his comments to the elements of the order and forget the broader brush, until such time as the House has a broad-brush debate on Northern Ireland's future.

Mr. Barnes: There have been arguments about investment in the Larne area and whether that should take priority over investment that would link developments with Ireland. Even in the context of the appropriation order, what occurs in different areas of Northern Ireland is of significance in respect of trade, development and economic furtherance in the whole area.

The argument is sometimes put as though there is a contest between, for example, the constituencies of South Down and Mid-Ulster as to which should be the target of resources, when what is needed is the encouragement of economic growth and development from which both can benefit. I suggest that the same applies to the island of Ireland. There should be concern for the whole area, and the strategy for the north of Ireland is relevant.

10.51 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Northern Ireland Members have expounded the needs of their constituencies and developed the principles that they consider are right for the Province. All aspects of the needs of the people of Northern Ireland have been covered. I shall draw a few of those strands together and deal with a number of issues arising from the order—particularly in respect of health and social services, and housing.

The hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker), who has a special interest in housing, dwelt on a number of issues. I consider that health and housing are connected. If we believe in putting people first, as we do, and in preventing ill health, we must tackle the causes of ill health. My hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) dealt at length with unemployment, which contributes to poverty. Poor housing and the lack of affordable housing leads to ill health in families, greater hardship, anxiety, and greater pressures on general practitioners and the health service.

Housing is a significant factor. In line with Government demands, a housing strategy was provided by the Housing Executive committee last October, following wide consultation with interested organisations and individuals throughout the Province. That strategy revealed that over the next three years Northern Ireland needs 4,500 additional dwellings. Of those 1,500 homes per year, 1,400 will have to be new properties. Those figures are based on a rising level of urgent housing need, increased housing formations, community care pressures and a decline in accommodation re-lets.

Some of the details in that strategy report on urgent needs are as follows. In March 1990, 9,210 applicants were registered as requiring urgent need. In 1991, that figure increased to 9,906. In 1992, it increased to 9,922. Last year, it increased to 10,395. Therefore, there is a growing need for the Government to look at housing needs in Northern Ireland.

The number of housing allocations in March 1993 was 10,248. In March 1992, it was 11,170, so there is a relative and constant allocation of properties. The population in the area over the 10 years from 1981-91 increased by 40,663. The number of households increased by more than 68,000. That is what has developed over the past decade in respect of the need for housing. We have witnessed a reduction in the provision of resources for housing need. If we look at the resources available in 1987-88, we can see that the allocation was £57 million. The projection in the order for 1995-96 is £57 million. In other words, there is no increase, but a decrease in real money available for new housing. Therefore, a significant factor has to be considered when looking at the resources for housing need.

Mr. Heald: How much should be spent, then? What is the Labour party's policy?

Mr. O'Brien: I am coming to that, and I will advise the hon. Gentleman what should be spent on housing.

It is not just new housing that must be examined. In 1987-88, £45 million was allocated for improvement and

[Mr. O'Brien]

repairs of private sector dwellings. In 1995-96, the allocation is £43 million, which represents a reduction in the amount being made available for housing improvement. Hon. Members who have addressed the debate on behalf of their constituents have made it clear that there is a general need for more resources to be allocated for housing improvement and repairs. If the hon. Gentleman had been present in the debate, he would have heard one Member after another express the view that they need more resources for housing need and new housing.

We then had the situation of homelessness in Northern Ireland. In 1991-92, there were more than 10,000 applications for housing need. In 1992-93, the figure was 10,099. The percentage of people accepted as homeless in Northern Ireland has remained constant at around 40 per cent. Therefore, I consider that a further issue that must be addressed.

Modernisation was referred to by a number of hon. Members. It is a vexed issue because, when the Housing Executive makes a contribution to improve houses in certain areas, because of the lack of resources that are available, there are aggrieved people who are not included in the current programme. They fear that, because of the reduction in resources being made available, their turn in the improvement programme could be put further back, or even delayed to the extent that the tenants of the property would never see the improvements or modernisation carried out. The Housing Executive is often placed in a Catch-22 or no-win situation: it wishes to carry out improvements and modernisations, but because of the reduction in resources it must advise frustrated tenants that it is not their turn. That makes it more difficult for its administration to continue.

The Housing Executive has not the resources to carry out a major programme. Tenants suffer considerable anxiety when it is forced to provide some houses with new kitchens, bathrooms and windows and leave others, because of the lack of finance. The other tenants worry about when their houses will be modernised. There is always doubt about the present Government's policies, and people have every right to fear that the extra modernisations will not be carried out. In addition to the usual funds, block resources should be made available to tackle the problem posed by this vicious modernisation programme.

If the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) is concerned about the need to improve houses in Northern Ireland, he should read the 1991 housing conditions survey, which suggested that some 40,660 sub-standard dwellings would remain to be improved over a four-year period. If he is interested, he should join us in our efforts to ensure that the tenants of those sub-standard houses are allowed to have improvements carried out.

Targeting and additional resources are also needed for renovation grants. The housing survey revealed that more than 50,000 houses in Northern Ireland were sub-standard, and that many were unfit for habitation. In Fermanagh, 23·3 per cent. of housing stock is in need of renovation; in Magherafelt, the figure is 17·8 per cent. We cannot have a concerted programme to deal with that under the provisions of the order.

Why is that? Why can we not have a concerted, one-off action programme to carry out the necessary renovations and provide the additional money? That would give some hope to people living in sub-standard houses. I consider it a universal right to have a warm, comfortable house, and that is what the Northern Ireland Housing Executive wants to provide. The only obstacle is the fact that the Government will not provide the resources.

The Government are providing a budget of £538 million for housing in 1995-96. According to the Housing Executive's survey, that will leave a shortfall of £54 million in the next three years. I do not think that that is an unreasonable amount to allow the Housing Executive, over three years, to increase its housing stock—and that is the policy that I shall pursue on behalf of the Labour party. If the Government are really interested in helping people in Northern Ireland to obtain reasonable homes, they must provide the necessary resources.

The Minister should consider the issue of housing revenue account income in the form of rents. The Government keep increasing rents in Northern Ireland by 6, 7 or 8 per cent. more than the rate of inflation. That is higher than any other increases in Northern Ireland. They then complain that housing benefit payments are much too high. The Secretary of State for Social Security has said that people who are in receipt of high housing benefit payments will be taken out of high-charge housing—evicted—and put into cheaper, sub-standard accommodation.

Ministers are being hypocritical in charging rents that are way above inflation. People on housing benefit in Northern Ireland whose rents have been increased are now being told that they will have to leave their high-rent properties and move into low-rent, sub-standard properties, which will affect their health.

Housing and the health service must be considered together. The health service has never faced a greater threat or been under such pressure, and that point must be addressed by Ministers. Hospital trusts are being established in Northern Ireland, which will mirror what happens in the regions of Britain. Problems that are affecting trust hospitals in the rest of Britain—a lack of funding for patient care, doctors having to pace themselves to prevent a funding gap before the end of the financial year—will occur in Northern Ireland.

Hon. Members have referred to delays in operations being carried out. In other parts of the United Kingdom, the waiting list for cataract operations is more than 18 months. Waiting lists are growing and the patients charter has no meaning. If that is what will develop as a result of the order, I say that privatisation and commercialisation—hallmarks of the Government's changes to the health service—are not the way forward for the health service in Northern Ireland.

We must change the way in which the Government view hospital trust programmes. The so-called episode of care is now recorded in hospitals—patients moving from one ward to another or simply returning to a different bed after visiting the operating theatre. Such actions are counted as a new activity. That is the record of patient care in trust hospitals.

I appeal to the Minister to have regard to these two important issues—housing and health—because I consider that one is dependent on the other. The Government must act to improve housing so that we can then improve health care. I ask the Minister to consider very carefully the points that I and other hon. Members have made.

11.8 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Ancram): May I quickly refer to the speech of the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), who understandably spoke of resources? We are all concerned about resources; indeed, the order is about resources. It was interesting to hear him use this opportunity effectively to commit his party to a major increase—£54 million—in public expenditure on housing. He knows that to achieve that under the consequential formula of the block there would have to be a substantial increase in United Kingdom public expenditure.

I merely wish to inquire whether the hon. Member has cleared that pledge with the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman), the shadow Chief Secretary, or whether it is another pledge by a Labour spokesman that will be disowned by a Labour Treasury spokesman at the first opportunity.

We have had a good debate and I have a little time to answer some of the questions that have been asked, as I have been invited to do. It is not often that I am invited to speak at great length, but that was the invitation made by a number of hon. Members and I shall take advantage of it as long as the Clerks and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, permit.

Anyone who has listened to the debate from its beginning at, I think, 4.30 pm must have learnt a lot about Northern Ireland. We have talked about Northern Ireland from north to south, from east to west, back to front and in the smallest detail. I do not think that there is a road or hospital that has not been mentioned, and I regard that as a healthy aspect of the debate because it provides us with an opportunity to deal with problems that are important to the people who live in the constituencies of the hon. Members who have spoken.

Clearly I shall not be able to respond to all the matters that have been raised. As for those that I do not have the time to cover or which need to be dealt with in such detail that, rather than risk inaccuracy, I should like to check my facts before replying, I shall write to hon. Members or ask my colleagues at the Northern Ireland Office to do so as appropriate.

Several references have been made to St. Patrick. I learned a long time ago that I should never become involved in arguments about him, but, when I visited the Ulster museum the other day, I wondered how many figures he had had, in view of the number on display in glass cases in the museum.

The background to the debate is that we all want a prosperous Northern Ireland. We want a Northern Ireland that will attract investment and jobs. For that reason, I was disappointed that the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) began his speech in his traditional way, telling us how bad and awful everything was in Northern Ireland. There is a tendency for hon. Members following such a speech perhaps to concentrate on the downside of what they perceive to be the problems of Northern Ireland rather than on the upside.

With due respect to hon. Members, I hope that in debates such as this we can sometimes try to talk up Northern Ireland. Whenever I come back from Northern Ireland and talk to people who are considering investing there, I certainly say what a wonderful place it is, how good the education and services are and what a good place it is to make an investment and create jobs. It is worth our remembering that in our debates.

The hon. Member for Wigan referred to the Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte report, but he was very selective. He omitted to mention that the review concludes that the Northern Ireland local economy has continued to perform well relative to other parts of the United Kingdom and that the outlook for the Northern Ireland economy in 1994 is probably one of the best for a number of years. A survey carried out for the review found that more than half of local firms interviewed are committed to expansion in 1994. That is good news, and I would have hoped that the hon. Gentleman would mention it.

There are other pieces of good news. The PA consulting group quarterly survey of business prospects in January 1994 stated that the recession was over for the manufacturing sector in Northern Ireland. The Confederation of British Industry's Northern Ireland business confidence survey, also from January this year, said that companies' own business confidence and their confidence in the Northern Ireland economy were at record levels. It is important to make those points because they will attract industry and jobs to Northern Ireland and, my goodness, we need that in view of the fact that much of the publicity concentrates on the troubles rather than on the good things.

Having said that, I shall deal with some of the specific points that have been made. The hon. Members for Wigan and for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) mentioned income support levels as against fuel costs. Income support levels, including premiums payable to pensioners, families and disabled people, are intended to cover normal day-to-day living expenses, including heating costs. No specific amount is identified for expenditure on fuel. The rates of benefit were increased by 3·6 per cent. from April 1993 and people on income support are better off, as they are no longer required to make a 20 per cent. contribution towards domestic rates from their benefit.

From April 1994, pensioners and disabled people will receive an extra 50p a week or 70p for couples, on top of uprating for inflation, to help with fuel bills. I am sure that hon. Members will argue that that may not be enough, but I say to my hon. Friends, especially my hon. Friend the Member for North Down, that that shows that the Government have recognised that there will be problems and have sought to try to meet them.

The hon. Member for Wigan also raised the question of the Buddy Bear trust, as did the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea). I have to be a little careful in what I say here because, as the hon. Gentleman knows, there is a judicial review before the courts. For that reason, I have to be cautious about my comments. However, I can say that the Buddy Bear trust conductive education school is not eligible for grant aid as it is provisionally registered as an independent school; that is part of the problem.

To qualify for grant aid, it would have to make a successful application for grant-aided school status through the normal statutory procedures. The school has been inspected, which has led to the identification of certain weaknesses in its educational provision which remain the subject of discussion with the school trustees. The hon. Gentleman must accept that I cannot say more at the moment because of the judicial review.

The Public Accounts Committee report on road safety was raised by a number of hon. Members. Obviously, we want to consider the report's recommendations and the comments made by hon. Members in this debate most

[Mr. Michael Ancram]

carefully before a response is made to the Committee in due course. The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) asked why no reference had been made to funding for 1994-95 in terms of the general debate and of road safety in particular. That will, of course, be the subject of a separate debate later in the summer when the main estimates for Northern Ireland Departments for next year are presented. The order touches only a part of next year to see us into the early part of it before the next order becomes operative.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) raised the question of fire regulations. I listened carefully and seriously to what he said. I wish that he had given me notice of his question, because it is a serious issue. I should like to look into the matter closely before replying to him. If he had given me notice, I might have been able to do so at the time. I am sure that he appreciates that, given the nature of what he has raised, rather than trying to answer off the cuff or with incomplete information, I should like to look into the matter and then to answer him. Given the interest expressed by hon. Members in what the hon. Gentleman said, I shall try to make arrangements to ensure that other hon. Members who have taken part in the debate, and possibly others more widely, are made aware of my reply.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East, who gave me his apologies for having to leave and not being here for the winding-up speeches, mentioned capital provision in education, as did a number of other hon. Members. Some £50 million will be spent this year, with £20 million going to major building works. He spoke about Limavady grammar school in his constituency, and I shall write to him on that matter.

The moratorium on capital spending was not an easy decision for me to take. I have to allocate my share of the block according to the priorities, as I see them. Those decisions are never easy. Given the nature of the block this year, I thought that it was important that I concentrated the available resources on classroom and teacher provision. I am sure that hon. Members who have been involved in education would agree that that had to be the first priority.

The result was that I had to announce a moratorium on capital spending. I hope that the moratorium will not need to last long. It allows me to match my resources in terms of the budget that we have set ourselves for this year. I hope that it will not cause more than some small delays, rather than actually stopping any particular projct from going ahead. I cannot be exact on that, because we are not yet in the financial year to which the moratorium refers.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East also mentioned the Limavady bypass. It is now included in the Department of the Environment's current major works programme and the first stage is programmed to start in 1997-98.

The hon. Members for Londonderry, East and for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) made a lot of the question of the rural planning strategy. The hon. Member for Londonderry, East asked what would happen to rural planning, on which the Department of the Environment has published a new strategy.

The main thread of the new rural planning strategy is to assess and balance the need for development, houses, jobs and so on in any especial area againt the need to protect and conserve the environment. It is about getting the right type of development in the right place with the right design. That will require the willing co-operation of all key players in the rural development area.

Having once been a planning Minister in Scotland, I understand the difficulties of planning and I was pleased to be informed—I hope that it is correct—that the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone has arranged a meeting with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, where he will be able to discuss the issues that he has raised tonight. Given the detail of what the hon. Gentleman said, I suspect that my hon. Friend will be better briefed for that meting than is normally the case when we meet hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster spoke of the reduction in the rate of hill livestock compensatory allowance. Hon. Members will be aware of the pressure on public expenditure and the agriculture budget is not immune from those pressures. The reduction in those allowances has to be seen in the context of hill farm incomes. Those have increased substantially for a second year, helped significantly by improved cattle prices and increased livestock premiums. Those include a higher rate of suckler cow premiums in Northern Ireland than in Great Britain. There are strong indications that that trend will continue in 1994-95 with further increases in premium payments for cattle.

I note the comments of the hon. Members for Mid-Ulster and for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) on the problems of pig farmers. If I may, I shall draw those to the attention of my noble Friend and I shall ask her to communicate with the hon. Members about that.

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster also talked about the takeover of Unipork by Bridgewater Foods Holdings Ltd., and I recognise the importance of that factory to his constituency. I am told that the Industrial Development Board will be maintaining contact with the company and will be considering what assistance can be made available when a business plan is available. It is not possible at this stage to comment on the future size and shape of the business, as those matters are under the commercial judgment of the new owners.

The hon. Members for Mid-Ulster and for Antrim, North raised the question of the Newry bypass in connection with the Larne road. I realise that that has been a matter of contention for some time. The hon. Members suggest that there is some significant political interference, but that is simply not borne out by the facts. The A1 Belfast to Dublin road and the A8 Belfast to Larne road have always enjoyed a high priority in the roads service major works programme.

The completion of the Newry bypass will resolve a long-standing problem experienced by traffic using the A1 and, it is hoped, will lead to expansion of trade at the ports of Larne and Belfast. It is worth remembering that, because it was referred to by a number of other hon. Members.

The Belfast to Larne road is already of a high standard, with some 30 per cent. being dual carriageway or motorway. In general, it can cope with existing volumes of traffic, but ultimately it is planned to dual the remaining single carriageway section. That first stage of dualling has been included in the latter part of the 1997-98 major works programme. The remaining stages will be taken forward as funding permits.

I can assure hon. Members that the Government are committed to maintaining and developing transport links

between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. All Northern Ireland ports and airports receive substantial European regional development fund grant support. In the years 1994-99, more than £100 million is available under the European regional development fund programme, aimed at improving access to major transport links. I hope that hon. Members will see, therefore, that a lot of work will be possible in the next few years.

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster also raised the question of the location of industrial projects. The Government cannot force private sector companies to locate in specific areas. Recent inward investment successes by the IDB have shown that a good spread of projects can be achieved throughout Northern Ireland—a consideration which is always very much in the mind of the IDB in trying to encourage inward investment.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the recent decision to extend industrial relations legislation governing unfair dismissal to part-time workers in this country and asked whether it would apply in Northern Ireland. The Government's view is that Northern Ireland industrial relations legislation should in general conform with that of the rest of the United Kingdom unless there are special local circumstances to be taken into account. It is hard to see that such circumstances apply in this particular case.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of the closure of the Tyrone county maternity services. I am sorry to hear that he has not yet met my noble Friend. I understand that she has agreed to meet him. If that is not also his understanding, I will check to ensure that it is the case.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) asked about capital spending on schools. I am aware of the problems in his area, and I will of course bear them in mind along with the other priorities currently before me. The hon. Gentleman mentioned school visits to France. I must say that, much as I should like to help, I have no authority over French fishermen, although I recognise the point that he made.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to additional funding for factory building. The additional funding for such building will be used in a number of recent inward investment projects secured by the IDB. The outlook for the future also looks promising in this regard: negotiations are at an advanced stage with major investors from Japan, Taiwan, the United States and Korea, and the IDB assistance will include assistance for the factory building requirements of some of them if they succeed in coming to Northern Ireland.

A number of questions were asked about agriculture. If I may, I will ask my noble Friend to write to hon. Members because I am conscious of the time constraint that I am under at the moment.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) and the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) asked about Strangford Lough marine nature reserve. Although it has been suggested by some fishermen that the designation of that reserve will result in a ban on commercial fishing, that is not the case. The stated objectives of the Department of the Environment for the management of the MNR make it clear that commercial exploitation of the fish stocks should continue on a sustainable basis. A six-week period of public consultation is, as I understand it, currently under way, and we shall have to await the results of that consultation.

The hon. Member for South Down referred to funding for care in the community. I am pleased to be able to inform hon. Members that, in 1993-94, boards were allocated and additional £29 million, including £24·6 million transferred from the social security budget which was specifically earmarked for the implementation of the new community care arrangements. In the coming year, the allocation to boards under "People First" increases by £41·2 million to more than £70 million. There may always be arguments about resources, but the Government are putting substantial resources behind the initiative——

Mr. William O'Brien: I did not want to intervene at the beginning of the Minister's speech, but he asked where I suggested the money should come from to finance housing. May I suggest to him that he scraps all the consultancies and consultations in connection with the privatisation of water and sewerage in Northern Ireland and uses the resources from that to finance other projects in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Ancram: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has come up with an answer that will save him from the wrath of the hon. Member for Peckham, at least for the moment, although I suspect not for long.

A number of hon. Members asked about Belvoir Park hospital. I am aware that there is a great deal of concern about that and other hospitals in the Eastern health and social services board area. The board published its strategy for acute services at the end of last year and that is now under consideration by my noble Friend Lady Denton who has recently taken over responsibility in these matters. I understand that my noble Friend is currently engaged in a programme of meeting hon. Members and representatives of district councils and community groups and hopes to be able to announce her conclusions before Easter. Hon. Members would not expect me to comment any further on that at this stage.

One other question was raised at some length by a number of hon. Members—that of Republic of Ireland students studying in Northern Ireland. I am sure that hon. Members know that there is a requirement under a European Court decision that it would be discriminatory to treat students from other member states less well than home students. Thus, fees are paid for Republic of Ireland students, as well as other European students, who come to Northern Ireland universities. I agree very much with my hon. Friend the Member for North Down, who, in a splendid speech, made it clear that universities exist to help people to mix. It would be appalling if Northern Ireland universities were for Northern Ireland people only, and if nobody else could come to them. I am very glad that my hon. Friend gave us his support.

We have had a very full debate. I believe that there is in Northern Ireland much about which we can be pleased and of which we can be proud. I hope that in the next Northern Ireland appropriation debate, in the summer, we shall hear the good news about the Province and see evidence of the resulting jobs and investment that it deserves.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.

Faulty Gas Supplies

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

11.30 pm

Mr. John Heppell (Nottingham, East): I am never sure whether I have a greater dislike of the House being full and emptying, or of the House being empty and emptying even further, when I get up to speak in an Adjournment debate. But that is my last attempt at humour in this contribution, which will be brief, as I want to give my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) an opportunity to participate. My hon. Friend has concerns similar to mine, and we have the Minister's agreement to his participation.

I have two reasons for initiating this debate. The first is a tragedy that occurred in my constituency in 1992. Two young brothers—Alan and Trevor Leighton—died from carbon monoxide poisoning. It is alleged that the landlord of their flat reconnected a gas supply to an appliance that had been condemned by a qualified gas fitter. I realise that the Minister will not be able to comment on this case, as the landlord is being prosecuted for breaches of health and safety legislation and of regulations governing the safety of gas installations.

My other reason for bringing this matter to the attention of the House derives from my hearing a Radio 4 programme called "Face the Facts", which showed that my impression that this was an isolated case was wrong—that such incidents were happening across the country.

The fact that they occur in different places at different times may give the impression that there are not many of them. However, it is estimated that 30 people a year die from carbon monoxide poisoning, and that more than 400 end up in hospital casualty departments. Other estimates put the figures higher. According to some, there is a death every week—52 a year. The tragedy is that many of those involved are young people who have moved into multi-occupation accommodation at the start of lives of their own.

A very sad aspect of the case to which I have referred —that of Alan and Trevor Leighton—is that they realised that there was something wrong. But they did not know that the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning were the result of a faulty gas appliance. Something must be done to ensure that such avoidable tragedies do not happen. No court action or feelings of vengeance will bring back those brothers or any of the other victims. Not even justice can do that.

We need to forget about the after-effects of these tragedies and consider prevention. That must be our aim, but it can be secured only by three means. First, we need greater public awareness—awareness among students, landlords, doctors, and so on—of all the symptons of carbon monoxide poisoning. In addition, we need tougher enforcement of current regulations. There are regulations in force that should be enforced with the fullest rigour of the law. Such enforcement could prevent needless deaths.

The third point—I hope in this respect that the issue will not stop being a non-party political matter, as I am sure the Minister shares my concerns in this regard—is that we may need new regulations.

The Gas Consumers Council has done quite a good job. I am not complaining that it has not tried. The council allocated a week last September as gas safety week. During that week, and after it, leaflets were sent to students, contacts were made with student organisations, special leaflets were issued for landlords, and general leaflets were issued to the general public. However, when I asked several of my colleagues whether they had noticed gas safety week last September, the majority said that they had not. That is the problem.

Several years ago, when people died in similar circumstances, a major national campaign was instituted. I recall television programmes along the lines of current programmes about fire prevention. Those programmes graphically illustrated the results of bad gas appliances. I hope that the Minister will tell us of measures that will follow along those lines. I hope that there will be measures to protect young people in flats.

With regard to enforcement, section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 needs to be followed more rigorously. New regulations could strengthen matters to ensure that the tragedies to which I have referred do not recur. The Health and Safety Executive's pipe gas sub-committee, which may sound old-fashioned and boring, want to table amendments as part of the HSE's review to make it a statutory obligation on landlords to ensure that appliances are serviced properly. I hope that the Minister will tell us that the Government will be prepared to accept those changes in the regulations.

The Building Regulations Advisory Committee wants to introduce regulations to ensure that notifications of the construction of flues to local authorities is made a statutory requirement, so that local authority inspectors can ensure that flues are not blocked by debris and that the proper materials have been used to ensure that flues are safe.

I hope that those are the kind of regulations that the Minister supports. However, in the near future, two factors could aggravate the situation we already face. I understand the reason for the reduction in the number of gas showrooms. That is a financial consideration for British Gas, which wants central showrooms in large cities.

I am concerned that there are fewer gas showrooms where people can pick up leaflets offering proper advice. In addition, gas showrooms no longer ask to install the appliances that have been purchased. People who work for British Gas may not install those appliances. Instead, people will be given a list of firms—admittedly Confederation of Registered Gas Installers firms—which will fit those appliances.

If British Gas does not install appliances, I am concerned that there will be a tendency for people to revert to do-it-yourself. If someone is not told that British Gas is going to install an appliance, that person might think, "I'll buy the appliance, and I'm sure that I can fit it myself: it's very easy." I am worried about that, and I hope that the Minister will deal with those problems.

I am also worried that, even though firms may be CORGI-registered, those who come to work on the equipment may not be properly qualified. I hope that the Minister will look at ways to ensure that everyone knows that, when a fitter comes to fit, repair or maintain an appliance, he is properly qualified and has had the proper training.

I recognise that the Conservative party has a problem with regulations. I accept that its philosophy is to abolish regulations. But Conservatives must realise that some regulations are necessary and serve a purpose. I think that I can disagree with the Under-Secretary of State for Employment about whether there is froth on beer. I think that I can become much more passionate than her about

whether I should have a decent head on my beer and whether I should have a full pint of beer. But there is a big difference—we are talking not about froth on beer, but about people's lives.

I am sure that the Minister, and Conservative and Labour Members, will share my concerns about the safety of gas appliances. I hope that the Minister will try to give me answers tonight that will help to put my mind at rest.

11.42 pm

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) and the Minister for allowing me to participate in the debate.

As my hon. Friend said, we are talking in the context of unnecessary deaths. There were two unnecessary deaths in my constituency a year or two ago. Richard Peace and Beth Allard died from carbon monoxide poisoning from a faulty gas water heater. They lived in a purpose-built flat that was not covered by regulations governing houses in multiple occupation. They were not living in student accommodation, and so had not received some of the publicity that has been distributed through student unions.

I was shocked to discover afterwards that the same company that owned that property also owned more than 50 other properties in adjoining streets. It seemed likely that the same unqualified builder who had been responsible for the work on the purpose-built flat had also done work on the other properties.

Despite efforts by the local authority trading standards officers to have surveys carried out, three or four months after promises had been made by the property company, the officers were still waiting to hear that checks had been carried out. Within three days of the deaths, I was told that the landlord was trying to retrieve the keys from the police in order to re-let the flat.

That may have been an extreme case, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East said, we know that, on average, 30 to 40 deaths occur every year. I am sure that everyone wants not merely action after the event, but action to prevent such incidents.

My hon. Friend identified the issues that we must examine, including awareness. Campaigns have been conducted, and I pay tribute to people such as Anne Watkinson and the Gas Safety Action Group. As a result of tragedies that they have suffered, such people have done much to raise awareness of the problem. Students are becoming more aware because of some of the work that has been done in universities.

Many people think that gas safety involves leaking gas. In fact, a majority of the accidents and fatalities involve carbon monoxide poisoning, not gas leaks—virtually all of them occur in the home, predominantly in private rented accommodation. I agree with my hon. Friend about the need for large-scale and continuing publicity. It needs to involve lots of people, including the gas companies and the Health and Safety Executive.

I hope that the Government will consider how they could help with publicity, such as more high-profile television campaigns. Even where leaflets exist, it is a question of getting them to the right people. My local gas company considered sending out leaflets with bills. That is fine, but bills do not necessary go to the tenants or occupants. They may go to the landlord, and not be seen by those who need to see them.

Another issue is legislation and regulation. Houses in multiple occupation are better covered by regulation than other sorts of private lettings. I am aware of the proposals which the Health and Safety Executive has put out to consultation for amendment to the gas safety regulations, which would put a duty on landlords to ensure that gas appliances were kept in a safe condition, and would prohibit the future installation of open-flued appliances for space or water heating in accommdation designed for sleeping purposes. But that does not get rid of existing installations.

Perhaps we should consider how British Gas or CORGI-registered businesses could be encouraged to offer free safety checks. They may say that that is not good business, but if, at the same time, it were used as an opportunity to suggest that people should convert to balanced-flue apparatus or similar safer appliances, it could bring in some business that would compensate for the free checks.

I agree that we need tougher action against landlords. Incidently, on a small point that has nothing to do with carbon monoxide poisoning, when trading standards officers look for unsafe gas appliances, they have the power to enter a shop, find a gas cooker that looks unsafe, impound it and have it checked by the gas board. If it is unsafe, they can then take action against the seller.

I was astonished to discover, just a couple of days ago, that my local authority was being charged £500 for one gas cooker to be checked for safety purposes by the gas board. As my local authority said, it would be cheaper to buy the cooker and throw it on the rubbish tip, but it was afraid that that might encourage a market in second-hand gas cookers, which it did not want to develop.

Ultimately, whatever legislation we have, awareness is critical. Checks and regulations will prevent some of the problems, but both arms are needed. What do the Government intend to do, and will a statutory instrument put into effect the Health and Safety Executive's recommended changes to the regulations?

11.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I congratulate the hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Hepple) on securing this debate. He is right to say that this extremely serious subject concerns both sides of the House. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on his intervention.

In the time available to me, I shall endeavour to deal with the three areas identified by the hon. Member for Nottingham, East and taken up by the hon. Member for Walthamstow, which were awareness, tougher enforcement and the need for further regulation. If, however, because of pressure of time, I do not deal with those issues to the hon. Members' satisfaction, as always when a serious issue has been raised, I should be happy to meet or correspond with them on the subject. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, who is responsible for health and safety, would also be only too glad to do so.

On additional regulation, if I have time I shall explain that the approved code on training and the CORGI registration scheme are helping to improve overall standards in the installation and servicing of appliances. But the Health and Safety Commission believes that even more can be done to improve safety. In August last year,

[Miss Ann Widdecombe]

it published a consultative document that was designed to strengthen the 1984 regulations on safe installation and use, and, of course, provide greater protection to the public. We heard one example of the proposals, but it might be helpful if I ran through the gist of them.

First, the proposed regulations would require all landlords to maintain gas appliances properly and regularly. Secondly, landlords and other businesses would be required to use only CORGI-registered companies for maintenance and installation work.

Thirdly, the proposed regulations would restrict the type of gas appliances which are installed in sleeping accommodation, including bedsits. Our experience of accidents suggests that open-flued central heating boilers and open-flued or flueless water heaters should not be installed in bedrooms. In addition, it is quite cheap and easy to fit gas fires with detectors which cut the gas supply if there is a risk of carbon monoxide escaping into the room. The proposed new regulations would reflect those points.

Fourthly, the proposed changes would introduce for the first time the same levels of control on the use of liquefied petroleum gas as on piped gas. As the hon. Member for Nottingham, East may be aware, LPG is the type of gas that is used in more remote rural areas and in holiday caravan parks.

The Commission's proposals have received strong support from those who have commented on the document, ranging from student bodies, through local authorities, to the gas industry itself. The Commission is considering the revised regulations and a supporting approved code of practice, with the aim of laying regulations before the House in the summer. I am confident that these new regulations will add significantly to the safety of gas.

I now turn to the question of publicity. But before doing so, I should say that all hon. Members wish to express sympathy to the young people to whom the hon. Gentleman referred and, indeed, the two other young people who have been mentioned in this debate. In the first case, it is sub judice. In the second case, proceedings are being considered, so I cannot comment in detail. Certainly any cutting short of life is a tragedy, but for young people, and especially in the case of brothers, our sympathy goes to the bereaved families concerned.

My fellow Ministers and I share the hon. Gentleman's concerns about the importance of ensuring that people are aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning froom gas appliances. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Minister of State will shortly be meeting a delegation of those bereaved through carbon monoxide poisoning. They will discuss the current and proposed action by the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive to reduce not only the number of deaths but the number of incidents caused by such poisoning.

As the hon. Gentleman rightly pointed out, the problem with carbon monoxide is its insidious nature. Early symptoms of poisoning can easily be confused with influenza, and include headaches, general debility and nausea. Detection is much more difficult because the gas is colourless and tasteless.

While the Health and Safety Executive believes that people are generally aware of the risks of gas explosion, it believes that there is much less appreciation of the dangers of carbon monoxide. It has advised a number of recent consumer interest television programmes, and the publisher of the popular magazine *Bella*, in the preparation of features about carbon monoxide poisoning.

It has also established a gas safety awareness working group to co-ordinate a coherent programme of public information. This draws members from a number of interested bodies, including British Gas and Calor Gas, the Gas Consumers Council, the Gas appliance manufacturing industry, CORGI, the consumer safety unit of the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Health and Safety Executive.

The first fruit of this activity was a joint campaign between the Health and Safety Executive, British Gas, the Gas Consumer Council and CORGI in autumn last year —at the start of the academic year and of colder weather. It was aimed particularly at students and other young people living in rented accommodation. Three different leaflets were produced, plus a poster intended for display on college or university premises. British Gas contacted every college in the country, and enclosed copies of the leaflets and posters, and the HSE wrote to every local authority.

That campaign was featured on television and radio, and in national and local newspapers. British Gas printed 400,000 copies of the leaflet, aimed at young people, called "Is there a deadly killer in your digs?" All those were issued, and a second print run was needed. Another leaflet was directed at landlords, aimed to make them aware of their responsibilities.

The HSE will be encouraging the gas industry to maintain those efforts. For example, the next campaign will include medical professionals among its targets. It will seek to ensure that they are on the look-out for early signs of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Both hon. Members referred to enforcement action against landlords. In addition to action to increasing public awareness, the HSE can and does use its powers to prosecute landlords who endanger the safety of their tenants. Manchester city council was fined £25,000 following the death of a tenant after an appliance had been poorly installed by one of its workmen. Oldham council was fined £30,000 following its failure to maintain an appliance. A private landlord in Yorkshire was fined £15,000 following the death of two tenants.

I mention those cases to show that enforcement action is taken very seriously. In the two cases raised, hon. Members will know that such action is being taken and may be taken.

In the short time left, perhaps I can address the general issues raised by the debate. Gas provides 18 million householders with a cheap and efficient means of heating their homes and cooking. If properly used, the public can have confidence in its safety. We must all be aware, however, that it has two main dangers. First, a leak of gas may cause a fire or explosion. Secondly, when the by-products of burning gas are not properly vented to the outside atmosphere, that leads to carbon monoxide poisoning.

In the past five years, between 40 and 50 people have died each year in gas accidents. The greater proportion of those deaths have, as the hon. Member for Nottingham, East rightly said, been from carbon monoxide poisoning. In 1992-93, the latest year for which we have figures, 39 people died from carbon monoxide poisoning related to faulty gas appliances. A further 170 incidents of non-fatal

poisoning were reported. The main reasons for those tragedies were the poor initial installation of an appliance or a lack of regular maintenance.

What are we doing to reduce the risks and bring down the number of deaths and non-fatal incidents? Although there is no cause for complacency, a great deal has already been done. Deaths have decreased from 1,200 a year in the 1960s and more than 300 in the 1970s. In 1984, new regulations controlling the safe installation and use of gas were introduced. Those regulations set out very high standards for such matters as gas emergency controls, the safe use, testing and purging of pipes, and the installation and siting of appliances.

Also in 1984, responsibility for gas safety passed from the then Department of Energy to the HSC, which is an independent body. Its members are drawn from those with experience in industry, trade unions, local authorities and consumer protection. They have taken forward action on a number of fronts.

In 1988, the HSC published an approved code of practice about standards of training in safe gas installation. This describes the core elements of training courses needed to train a competent fitter. I accept what the hon. Member for Nottingham, East said about monitoring not just the company and the appliances but the fitters who are responsible for the installation and maintenance of those appliances.

In 1991, following advice from the HSC, the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) (Amendment) Regulations 1990 came into force. They require all gas installation businesses to register with a body approved by the HSE. At the moment, the only approved body is the Council for Registered Gas Installers, CORGI, which inspects each business annually. Each business must be registered. More than 45,000 businesses have registered.

CORGI can recommend improvements—for example, it has required that more than 20,000 operatives to undertake extra training. It can also remove incompetent businesses from its register. That is not an empty threat —about 10 businesses a month are deregistered. For self-employed installers, removal from the register means loss of their livelihood.

I have explained that the approved code on training and the CORGI registration scheme are helping to improve overall standards. I have already addressed the forthcoming proposals for increasing safety. I have explained what measures have been taken for increasing public awareness, and I have examined, briefly at any rate, what enforcement action, controls and registration criteria exist. I repeat to hon. Members that, if there is anything that I have not covered, I should be delighted to do so on a future occasion.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Tuesday 8 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL [*Lords*]

Ordered,

That the Committee on the British Waterways Bill [*Lords*] have leave, for the purpose of its consideration of the powers sought by the British Waterways Board in the Bill, to visit and inspect sites on the Grand Union Canal, provided that no evidence shall be taken in the course of such visit and that any party who has made an appearance before the Committee be permitted to attend by his Counsel, Agent or representative.—[*The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.*]

BILL PRESENTED

BRITISH RAILWAYS ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Mr. Secretary Lang presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to British Railways (to be presented under section 8 of the Act): And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Wednesday 16 March and to be printed [Bill 64].

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Object.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is objecting to the presentation of the Provisional Order Bill. I am sorry, but I cannot take an objection in this case.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Iraq

1. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the objectives of the British military contribution to the United Nations force covering Iraq.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): The objective of British military involvement in Iraq is to secure the Iraqi Government's compliance with all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Dalyell: May I ask a question of which I have given the Department notice? From the pictures that have been taken by the RAF, is there any hard evidence of wanton destruction in the heart of the marshes in the area around Querna, where the Tigris meets the Euphrates?

Mr. Hanley: The answer is yes. We are constantly gathering information on the southern marshes. Where it is suitable for public release, we shall consider doing so from time to time to raise the level of public awareness and to inform debate in the House. We have already released a video film showing villages destroyed by the Iraqi military. Since then, there has been growing evidence of drying out and flooding in the area. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the notice that he gave; if he would like to see the video film I can arrange for that.

Mr. Wilkinson: Is my hon. Friend aware that the RAF Harrier force is doing a first-class job from Turkey over northern Iraq, that last year about one third of Harrier crews were deployed overseas and that about half its crews are likely to be deployed overseas this year? Are not Her Majesty's forces being asked to do more with fewer resources? When will that process stop?

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the subject of the RAF Harriers based at Incirlick. There are eight GR7 Harriers based there on Op Warden and they fly an average of four reconnaissance sorties each days in support of the northern no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel. We should also pay tribute to the six Tornado GR1s which also fly on average four sorties in support of the southern no-fly zone south of the 32nd parallel. My hon. Friend will be aware that the RAF takes on those tasks willingly.

Military Operations

2. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of existing arrangements for the chartering of merchant tonnage in support of military operations; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): My Department's arrangements for chartering merchant vessels are kept under constant review. Last August, we placed a one-year ship broking

services contract with the Baltic Exchange to cover most of our requirements. We shall revisit this contract in the coming months.

Mr. Waterson: Does my hon. Friend think that there are any lessons to be drawn from the fact that during the Desert Shield and Desert Storm operations, only five out of 110 vessels utilised by British forces were British flagged, whereas 96 per cent. of those used in equivalent operations by the French forces were French flagged?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend makes a fair point, but he should be aware that the charter contracts were offered on the open market and it was quite possible for British shipping companies to take them up. As they made clear to us, they did not do so largely because they had contractual obligations, which they were honouring at that time. There is no great significance in the percentage figures to which my hon. Friend drew attention.

Dr. David Clark: The Minister will be aware of the heroic role that the merchant seamen played in the Normandy landings. Will he give the House an assurance that that contribution will be properly recognised in the D-day celebrations?

Mr. Aitken: Yes. I am glad to give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. The role of our merchant seamen was heroic in that conflict and it will be suitably recognised in the D-day celebrations.

Mr. Shersby: Does my hon. Friend recall the importance of Atlantic Conveyor during the Falklands conflict and the serious consequences that flowed from the loss of that vessel? Will he assure the House that, in the event of any similar conflict in other parts of world, the Department will have access to suitable merchant vessels capable of carrying helicopters and other similar equipment?

Mr. Aitken: We certainly have taken careful heed of the lessons of the Falklands war, including the sad destruction of Atlantic Conveyor. Some 52 British ships were either requisitioned or chartered during the Falklands war. As I told the House in a debate on 9 July, despite a diminution of the number of British-flagged ships, we still believe that there are sufficient ships on the UK and dependent territories register for our defence needs.

Bosnia

3. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current British deployment in Bosnia.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The current Army battalion group—1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards and its support units—will be relieved in April and May by the 2nd Battalion, Royal Anglian Regiment. At the request of the United Nations, we have also deployed a Cymbeline mortar-locating troop and a number of additional observers and monitors.

Mr. Macdonald: Is not it clear that General Rose has transformed the situation in Bosnia in the past month, building up for the first time a genuine momentum for a just peace in that country? Therefore, is not it shameful that the Government are still refusing, according to the answer that the Secretary of State has just given, to respond to General Rose's request for extra forces of a high calibre and instead have been handing out redundancy notices to troops already there? Should not the message from the Government to General Rose be, "You are doing a magnificent job. Keep it up. Regardless of what other countries do, we will not let you down"?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should at least do the House the courtesy of checking his facts before he makes rather foolish and ill-informed accusations. An elementary perusal of this morning's newspapers would have informed him that, yesterday, a meeting was convened at the United Nations—it was a British initiative—to discuss additional troops being sent to Bosnia. The United Kingdom has already made it clear that it believes that there is such a case for sending additional troops and that we look to other countries to join us in carrying out that initiative.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there will be a widespread welcome for what he has just said and, indeed, for anything that can be done to assist a brilliant British general in charge of United Nations forces?

Mr. Rifkind: I happily pay tribute to the remarkable work that General Sir Michael Rose is doing in Bosnia. A number of important initiatives have been making healthy progress in the past few weeks, including the success of the operation involving the removal of heavy artillery from Sarajevo and the Croat-Muslim ceasefire. I understand today that there may be substantial progress with regard to the handing over of Tuzla airport to the United Nations. Against that background, we are all anxious to do what we can to build on that important window of opportunity because, clearly, a gradual implementation of a ceasefire throughout Bosnia will not only be of enormous relief to the people of Bosnia but will provide the best opportunity of bringing back United Nations troops to their own countries at the earliest possible date.

Mr. Hardy: Earlier this afternoon, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces informed the House of the contribution made by the Royal Air Force in restraining Iraq. In addition to telling the House of the military contribution in Bosnia, will the Secretary of State tell us what contribution is currently made, or has recently been made, by the RAF and by naval aircraft?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct to remind us that the contribution in the Adriatic is being provided by all three services. The RAF has Tornado and Jaguar aircraft while the Royal Navy has not only ships in the Adriatic but Sea Harriers based on the carrier. That is a formidable tri-service operation, which illustrates that, even for a United Nations operation, sophisticated modern equipment is needed to ensure that the United Nations tasks can be fully carried out with the high degree of professionalism that we rightly expect.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind the wisdom of the ages—that it is all too easy to commit troops to battle and all too hard to get them out again afterwards? Some of us remember that when British troops were first deployed in Northern Ireland, it was not expected that they would have to stay for more than a few years. Now we have over 17,000 there.

Does not he feel that extra commitments bring into question the whole Government policy of cutting back on our armed forces?

Mr. Rifkind: I am very conscious of the points that my hon. Friend made in the earlier part of his question. Of course we are all anxious to ensure that the strategy pursued is that which has the best prospect not only of bringing peace to Bosnia but of allowing the early return home of British and other United Nations forces.

As for the second part of my hon. Friend's question, he should remember that although we have 2,500 troops in Bosnia, we are also in the process of reducing our presence in Germany by some 40,000 compared with what was required during the cold war. The comparison illustrates why it is reasonable to plan for a smaller Army than was necessary during that period.

Dr. David Clark: A battalion of the Duke of Wellington regiment, with its Saxon armed cars already painted white, has been on standby for nearly three weeks. Why have we had to wait to be able to respond to General Rose's request for an attempt to keep the peace? When will the Government stop vacillating, and when will we dispatch those extra troops?

Mr. Rifkind: I know that the hon. Gentleman is motivated more by a daily search for sound bites than by the need to develop a sound and coherent policy. I must remind him, however, that the operation in Bosnia is not a purely British operation; it is a United Nations operation. As the hon. Gentleman likes to pride himself on being a great admirer of the UN, he should welcome the lead that the United Kingdom is giving to try to ensure a co-ordinated and united UN resolve and response to the request for additional forces.

Trident

4. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Aitken: The Trident programme continues to make good progress, with HMS Vanguard due to enter service on time around the turn of the year.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer, which will be welcomed by all who are anxious for the freedom of this country and the defence of freedom worldwide. Does he agree that that progress would not have been made if we had listened to the Labour party in 1987, and would not be made if we were to listen to the unofficial leader of the Opposition today?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is right to pay tribute to the important role that the Trident force will play in safeguarding our freedoms. He is also right—although not quite up to date—in his criticisms of the Labour party. He may be unaware that at its last conference Labour passed, by an overwhelming majority, composite motion No. 48, which demanded the immediate scrapping of the Trident programme—a policy which would leave British workers unemployed and Britain undefended.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Will the Minister try to explain how a system that has been developed to produce massive and unthinkable damage—especially in the Soviet Union, to prevent it from making a first strike—will deter any small state from developing its own nuclear weapons or threatening to use those weapons?

Mr. Aitken: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman begins to understand the whole principle of deterrence. In regard to Russia, he may not have noted the important announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Yeltsin that no countries would target their missiles on each other any longer; his references to Russia are out of date. As for any conceivable involvement of a bandit state or an evil dictator, I think that both would probably be deterred by the threat of Trident missiles, which are likely to be sub-strategic as well as strategic.

Mr. Streeter: Is my hon. Friend aware that many thousands of people in the west country will be employed in the early years of the 21st century in maintaining the Trident submarine? Can he confirm that the Government remain committed to the fourth submarine, unlike the Labour party?

Mr. Aitken: Yes, I can indeed confirm that we remain committed to a fourth Trident submarine, for a very good reason: experience has shown us that the only way in which to be absolutely certain that we can maintain continuous patrolling of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent in our submarines is by having four boats available.

Mr. Donald Anderson: When will the Government take the danger of nuclear proliferation seriously? Last November, when the Government had a chance to reduce the number of nuclear warheads, they failed to do so; they reduced only the firepower on our nuclear submarines. Did not that send a negative signal to the countries in unstable parts of the world that have started, or are tempted to start, along the road to a nuclear capacity?

Mr. Aitken: The Government are firmly committed to non-proliferation and to encouraging that in all possible ways. As for signals, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that no Trident submarine will deploy with more than a maximum of 96 warheads and that, if our present plans continue, the total explosive firepower on a Trident submarine will be much the same as that deployed on Polaris submarines. Moreover, by the time that Trident is fully deployed, we expect that our whole operational nuclear arsenal will be some 25 per cent. less than our entire operational nuclear arsenal in 1990, so there is a reduction.

Mr. Brazier: Does my hon. Friend accept that some of us are deeply concerned that we might be confined to a sea-launched nuclear capability because nuclear proliferation means that in the long run we may face nuclear enemies in the third world for which we shall need an air-launched capability to provide effective deterrence?

Mr. Aitken: It is important to recognise that the announcement that we have made about the sub-strategic role of Trident means that our nuclear strike capability could reach almost anywhere from a Trident submarine with a targeted sub-strategic missile. We shall have the capability, although it is not an air-launched capability. We shall of course retain an air-launched capability until approximately 2007 as a result of retaining the WE177 bomb.

Training

5. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those countries for which his Department provides or has provided training in this country or elsewhere in defence-related matters in the last 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: Since 1984, students from some 116 countries have attend training courses in British military establishments. Also, I am pleased to announce to the House that today I have formally agreed that the United Kingdom will contribute to the training of a Baltic joint peacekeeping battalion composed of contingents from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia as part of a phased multinational programme of assistance. The United Kingdom's contribution will be led by the Royal Marines who will provide individual and company-level training.

Mr. Ainger: May I assure the House that that was not a planted question? Can the Secretary of State give the House an assurance that the Government are not providing military training to any country that is in breach of any UN resolution, in particular to Indonesia which, as the Secretary of State will I am sure know from seeing the documentary "Death of a Nation", has carried out a policy of genocide against the people of East Timor?

Mr. Rifkind: There have been times when we have provided training to Indonesia, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that we take into account the human rights record and other activities of any Government in determining whether military training would be appropriate.

Mr. Devlin: Is not it the case that many countries in the third world and the Caribbean, and especially some in Asia such as Nepal, have close links with this country because of the long-standing co-operation in military matters that we have undertaken with them? Will not the fact that many of their senior officers have been trained at British military academies provide a good basis for a relationship for us in the future?

Mr. Rifkind: That is indeed the case. Some of the most impressive training that we have provided has been to the new Governments in Zimbabwe and Namibia and it has enabled the integration of the various elements of their armed forces. We are, of course, currently providing a similar service in South Africa at the request of the South African Government and the African National Congress.

Menwith Hill

6. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why he has refused permission for a group of Labour hon. Members from Yorkshire to visit Menwith Hill station in North Yorkshire.

Mr. Hanley: For operational and security reasons, such visits are not in general allowed.

Mr. Madden: Is not it extraordinary that British Ministers should refuse elected Members of the British Parliament the opportunity to visit bases on British soil? Were British Ministers afraid of the information that American personnel might give us or did they feel that we could not be trusted with the mess silver?

Mr. Hanley: I have nothing to add to my previous answer.

Mr. Riddick: Is my hon. Friend aware that a few years ago, when I was a little younger and when I was chairman of the North Yorkshire Freedom Association, I organised a rather successful anti-CND demonstration at Menwith Hill? Is he further aware that, at that time, the station authorities refused access to the CND squatters camping outside? Does not it make perfect sense for the authorities now to refuse access to mischief-making Labour Members of Parliament with CND sympathies?

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right but I can tell him one thing: were a group of Conservative Members of Parliament to apply to visit Menwith Hill, it would receive the same response as the group of Labour Members.

Mr. Cryer: Is not one of the outrageous truths about Menwith Hill that it has never received any authority from Parliament and that it is operated by a foreign power, whether or not that foreign power is sympathetic? Therefore, it should be accountable to the House. Is not the Minister denying democratic accountability through the House by refusing to allow Members of Parliament to go to what is a secret eavesdropper on telecommunications from the United Kingdom, which operates without any implied or expressed authority from the House of Commons?

Mr. Hanley: It is a Ministry of Defence-owned property and it is Ministry of Defence controlled. Therefore—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Have you been there?

Mr. Hanley: I spent a day there on 27 January. There is no lack of democratic accountability. There have been 40 questions in two years on that subject—four tabled by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). If he were to request something such as an Adjournment debate, the matter may be discussed further. Opposition Members have not taken the democratic opportunities available to them.

Mr. Robert Banks: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Menwith Hill base is an extremely important communications centre for the North Atlantic alliance and that we should be grateful for the security that we obtain from the presence of the United States service men and our own RAF service men at that base? Is he aware of the number of jobs that emanate from the workings of the base and that excellent relationships exist between United States servicemen and the people of Harrogate?

Mr. Hanley: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right. Menwith Hill is vital to the security of the United Kingdom and to the United States and nothing is done there that is not consistent with the security of the United Kingdom. I also agree with my hon. Friend about the jobs because there are 600 United Kingdom nationals and 1,200 United States nationals and therefore there is a considerable community. Relations in the area are absolutely excellent.

Nuclear Arms Reductions

7. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contributions the Government are making towards the process of strategic nuclear arms reductions.

Mr. Rifkind: The United Kingdom maintains only the minimum deterrent required for our security needs. If in the future there were further substantial reductions in United States and former Soviet strategic stockpiles and if defensive capabilities had not significantly enhanced, we would consider what further contributions we might make to nuclear arms control.

Mr. Clapham: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that answer, but earlier he announced that the firepower of Trident is about equal to that of the Polaris system that it replaces. However, the Trident system has more warheads, it is more accurate and those warheads can be independently targeted. What sort of message does the Secretary of State think that that sends out to other nations as we approach the non-proliferation treaty extension conference in 1995?

Mr. Rifkind: Trident certainly has a substantial capability, but we have made it clear that the warheads that will be carried by Trident will have a destructive yield approximately the same as that of Polaris. It is precisely because of the self-restraint that we are exercising that we are able to send the kind of signal to the international community that the hon. Gentleman ought to be supporting.

Mr. Dickens: Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the world is full of military turbulence and uncertainty at the moment and that, while we have the Trident submarine lurking beneath the oceans of the world ready to deliver an unacceptable response to anyone who may attack the United Kingdom or our allies, we are safe?

Mr. Rifkind: Not only is that correct, but the reality is that even Russia and the United States, when they have fully implemented all their commitments under START, will each have 3,000 strategic nuclear warheads, which illustrates the need for the United Kingdom to maintain its own national deterrent.

United States Forces

8. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to meet the United States Defence Secretary to discuss deployment of United States forces in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rifkind: I spoke to Dr. Perry earlier this week. We discussed a range of issues of mutual interest.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Secretary of State aware that 29 American bases and facilities have closed over the past five years, with disastrous effects on local economies, adding to the existing effects of the loss of British defence jobs? When the right hon. and learned Gentleman talks to the United States Secretary of State, will he obtain details of the $1.5 billion that the Americans spend on defence conversion, and learn something from them?

Mr. Rifkind: When the hon. Gentleman complains about the effects of American base closures he should remember that he belongs to a party which calls for far more serious reductions in British defence. He should also be aware that our resettlement policies for people who leave the armed forces are the most generous in the world —considerably more so than those in the United States.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. and learned Friend remind people that in 1945 the United States forces went home, and that it was only the Berlin airlift of 1948 that brought them back to the United Kingdom? We should never repeat that mistake. While the world is unstable, we require the presence of the United States and other NATO allies in order to deter.

Mr. Rifkind: Indeed, the United States has sent its forces to help in the defence of Europe three times this century. Once it was because of a threat from communism, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact. On the two other occasions, the threats to Europe were of a different order. That suggests that the links and the mutual interest between north America and western Europe antedated the cold war, and will continue to have relevance in the years ahead, although communism is no longer in Europe. Europe's security is of great importance to the United States, which justifies the continuation of the Atlantic alliance.

Dr. Godman: The Secretary of State knows that the United States navy has departed from Holy Loch, but that occasionally its submarines come back into United Kingdom waters. Is he satisfied that when United States nuclear submarines are sailing in our waters their officers stick rigidly at all times to the code of practice for the safety of our fishing vessels?

Mr. Rifkind: We expect all submarines to take into account the crucial importance of protecting the fishermen operating in those areas, and I have no reason to believe that the United States is anything other than conscientious with regard to those obligations.

Tracker Radar

9. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral answer on 11 January, *Official Report*, column 8, if he is yet in a position to place the order for the conversion of type 911 tracker radars.

Mr. Aitken: I am pleased to announce that formal contractual discussions with Marconi Radar and Control Systems of Chelmsford have commenced. Contract placement with the company will depend on the satisfactory conclusion of negotiations, which I hope will not take much longer to finalise.

Mr. Burns: I thank my hon. Friend for that extremely reassuring answer for my constituents. May I urge him to ensure that there are no subsequent hiccups, and that the contract is wrapped up, signed, sealed and delivered as quickly as possible? Can my hon. Friend say how large he expects the contract to be, as it is crucially important for job security and for the safeguarding of employment in Chelmsford and elsewhere?

Mr. Aitken: In answer to the second part of my hon. Friend's question, which he is right to raise—he has been vocal on behalf of his constituents in support of the contract—although obviously the value will depend on price negotiations, I expect it to be about £20 million. I share his hopes about getting the contract signed, sealed

and delivered as soon as possible, but I must add that the ball is rather in the company's court and that it takes two to tango.

Minehunters

10. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he intends to take to ensure value for money in tendering for new minehunters.

Mr. Aitken: To secure best value for money, competitive tenders have been invited from all United Kingdom warship builders for a core batch of four Sandown class single-role minehunters, with options for three more.

Mr. Denham: The Minister will be aware that Vosper Thornycroft of Southampton will be anxious to submit a competitive bid for those orders. Will he also acknowledge that investment both by the Government and by Vosper Thornycroft has given that shipyard a world lead in many areas of naval technology, benefiting both the Royal Navy and British export orders? In the light of recent press speculation, will the Minister take great care before allocating any naval orders to foreign-owned shipyards which could possibly undercut Vosper Thornycroft's position in world export markets?

Mr. Aitken: First, I share the hon. Gentleman's understandable pride as a constituency Member of Parliament in the achievements of Vosper Thornycroft. I visited the company, and I regard it as not only a British leader in its field but a world leader. On the hon. Gentleman's second point, I can assure him that, so far as I know, we have no intention of contemplating awarding British warship orders to foreign yards. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman may take some comfort from the fact that we have excluded foreign hulls from this particular competition. It will be a British built contract for Sandown class minehunters.

Infantry Battalions

12. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current average emergency tour plot interval for an infantry battalion.

Mr. Hanley: The average emergency tour interval for infantry battalions in 1993-94 is 17 months. On the basis of current commitments, we expect this to rise to 20 months in 1994-95, and to 30 months thereafter.

Mr. Clarke: Can the Minister confirm that 24 months minimum to allow the battalions to do their training is the figure for which we should aim?

Mr. Hanley: Certainly, 24 months is the target when we have completed the draw-down in 1995-96.

Mr. Robathan: Does my hon. Friend agree that the large number of applications for voluntary redundancies reveals how low morale is currently in the armed forces, and that this is caused by overstretch and the number of emergency tours because there are insufficient troops currently in our Army?

Mr. Hanley: The large number of voluntary redundancies is, first, a measure of the generosity of the voluntary redundancy terms and, secondly, the sign of an improved economy outside.

Dr. Reid: At a time when there is chronic overstretch among our infantry battalions and when our young men in Bosnia have their patriotism rewarded by being sacked while under fire, is it not deplorable that Ministers have sanctioned the spending of more than £1 million on four houses to be refurbished for the top brass of the RAF? Is that what they mean by putting the front line first?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that the redundancies which were announced were the third phase of the Army redundancies as part of the "Options for Change" programme. They were an orderly reduction of the forces that we have at our command. We need to recruit more as well to keep the flow through and the talent coming in. As for the latter question, I refuse to answer.

Hydographic Service

13. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his plans to acquire ships and equipment for the Hydrographic Service.

Mr. Aitken: We recognise the importance to the Royal Navy of a continuing specialist hydrographic capability. We therefore plan to replace our current specialist hydrographic vessels and equipment as this becomes necessary.

Mr. Luff: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that there are sufficient resources available to the Hydrographic Service to meet its current survey requirements, never mind the new requirements that will be imposed on Britain if we ratify the United Nations law of the sea convention, as I hope that we shall?

Mr. Aitken: Yes, I am satisfied that the hydrographic squadron is able to meet our established defence hydrography requirement. It may also be possible to divert Royal Navy hydrography vessels from defence tasks to contribute to other hydrographic work. Our current review of the excellent Hydrographic Service is also considering further possibilities such as bare-boat chartering with Royal Navy crews.

Issues relating to the United Nations law of the sea convention are the responsibility of the Foreign Office, but I have noted my hon. Friend's point and will pass it on to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Bosnia

14. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total number of military personnel in Bosnia in each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Rifkind: The number of personnel deployed in support of operations in Bosnia fluctuates, of course, but on average over the last year there have been some 2,300 personnel on the ground. This has recently been increased to 2,450.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Are the Government resisting the use or increased use in Bosnia of forces from Russia, the Ukraine or Turkey?

Mr. Rifkind: Both Russia and the Ukraine are currently in Bosnia. We believe that they carry out a valuable role and are making a useful contribution to meeting the United Nations requirements. Until now, Turkey has not been

invited to send forces to Bosnia. This partly reflects Turkey's historical involvement in the region, but it is, of course, a matter for the United Nations to decide.

Mr. Budgen: If the number of our forces in Bosnia rises to 3,500, what will be the extra cost to the British taxpayer of stationing those troops?

Mr. Rifkind: If we find it appropriate to announce any increase in the British contribution in Bosnia, we shall be happy at that time to comment on the financial implications.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: In the circumstances, how can the Secretary of State justify sending redundancy notices to soldiers on active service in Bosnia, such as my constituent Alistair Charntler, who was given no reason for the redundancy notice that he received on 24 February and no indication as to why he had been selected for compulsory redundancy?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Lady consults the Army, she will find that it believes that it would be intolerable for liability for redundancy to depend on whether a soldier was serving at any given moment in Bosnia, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, England, Scotland or elsewhere. It is appropriate that these matters be considered in relation to the needs of the armed forces and the personal qualifications and ability of the individual soldier. I believe that the Army's view is entirely correct and justified in that respect.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Given that one sixth of our armed forces are tied up in Northern Ireland and that there are disturbances elsewhere in the world which may require a response, if my right hon. and learned Friend authorises more troops to go to Bosnia, will be bear in mind that there is already considerable fear of overstretch in the British armed forces? Is there not a particular need to make sure that our armed forces have full supplies and logistic support?

Mr. Rifkind: Our commitments in Northern Ireland, as a part of the United Kingdom, will always take precedence over our commitments elsewhere, and Northern Ireland must have first call upon Her Majesty's forces if necessary. With regard to any further deployment of forces to Bosnia, I can assure my hon. Friend that we will bear in mind the importance of maintaining the objective of ensuring that there is a 24-month interval between emergency tours, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces suggested a few moments ago.

Nuclear Weapons

15. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to states that are currently non-nuclear.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom is a signatory of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and we play a full part in encouraging those countries that have not yet acceded to the treaty to do so.

Mr. McAllion: Can the Minister not understand that threatening the peoples of other countries with mass destruction serves only to ensure that those countries develop their own weapons of mass destruction to respond to that threat? When will the Government take the only step that matters in reducing the numbers of nuclear weapons and announce their intention to scrap the costly, wasteful and useless Trident system?

Mr. Hanley: I hear the authentic voice of the Labour party. The United Kingdom plays an active part in defusing regional tensions that might encourage proliferation. Along with other non-proliferation treaty co-depositaries such as the United States and Russia, and in concert with G7 countries, NATO allies and our European Community partners, we are seeking an unconditional and indefinite extension to the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Salmond: How can the United Kingdom keep a straight face in international negotiations on the proliferation of nuclear weapons while the Government, ably supported by the Labour Front Bench, hang on to the expensive and useless military plaything that is the Trident missile system?

Mr. Hanley: That useless military plaything not only defends the United Kingdom and far further, but gives thousands of jobs to the country that the hon. Gentleman is meant to be trying to support.

European Fighter Aircraft

16. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest position as regards both the EF2000 project and the Hercules large aircraft replacement.

Mr. Aitken: Both projects are making satisfactory progress.

Mr. Hawkins: My hon. Friend is well aware that a large number of my constituents work at British Aerospace in Warton on the EF2000. Will he say how many jobs in the north-east depend on that project and on any involvement that British Aerospace may have in future large aircraft?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the importance of the project to employment in the north-west and in his constituency. Some 300 British companies are involved in the Eurofighter project as sub-contractors. That means that there are some 9,000 jobs in the development phase of EF2000. At peak production, we estimate that some 28,000 people will be employed on the project in Britain and some 60,000 in Europe.

Mr. Martlew: Is the Minister aware that the delay of more than two years in the Eurofighter 2000 project will mean not only that there could be a loss of valuable exports of that product, but that the Royal Air Force will have to continue to maintain aging aircraft until Eurofighter comes into service? *[Interruption.]* How many millions of pounds extra will we have to spend on maintaining those aging aircraft because of the delay with Eurofighter?

Mr. Aitken: The cheers for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister were so loud that I missed part of the question. The delays that the hon. Gentleman criticises are to allow us make absolutely sure that all the lessons are learnt from the technological difficulties with similar projects, such as the Gripen. The manufacturers are simply taking care that the flight control software is in perfect condition for the first flight, which is now expected in

April. Neither the manufacturers nor the Governments concerned should be criticised in any way for taking care to ensure that everything is perfect before the first flight.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Ward: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the Department of Health examines carefully the Audit Commission report published today, which shows that £425 million could be saved on the national health service drugs bill if doctors reassessed their prescribing requirements?

The Prime Minister: We spend something over £15 billion a year on drugs in the primary care sector, so it is in everyone's interests to have cost-effective prescribing. As the report shows, our general practitioners are among the most cost-effective prescribers in the world, although I believe that there is still room for improvement.

Mr. John Smith: At a time when, regrettably, there are so many innocent victims of crime, why are the Government intent on pushing through, in less than four weeks from now, a major weakening of the criminal injuries compensation scheme by substituting a crude tariff system for the proper assessment of damages suffered by victims?

Is the Prime Minister aware that a police officer who was seriously injured in a criminal attack was awarded £121,000 last year under the existing scheme, but would be entitled to only £7,500 under the new scheme? What justification can there be for that?

The Prime Minister: I do not have those precise figures in front of me, but we are seeking to change and make more efficient and effective the criminal injuries compensation scheme. It has met with many delays, while the amount of compensation was determined. We are seeking to produce a better, more effective and more efficient scheme that provides for speedier compensation.

Mr. John Smith: I notice that the Prime Minister did not attempt to justify the change that will result. May I ask him directly why future loss of earnings and future costs of medical care are to be excluded completely from damages when, in the case of badly injured people, those are perhaps the most important losses? Is it not bad enough that crime has doubled under the Government without making the victims pay for it?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that the actions that we have taken against crime have been effective and efficient and have often been opposed by him and his party. I need no lectures from him about crime. What we are seeking to do is to make a more effective and efficient system fairer between both the recipient of assistance and the taxpayer.

Mr. John Smith: So that the Prime Minister understands the issue involved, may I remind him of the case of Mrs. Slater, a young wife with two children who saw her husband murdered at her front door? She was awarded £137,000 under the existing scheme. Under the Prime Minister's proposals that lady would get £17,000. Why should she lose £120,000 in a Government cost-cutting exercise? We hear constantly from the right hon. Gentleman about the victims of crime. Unless he withdraws the scheme he will be guilty of hypocritical humbug.

The Prime Minister: We have one of the most generous systems of assistance in the world in terms of criminal injuries compensation, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows. We are seeking to make sure that it is more efficient and more effective and that the compensation is paid more speedily than at any stage in the past. The right hon. and learned Gentleman and his hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor were saying recently that they would enter into no more spending commitments until they knew how those commitments could be met. Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman broken his own edict yet again?

Q2. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Luff: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one sure way of improving performance in our schools is to publish examination results? Is he aware that at the weekend the Labour party pledged that it would scrap such performance tables, depriving parents in Worcestershire and the rest of the country of information that they need and deserve when taking important decisions about their children's future?

The Prime Minister: I have no doubt that publishing that information acts as a spur to higher standards. It also throws the spotlight on the quality of teaching in many schools. I regret very much that Labour Members wish to remove this right, that they do not trust parents with the information and therefore wish to keep them in the dark. But it is not a question just of performance tables. In the same speech, the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) promised to scrap grant-maintained schools, thereby removing from hundreds of thousands of parents the right that the Government have given them. And it is not just the Labour party: the Liberals would join in the introduction of that repressive legislation.

Mr. Ashdown: There will be a warm welcome for the Government's decision this morning to respond to General Rose's request for reinforcements in Bosnia and, indeed, for the fact that this afternoon the United Nations has taken control of Tuzla airport. As the job in Bosnia is not to reinforce failure but to strengthen success, is it not now vital that other nations follow Britain's lead and would it not be helpful if the United States were to do so?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman has said, we have been leading diplomatic efforts to help the United Nations to secure reinforcements. As I told the House a few days ago, we are prepared to provide more forces proportionately as part of a wider international effort. The right hon. Gentleman is right about Tuzla

airport: an important objective has been met. This will assist the aid operation, and we shall provide an aircraft specially to take aid into Tuzla.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Commonwealth as a whole has a great contribution to make to the causes of peace, democracy and stability, especially in southern Africa at this very sensitive time? As we approach Commonwealth day, will my right hon. Friend reaffirm the United Kingdom's commitment to the Commonwealth?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to do so. At both the last two Commonwealth conferences we proposed reforms to make the Commonwealth a good deal more relevant and bring it up to date. Relationships within the Commonwealth are better than they have been for many years. As my hon. Friend referred to South Africa, let me say that many of us look forward to that country's first democratic elections which will be held in April and, I hope, to South Africa's wishing to return to the Commonwealth in due course.

Q4. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McKelvey: Will the Prime Minister explain why, in 1994, it is necessary for my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry) to introduce a private Member's Bill to provide basic civil rights for the disabled? Will the right hon. Gentleman seriously consider backing that humane Bill so that it may become part of the law of the land?

The Prime Minister: As I have indicated on other occasions, the Government have done a great deal for disabled people—rightly so—and we certainly intend to do more. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the changes on access, on social security, on education—*[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members will wait, they will get an answer. The hon. Gentleman will be aware also of the changes in relation to employment. It is a rolling programme. We share the aim of eliminating discrimination against disabled people. We have put in place a number of measures to do this. Of course we shall examine carefully the Bill of the hon. Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry). There will be a debate on Friday, after which I hope that the Bill will go into Committee for detailed examination of its provisions, what it would achieve, what it would mean, what it would cost and those parts of it that are appropriate.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that during the 1960s and 1970s the Labour party spent a great deal of taxpayers' money on overseas aid, but achieved very little benefit for the people of this country in return? Will he take pride in the fact that nowadays, under a Conservative Government, we make sure that the British taxpayer and work force benefit from our policy of linking trade with aid?

The Prime Minister: We have a very high-quality aid programme, a small portion of which is linked, under the aid and trade provisions, with trade with appropriate countries. Aid and trade provision has existed since the late 1970s. It is appropriate, it works well both for the recipient countries and for British exporting prospects, and I look to see it continue.

Iraq

Q5. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he had with President Yeltsin about United Nations action in Iraq.

The Prime Minister: I did not specifically raise this subject with President Yeltsin during my recent visit, but Russian policy is in line with our own on this subject. We are in contact on a day-to-day basis with Russia and with our other G7 colleagues on this particular matter.

Mr. Dalyell: May I thank the Prime Minister for making time to see me in his room last Thursday about the appalling malnutrition and infant mortality problem in the valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates? Since disease knows no boundaries and since there is the likelihood of a sweltering summer, can he do anything about the urgently needed water filtering and pumping equipment and the list of much-needed pharmaceuticals that I handed to him on that occasion?

The Prime Minister: I understand and respect the hon. Gentleman's long-standing concern for the people of Iraq, which he sees as quite distinct from the present leadership of the Government of Iraq. I share his concern about the people there. Since April 1991, we have spent more than £60 million on aid for Iraqi citizens, including food, essential medicines, heating supplies and help with agricultural projects. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we will continue with our aid programme and with the exemptions for food and medicines from the embargo, and that I will look at the specific point that he raised with me.

Engagements

Q6. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Spring: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that manufacturing output rose by some 1.1 per cent. in January, well above expectations, and that in difficult world trading conditions it is the policies of low inflation, low interest rates and low corporate taxation that has made Britain a beacon of success in the world? [HON. MEMBERS: "That's a hard one, John."]

The Prime Minister: Just relax. My hon. Friend is entirely right. There is no doubt that the manufacturing figures today show that manufacturing output is sharply up. That is very encouraging, and it was considerably above expectations. We have seen a strong export performance particularly to non-Community countries in recent months, but equally to many European Community countries, despite the fact that their markets are in recession and are reducing in overall size. I am delighted that we are making more and selling more at home and selling more abroad.

Q7. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Is the Prime Minister aware of the answer that I was given on 1 March, which showed that during the past three years some 13 rescue operations have been carried out by Royal Navy and Royal Air Force aircraft in the territorial waters of the Irish Republic? Will he impress on Mr. Reynolds the importance of extending such co-operation to save the lives of innocent people, especially from terrorism, as the forces co-operate with the Crown forces?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. We are constantly reviewing the co-operation with the Garda and with other elements of the security forces in the Republic of Ireland. Co-operation today is better than it has been at any stage in the past and I will continue to seek further improvement. There is a regular and good liaison specifically between the United Kingdom search and rescue authorities and the Irish marine emergency services which specifically includes a regular exchange of information and participation in the appropriate joint committees, so I believe that the liaison is extremely good at present. Of course, I will seek to ensure that that remains good and is improved wherever possible.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Will my right hon. Friend remind his G7 colleagues that there are really only three ways in which Governments can help to foster jobs—the promotion of sound finances, the deregulation of national economies and the encouragement of maximum flexibility in labour markets?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is quite right. If we wish to have jobs that last rather than temporary jobs, we need free trade, competitive industries and a flexible labour market. That is what we have now attained and that is, I believe, the principal reason why we are the only country in the European Union where unemployment is falling and seems to be on a firm downward trend.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, arising out of Question Time. You will have heard that on question 12, in accordance with your strictures, I asked one simple question concerning the justification for the expenditure of more than £1 million on the refurbishment of four houses for four members of the top brass of the armed forces at a time when there were infantry cutbacks. The response that I received from the Minister was, "I refuse to answer," in spite of the fact that his own officials are already answering questions on the same subject from Sunday newspapers, including *The Mail on Sunday*. Is it in order for Ministers to refuse to answer limited and legitimate questions which do not affect national security while their own officials are doing so?

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Gentleman did not ask one specific question; he asked two specific questions. I answered the first half. He did not give me notice that he was going to ask the second half, and it was not relevant to the first. May I say, Madam Speaker— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hanley: There has been some very unfair press speculation, but the matter is being considered by legal experts and no doubt we will report to the hon. Gentleman in due course.

Madam Speaker: We will leave the matter there.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is the first time that I have raised a point of order in a career of 20 years in the House because—

Madam Speaker: I have never raised one in 21 years.

Mr. Garrett: —because I regard most of them as spurious, but I think that for the one that I am about to raise you, Madam Speaker, are the only possible point of reference.

This morning, in a hearing of the Treasury Select Committee, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster refused to allow the Treasury Select Committee to undertake a direct survey of civil servants. He quoted in evidence, as his authority, a civil service management code which has no force of law, which has never been approved by the House and which was simply written by his civil servants. I think that that is an affront to the House, and that the distinguished Treasury Select Committee should be allowed to inquire into the opinion and attitudes of civil servants. I think that you, Madam Speaker, should rule against that abuse of power by the Chancellor of the Duchy.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may not know, but it is in fact an internal matter for the Committee, and it is for that Committee, if it wishes to do so, to make a report to the House. The Chair does not intervene in Committee proceedings. It is for the Committee, if it is not satisfied with those proceedings, to report the matter to the House and we then take it from there. Those are the procedures.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is not the first point of order that I have ever raised, but it is important.

It may not be immediately apparent to you, Madam Speaker, that on a regular basis throughout Prime Minister's Question Time, to your right and behind you, alongside the civil servants' Box, a number of people, usually Government Whips, are stationed standing and operating as professional hecklers. I do not complain about hecklers in the House as it raises the atmosphere, but, apart from the rudeness of blocking the civil servants' view, is it not totally out of order to heckle from a standing position? Is it not time that the Government got a grip on their Whips?

Madam Speaker: There are occasions on which I do have eyes in the back of my head. I am perfectly aware of what is happening behind me. Professional people may be standing there, but you also have a professional Speaker in the Chair. I have dealt with them from time to time and I shall continue to do so whenever necessary.

Dr. Reid: Further to my earlier point of order, Madam Speaker. In the light of what the Minister said— *[Interruption.]* It is a genuine point of order. The first answer which the Minister gave was a blocking order, which means that, when we attempt to table questions at the Table Office, they will not be accepted because the Minister had told the House that he would not answer questions. He said, "I have nothing to add. I will not answer that." However, he has subsequently come to the Dispatch Box and given an explanation in exchanges on a point of order.

Will you, Madam Speaker, rule on whether questions on the expenditure of £1 million to refurbish four houses, legitimately placed at the Table Office, will be blocked or unblocked in the light of what the Minister has said?

Mr. Hanley: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. May I remind you, with great respect, that the main question was,

"What is the current average emergency tour plot interval for an infantry battalion?"

The hon. Gentleman abused our procedures by referring to RAF accommodation, and it was on those grounds that I refused to answer.

Madam Speaker: Order. We must end the matter there. All those matters are and will be taken into account by the Table Office when questions are tabled. I cannot allow an extension of Question Time at this stage.

Energy Conservation (Lighting)

3.36 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to promote more efficient lighting and the consequent beneficial effects on the environment.

Over the past six years, concern for the environment has resulted in many different measures being taken by the Government and others to encourage a more responsible attitude by both business and individuals towards the damage which their actions may cause the natural world. Over the same period, I have introduced four Bills that have concentrated on the environment, particularly on how individuals can contribute towards better environmental practices.

The Bill follows on from those earlier Bills. It is simply designed to encourage people to use less energy when they light their homes. After heating, lighting is the main consumer of electricity in Britain. If we could use a more energy-efficient means of lighting our homes, we would considerably reduce our emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. That would make it much easier for this country to meet its international targets for emissions, particularly those associated with carbon dioxide, which will be particularly hard to meet in present circumstances.

Energy-efficient lighting has been with us for some time in many public buildings. Only in the past few years, however, has it been available in any variety to the domestic market. The Bill is designed to encourage its further use in the following ways: first, building regulations administered by local authorities would include a requirement for all new domestic buildings and extensions to existing ones to be fitted with energy-efficient lighting where practical; secondly, it would allow local authorities to extend the use of the home energy efficiency scheme to include the purchase of such lighting; thirdly, it would encourage loans from the social fund available to people on income support to be used for such lighting as well.

The positive effect on the environment if energy-efficient lighting is used in people's homes is dramatic. If one energy-efficient light were fitted per household in the United Kingdom, the total number of lights would be 22 million. We could save 1,320 MW of electricity, which is the equivalent of the output of one large coal-fired or oil-fired power station. If such a station were shut down, our CO_2 emissions would be reduced by 1.3 million tonnes per year. There would also be substantial reductions in the emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide.

The effect on people's pockets of energy-efficient lighting being used in their homes is even more dramatic. While an energy-efficient light costs between £6 and £14, compared with 50p for an ordinary light, it lasts eight times longer than an ordinary bulb and is five times more efficient. That would mean a saving in running costs of more than £10 a year if a 100 watt light were replaced by its energy-efficient equivalent. Even taking into account the difference in cost of the two lights, there is still a saving of more than £4 per bulb in the first year. That means that, for an average single person's electricity bill of £200, the purchase of four energy-efficient lights more than offsets the extra cost of VAT on electricity and, over a period of five years, saves such a person £100.

The message behind the Bill is simple. I want the Government to recognise the advantages to their energy-efficiency programme and their wider environmental objectives of encouraging and promoting the increased use of energy-efficient lighting.

I also want individuals to recognise that, regardless of any persuading by the Government, it is in their own interests to use energy-efficient lighting. Indeed, rather than paying large sums up front to electricity companies to avoid paying VAT, people can pay less on energy-efficient lighting, pay the VAT and still show an appreciable saving in their energy costs. At the very least, when an ordinary light next fails in people's houses, they should seriously consider buying an energy-efficient one.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. Simon Burns, Mr. Anthony Coombs, Mr. Henry Bellingham, Mr. A.J. Beith, Mr. Roger Knapman, Mr. Peter Ainsworth, Mr. Roy Thomason, Mr. John Sykes, Mr. Michael Bates and Mr. Harold Elletson.

ENERGY CONSERVATION (LIGHTING)

Mr. Keith Mans accordingly presented a Bill to promote more efficient lighting and the consequent beneficial effects on the environment: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 July, and to be printed. [Bill 69.]

Orders of the Day

Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 1

POWER TO PROVIDE FOR THE TRANSITION TO THE NEW TEST OF INCAPACITY FOR WORK

'.—(1) The Secretary of State may by regulations make such provision as appears to him to be necessary or expedient for the purposes of, or in connection with, the transition to the test of incapacity for work provided for by sections 5 and 6 above.

Nothing in the following provisions of this section shall be construed as restricting the generality of that power.

(2) In this section—

"commencement" means the commencement of those sections; and

"prescribed" means prescribed by regulations under this section.

(3) Regulations under this section may provide—

(a) that days of incapacity for work before commencement, and such other days as may be prescribed, shall be taken into account for the purposes of section 171B(3) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (period after which the all work test applies);

(b) that a person's continued enjoyment after commencement of any allowance or other advantage under any provision for the purposes of which Part XIIA of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 applies shall, except as may be prescribed, be subject to satisfying the test of incapacity for work under that Part; and

(c) for the determination in accordance with that Part of the question whether the person is incapable of work.

(4) Section 175(2) to (4) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (general provisions as to regulations and orders) apply in relation to the power conferred by subsection (1) above as they apply in relation to a power conferred by that Act to make regulations.

(5) For the period of three years from Royal Assent a statutory instrument which contains (whether alone or with other provisions) any regulations under this section shall not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House.

(6) A statutory instrument—

(a) which contains (whether alone or with other provisions) any regulations made under this section, and

(b) which is not subject to any requirement that a draft of the instrument be laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament,

shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.—*[Mr. Burt.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

3.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 15 and 16.

Mr. Burt: This afternoon and this evening we should complete the Commons stage of the Bill, which has been considered in Committee. I think that all parties accepted that it was a good Committee, which was speedily completed. We had good debates, and we have a range of issues to discuss today. In Committee there was a certain amount of give and take on both sides, which I am sure will be reflected in our discussions today.

The new clause and the two amendments grouped with it relate to the regulation-making powers for transitional arrangements. There are a number of complex sectors in the Bill that we propose to deal with in regulations, including the new test of incapacity and the transitional arrangements. As a result of new clause 1, there are now three clauses covering the transitional arrangements arising from the Bill. It may be helpful if I explain why.

Essentially, clause 4 continues to make provision for the main body of regulations concerning the transition from existing sickness and invalidity benefit to the new incapacity benefit. The following provisions introduce the new benefit.

As currently drafted, clause 11 provides general powers to deal with the preparation for or the coming into force of the Bill. The intention was that subsection (2) would deal with the introduction of the new medical test in areas of social security other than incapacity benefit.

However, new clause 1 will now deal with the transition from the existing test of incapacity to the new test of incapacity for all benefits other than incapacity benefit. It is intended that it will follow clauses 5 and 6, which introduce the new test of incapacity for work. Regulations under both clause 4 and the new clause will be affirmative resolutions procedure for three years after Royal Assent.

It is our intention that the powers in the new clause should be capable of being exercised long after the Bill comes into force. The wording in subsection (1) mirrors that of clause 4(1). While, of course, the Government aim to cover every aspect of the transfer to the new test in the first set of regulations, experience has shown that we do not always anticipate every eventuality. We therefore need a power that does not restrict its exercise to the coming into force of the Bill.

Clause 11, as amended by amendments 15 and 16, comes towards the end of the Bill and provides a general power to make transition regulations which will be negative procedure—for example, amending existing regulations on sickness benefit and invalidity benefit.

In Committee, hon. Members expressed concern about the breadth of the powers in the Bill to make regulations. As I have already explained, the purpose of new clause 1 is to restrict the power to make regulations for the transition to the new test of incapacity for work in other benefits, separating this power from the general power to make regulations in clause 11.

Although clause 11 will still contain general powers, amendment 15 prevents its application where regulations should properly have been drafted under the specific powers contained in clause 4 and new clause 1.

New subsection (5) gives effect to the main difference between the powers set out in clause 11(2) and that in new clause 1; it sets out that the regulations will be subject to affirmative resolution for three years from the date of Royal Assent. That provision mirrors my commitment in Committee to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) and brings the power into line with other regulation-making powers which are the subject of later Government amendments.

Transitional arrangements are often complex. We need to ensure that powers are drawn widely enough so that the regulations deal adequately and fairly with the wide variety of individual circumstances. However, the Government recognise the legitimate concern of Parliament that powers should not be too broadly drawn. Therefore, the purpose of

[Mr. Burt]

new clause 1 is to separate it from the general power in clause 11 and to make its exercise subject to affirmative resolution procedure.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): It is ironic that Government new clause 1 deals with yet more powers to bring in yet more regulations. We have complained bitterly throughout the progress of the Bill —from Second Reading, through Committee Stage and now on Report and Third Reading. It is about time that the Government introduced primary legislation properly amendable by the House, instead of sneaking in new legislation through the back door by regulation.

We are confronted again with the Government's failure properly to consider the matters before us. This afternoon, they are seeking extra powers to introduce regulations, which, it should be stressed, are unamendable.

Mr. Burt: You asked for them.

Mr. Bradley: No, we did not. We asked that the Government introduce the Bill by primary legislation, enabling to us amend it, and for proper and thorough-going debate and proper recognition by the House about its effects. Yet again, they have failed. I believe that the way they are introducing the legislation is an abuse of Parliament.

As I stressed, and as the Minister said, the new clause covers transitional arrangements. He has admitted that transitional arrangements between the current arrangements for invalidity benefit and the new incapacity benefit are particularly complicated.

When we were debating transitional arrangements in Committee, we flagged up potential problems with the transitional arrangements. The Government agreed that they were complicated, but we expected them to give due consideration to the issues we would raise, and table proper amendments on Report so that the House could be clear on how the transitional arrangements would work in practise.

Instead, they are using the device of regulation, because they have not thoroughly thought through the implications, and they hope that, by the time they introduce the regulations, they will have sorted out the problems. But I warn the Minister that we have bitter experience of a recent piece of legislation—as does the Minister; I hate to mention the Child Support Agency so soon—where ill thought out legislation means that the Government must table hurried amendments and changes to regulations. They still do not understand their full implications.

The Minister introduced changes in the arrangements for collection of maintenance by the CSA. It has now been realised that, because of those changes, many mothers will lose on their family credit, because family credit is not reassessed for six months. Under the current arrangements, there will be a delay before their family credit is reassessed. Many mothers could lose up to £50 a week because of the phasing in of the maintenance payments and the reassessment of family credit not flowing from that new arrangement.

The Government have not thought through the implication of the welcome change of phasing in of maintenance, and have not recognised the implications of that elsewhere in the system—for example, on family credit. I hope that the Minister will quickly introduce new changes to the proposals to ensure that family credit is reassessed immediately, so that mothers do not lose and are not further penalised by the phasing in of maintenance.

I see that the Secretary of State is in the Chamber, and I welcome that. I hope that he will carefully consider that point on the CSA. I do not wish to pursue it, because that is not the business before us: I merely use it as an example to show that, if one introduces regulations that are hurriedly conceived and ill thought out, one stores up future difficulties for the Government in the implementation of the legislation.

The new clause is welcome, because the Government have introduced the concession they promised in Committee—that the affirmative resolution will apply for these new regulations. That is clearly to be welcomed, but it seems to be one of the few concessions to have been introduced on Report.

I believe that the way in which the Bill has been handled, and the speed with which it has been brought out of Committee, has not allowed proper scrutiny of our deliberations in Committee or an opportunity for the Opposition fully to appreciate the implications of some of the concessions that were made. The Government's failure to table any amendments until late on Friday afternoon allows only limited time for the Opposition to consider our position and table our own amendments.

In Committee, the Government made a series of concessions, and we shall question the Government on them. There are difficulties because of the nature of the proposed legislation. There is little on the face of the Bill —for example, the medical test, the definition of incapacity, and the whole way in which the medical test in relationship to key groups of people will operate in practice are not there. There are difficulties anyway, but it is equally awkward when the Government are not prepared to table specific amendments to the proposed legislation to set out clearly the intentions in some of the concessions that have been made.

Let me ask the Government a specific question. I hope that they will not suggest the use of alternative regulations, but will consider the matter in the spirit of the regulatory nature of the legislation.

In Committee, when we discussed amendments Nos. 17 and 18 to clause 1, we had an interesting debate about the fast-tracking of people with terminal illnesses or prescribed conditions, and those in receipt of the higher rate of the care component of disability living allowance, to the higher rate of incapacity benefit—without their having to wait a whole year for full payment. In a sense, we are talking about transitional arrangements in those proposals and in the regulations.

On 8 February, in Committee, the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People said:

"I will indicate the cost of the two amendments, although in this particular case I shall not argue that the costs are such that they should be a compelling factor in deciding the outcome of this debate . . . I shall certainly give careful consideration to the points that were made this morning".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 8 February 1994; c. 71-3.]

Will the Minister give us some idea of how the terminally ill and those with prescribed conditions can be fast-tracked through to the higher rate of incapacity benefit?

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): My hon. Friend has raised a very important point. I am sure that all hon. Members have come across cases that should have been dealt with by that fast track system but have not, and which have not

been resolved before the tragic deaths of the individuals concerned. Is my hon. Friend satisfied that the Government have done enough research to be sure that they understand the problems? Can we now be certain that those problems will not arise in future?

Mr. Bradley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising a key issue. He has raised it before, as have many more of my hon. Friends in regard to constituency cases: they have felt that the Government have not addressed the issue properly.

In Committee, we were encouraged by the fact that the Government clearly understood the issue. We were led to believe that they would present specific proposals on Report to deal with the problems, and we are disappointed that they have not. They may intend to include such arrangements in the regulations. As I keep saying, without having the regulations before us, we find it difficult to make a judgment about the extent of the Government's commitment.

I hope that the Minister will give particular consideration to this issue, which is causing so much anxiety to my hon. Friends' constituents and others throughout the country. We are dealing with a specific group of people. The Minister was sympathetic in Committee; I hope that, although the Government have failed to table an appropriate amendment at this stage, they will now give us some comfort by recognising the problem that has been raised. I hope that they will not renege on the concession they made in Committee, when we were told that that problem would be specifically addressed.

I do not wish to delay the House. As the new clause and amendments give the Government yet more powers to introduce more amendments later by means of regulations, we shall have to wait for those regulations, and in the best way possible—by means of the parliamentary process—debate them at that stage. Let me stress again that we are greatly disappointed that the Government are to act in this way, and that the new clause and amendments do not contain the substance that we would expect at this stage of our deliberations.

After the Bill completes its passage tonight, the other place may well take up the points that we have made, and may want to ask some serious questions about the way in which the Government choose to introduce measures through the back door by means of regulation rather than through primary legislation. Primary legislation is the traditional method; it is much more sensible and satisfactory, and, I suggest, is of much more benefit to the public, because it allows a clear understanding of the Government's proposals.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The Bill is important because it has no precedent—I challenge anyone to produce one. There is no precedent in the history of the British social security system for abolishing a long-term contributory benefit. Many benefits have been amended or changed, but this is the first time in the century-long history of the British social security system that a contributory benefit has been abolished.

4 pm

Let us consider the arrogant detail of the new clause that we are being asked to accept. It amounts to a dictator's charter. It states:

"The Secretary of State may by regulations make such provision as appears to him to be necessary"—

not as appears to Parliament or to the nation but as appears to him to be necessary—

"or expedient for the purposes of, or in connection with, the transition to the test of incapacity for work provided for by sections 5 and 6 above."

The new clause would give the Secretary of State and future Secretaries of State absolute powers. It continues:

"Nothing in the . . . provisions of this section shall be construed as restricting the generality of that power."

There can be few examples in legislation of a Government seeking total power in such a way.

The Government have presented the new clause as a concession. The fact that the affirmative resolution procedure is to be used is something of a concession, but we are greatly worried and, about a fortnight ago, I took up with the Leader of the House in an oral question the way in which an unelected state is developing. The Government are elected once every five years and this Government happened to persuade the majority of people in England —only in England—that they are popular on a specific day, but then things changed.

There was a test of public opinion in Wales at the weekend. The Conservative party is for a little while the second party in Wales while the Labour party has 60 per cent. of the support. That is an extraordinary position. The rest of the support is scattered among the other four main parties. A similar situation exists in Scotland where the Government are at their lowest ebb but still have the barefaced cheek to introduce legislation that damages all the people, including those in Scotland and Wales who have not elected them.

Dyw hi ddim yn bosib i mi siarad fy iaith fy hun yn y senedd dyna un o'r problemau sydd gennyf yn y Tg—

Madam Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will enlighten me and let me know what that means.

Mr. Flynn: I was pointing out, Madam Speaker, that it is not possible for me to speak in both the languages of Wales in this House in spite of the fact that this is the only Parliament that Wales has at the moment. We have just celebrated St. David's day, but the debate on Welsh affairs was held on St. Winwaloe's day—we could not have even that small concession.

As a Welsh Member of Parliament, I can say that anger about the elective dictatorship that is running Wales is growing by the day. There was a magnificent rally at the weekend in which the people of Wales—people of many parties—spoke with one voice to demand our own Parliament. The reason why they did so is specifically Bills such as this. We have a Government we did not elect but who rule us by quango. We have a Secretary of State who is an alien in Welsh society.

The only justification for the clause and for the Bill that the Government have offered is that some people are receiving invalidity benefit although they are not genuinely incapable of work. We know the reasons for that belief and for the present situation. Just before the general election in 1987, all of us noticed that there was a sudden relaxation of the rules that are generally applied to the availability of invalidity benefit. It appeared that larger numbers of people were receiving it.

That was for reasons not unconnected with the general election, which was fast approaching. There was desperation among Conservatives that they would be rejected because of the enormous unemployment and it

[Mr. Flynn]

was far better for them to turn a blind eye to the growing numbers of people on invalidity benefit than have them classified as unemployed. The unemployment figures were already mushrooming out of control, so that there were 30 fiddles of the unemployment statistics and almost as many of the employment statistics.

One of the main industries in my constituency produces Government figures in the Central Statistical Office. The work of those people is important. Their only function in life is to produce statistics that are objective and are of value and they feel great resentment when they see the results of their professional work being prostituted by the Government and presented in a wholly dishonest way. The figures are presented in such a way that they are not meant to provide information on which the Government and others can make decisions but which can only serve the interests of the majority party.

Even with all the groups that are taken off the unemployment register to keep down those figures, we still have the nonsense of the employment figures. People are counted several times. If someone is working as a part-time cleaner in the House—the number is about to be reduced from 89 to 56—has another job in the afternoon, such as the many who work at St. Thomas's, and has a job at the weekend, that person is counted three times. She is three people according to the employment figures. We know that 750,000 people are counted twice in the employment figures. The position is entirely misleading and wildly inaccurate.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, by the same token, there are a number of people who are working but who are still on the unemployment register?

Mr. Flynn: I am sure that that occurs. Of course there is abuse in any system, but the Government have had 15 years in which to put the system right. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that that figure is as high as 750,000, he is entirely wrong. There is a black economy, which is fuelled at the moment by the Government's stupidity—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt. The hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) led the hon. Gentleman down the wrong path with his question. I am sure that we can return to the Government new clause.

Mr. Flynn: I am sorry that I was diverted by the blandishments of the hon. Gentleman—and not for the first time. I shall not stray again.

The other reason for the increase in the potential number of people on incapacity benefit was the large number of people who were at retirement and who decided to continue on invalidity benefit, rather than claim the state pension, because of the advantage that it was not taxable. The Government have turned their back on that for a long time.

It is hard to understand how that situation justifies a Bill in which the Government are trying to take away the entitlement to benefit from people who are incapable of work. The Bill does that in a number of ways. It extends from six to 12 months the period for which short-term benefit is paid, resulting in a massive loss of income during the second six months. It abolishes the earnings-related additional benefit for which people paid contributions between 1978 and 1991, and it introduces new tests of incapacity which will deny benefit to people who, in some cases, have rightly been treated as incapable of work for many years.

The new clause shows us what is happening in the Government's mind—if "mind" is not too large and all-embracing a word for the irrational ideological trash that comes from them. The Government are a group of ideologues introducing a series of what could be regarded as Treasury support measures—measures that have nothing whatever to do with social security.

The Child Support Agency has rightly been dubbed the Treasury support agency. It is ill thought out and has caused enormous damage. People have even lost their lives, as suicides have been attributed to the nonsense and excesses of the legislation. In a parliamentary answer I was told that 90 per cent. of the money that the agency will receive is likely to end up in the Treasury, not with custodial parents.

I do not wish to detain the House too long on the new clause, but it is indicative of the spirit of the whole Bill, and of a Government who wish to get out of a financial hole that they have dug for themselves, and who are doing so at the expense of the weakest in society.

Mr. Pike: I shall make a few brief comments, one of which arises from my earlier intervention. My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) rightly referred to the problem of fast tracking. We have reached Report, yet we are still not really sure whether the Government will deliver because, as so often happens, we are debating a Bill that does not include the regulations that will go with it.

We are being asked to take in good faith something that was said in Committee, so I hope that the Minister will be able to say positively that the Government recognise that there is still a problem regarding fast tracking and still the need to expedite the resolution of any benefit entitlement that people who are terminally ill may have. I hope that the Minister will spell out clearly the fact that although there is no solution in the provisions before us today, one will be included in the regulations.

With regard to the new clause, the tests and the transitional arrangements, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) said, and as we all know, the principal objective of the Bill is to save money and to reduce the number of people eligible for invalidity benefit. Even the Government have not tried to hide that fact. We all know that decisions on invalidity benefit involve deciding whether people are capable of performing their own work and if not, whether they are incapable of all work or only of certain types of work. That causes tremendous difficulty for people who have specific jobs in which they may have worked for a long time, but who have become incapable of performing that work.

A skilled engineer came to my advice bureau on Saturday. His hand had been seriously injured at work and he was no longer able to perform the work of a skilled engineer, so he has been on invalidity benefit. First, he had been found to be capable of work, although incapable of working in his own job, but then his case went for review and he has now been told that he is capable of any work. We think that the provisions for the new tests will involve that type of move regarding present entitlement to invalidity benefit.

The Minister was trying to make it look as though the Government would protect people by saying that if there were any mistakes that could not be dealt with, the transitional arrangements would mean that they could be altered within three years by regulation and statutory instrument, as specified in the new clause. The Minister made it sound as though the Government would try to do that in the interests of the public at large, but my hon. Friend the Member for Withington was nearer the mark.

He fears, as I do, that the transitional arrangements are the Government's attempt not to improve the situation but to tie it up because they may not have yet cut out everything that they want to cut out. Therefore, they are giving themselves draconian powers within the transitional arrangements further to turn the screws during the next three years with minimal debate, thereby saving more money for the Treasury and disqualifying more people.

Mr. Burt *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Pike: I see that the Under-Secretary is shaking his head. I hope that he will also say that my comments are totally unjustified. If that is what he says, I hope that when he comes to an election in two or three years' time, he is able to stand up and say that I was wrong and he was right. I fear that I will be right, and my hon. Friend the Member for Withington and I will be able to tell the Government that we were right to fear what they were doing. The Government have tightened the screws and screwed more people out of their ability to get this new benefit.

4.15 pm

Mr. Burt: The hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) opened with a breathtaking argument. We freely gave a concession in Committee by changing the regulations from negative to affirmative—a change that he welcomed at the time—but he then returned to his attack on the regulations altogether. I simply want him to know that I found it breathtaking.

Mr. Bradley: Can I clarify the position? We welcomed the concession that they should be affirmative, not negative, regulations. We certainly did not welcome the fact that the Government are introducing even more regulations that need affirmative resolution.

Mr. Burt: That was an argument that we had consistently throughout the Committee, and I should reiterate the point that I made then. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) was right in the first part of his remarks, which he directed at the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), that we are putting the regulations through to give us the flexibility that we need to deal with such a complex matter, recognising that we might not include everything for the sake of people covered by the first set of regulations. We are giving ourselves that room and flexibility.

There has been an argument about whether we overuse that power. We do not believe that we overuse it—that is the reason why we are doing it this way. The hon. Member for Burnley was right to ask what I would be saying in three years' time. At that time, I firmly believed that I should be able to reiterate the assurance that I am giving today. I hope that the fears of the hon. Member for Withington about the regulations will be satisfied by that time.

We spent a total of 34 hours in Committee, with 13 sittings. We had some good scrutiny there. We do not believe that we have sought additional power. As I said, the arrangements are to give effect to the agreement to make the regulations affirmative for three years. Transitional arrangements are usually dealt with in regulations for the ease of the House and to give us flexibility.

The hon. Member for Newport, West made an interesting contribution. He raised a number of matters relating to Second Reading and Third Reading but touched marginally on the amendment before us now. As always, I enjoyed his contribution. I am only sorry that I did not understand all the Welsh—I wish that I had.

The hon. Members for Withington and for Burnley both made a substantial point about linking rules and treatment of the terminally ill. In Committee, my right hon. Friend the Minister gave a commitment to consider a number of specific issues such as those. He warned the Committee that some of the issues were complex and would take time to explore. Hon. Members may be disappointed but that consideration is not yet complete. I can, however, reiterate my right hon. Friend's commitment to continue to give

Mr. Bradley: May I clarify the range of the Government's thinking on this point? In Committee, we talked about the terminally ill, people with prescribed conditions and people on the higher rate of component for DLA. Can the Minister give an assurance that each of those areas is being addressed and not only the terminally ill, although clearly they are crucial within that grouping?

Mr. Burt: Yes, I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. I also remind the House that, should amendments to the Bill be required, there will be a suitable opportunity to move them during the debate in another place. This House would then have the opportunity to examine the issues again at consideration.

I hope that I have been helpful in answer to the short debate on the new clause, which I hope will now be able to form part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 3

REPORT TO PARLIAMENT: MEDICAL TEST

"The Secretary of State shall, before 30th September 1996, lay before each House of Parliament a report on the operation of the test of incapacity for work under Part XIIA of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, which shall (among such other information as he may think fit) include—

(a) an account of the number of people who attended a medical examination under that part of that Act and a description of the type of such examination;

(b) an account of the number of people who, having attended such an examination were determined as incapable of work;

(c) an account of the number of people who having attended such an examination were determined as capable of work;

(d) an account of the reasons for determinations of capacity for work;

(e) an assessment of the medical test by such persons whom the Secretary of State may choose'.—*[Mr. Bradley.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Bradley: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to consider the following: New clause 4—*Annual Report by Secretary of State: appeals—*

[Mr. Deputy Speaker Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse]

'The Secretary of State shall, before 1st April each year after the commencement of this Act, lay before Parliament a report concerning appeals against determinations that a person is capable of work, which shall, among such other matters as he may think fit, for each area of the Benefits Agency Medical Service—

(a) specify the number of occasions on which an appeal was heard more than ten days after it was made, and the average time between the making and the hearing of the appeal;

(b) summarise the outcome of all appeals;

(c) report on the extent to which medical or other evidence influencing the outcome of an appeal;

(d) summarise the reasons for any failure by a claimant to attend a hearing; and

(e) report on the use made by claimants of representations at an appeal.'.—

Amendment No. 22, in clause 5, page 11, line 28, at end insert—

'(c) defining the way in which relevant evidence or information submitted by that person or by any medical practitioner or professional health worker will be used during the assessment'.

Amendment No. 24, in clause 6, page 13, line 17, leave out lines 17 to 23 and insert—

'(4) When a social security tribunal is to determine an appeal concerning a determination that a claimant was capable of work the tribunal shall sit with the claimants' general practitioner.'.

Amendment No. 25, in page 13, leave out lines 18 to 26 and insert—

'for appeals against determinations that a person is capable of work to be heard by a tribunal constituted under section 42 of this Act.'.

Amendment No. 26, in page 13, line 26, at end insert—

'(5) When a claimant has made an appeal to a social security tribunal concerning a determination that he was capable of work—

(a) the tribunal shall hear the appeal within ten working days of the appeal being made; and

(b) the claimant may be accompanied at the hearing by any person whom he nominates.'.

Mr. Bradley: This substantial group of amendments goes right to the heart of the Labour party's opposition to the Bill, and it shows why we have consistently and rigorously opposed the Bill on Second Reading and throughout Committee, and why we will continue to do so.

The clear purpose of the legislation is that the Department of Social Security must make its contribution to the cuts in public expenditure because of the Government's economic mismanagement. The £50 billion public sector borrowing requirement overspend is being addressed by the Government, and the Department of Social Security has looked at the people in the greatest need to try to make its contribution. It is clear that the legislation is Treasury-led, and its purpose is to make substantial cuts in the amount of money available to disabled people.

By the Government's own admission, they expect to save £550 million in 1995-1996 and a staggering £1,450 million in the following year. There can be no greater testimony to the fact that this is about saving money, rather than about a rational and careful replanning of benefits to meet the real needs of disabled people. Those benefits must be made in conjunction with a co-ordinated and coherent policy by the Government to try to enable people with disabilities who are able to return to work to do so. Those who cannot return to work should receive an adequate and proper level of income to meet their needs and those of their family.

We have made much this afternoon of the fact that the Government are introducing this measure by regulation, rather than by primary legislation. The purpose of new clause 3 is to enable there to be proper parliamentary scrutiny of the medical test, which is a vital element of the new legislation. It is a disgrace that the medical test on which all of the decisions are to be made about whether a person is eligible for the new benefit is not before the House as we debate the legislation. The test does not form part of the Bill, and it will be brought forward at a later stage by regulation.

It is a great abuse of Parliament that the Opposition are not able to examine properly today the details of the medical test, and that we must wait several months before that test is available for scrutiny through regulation. When it is brought forward, there will be no opportunity for the Opposition to amend the test, and we must accept it or reject it on regulation. That is an unsatisfactory way of dealing with the crucial matter of determining whether a person with disabilities is able to work.

The purpose of new clause 3 is to force the Government to produce a report to Parliament about the way in which the medical test will operate in practice. That report is crucial to ensure proper parliamentary scrutiny and understanding of the way in which the medical test will operate.

The report is also crucial because of our general views, which we explored in detail in Committee, on how the Government are developing the medical test. The process is a consultation sham. It is outrageous that a Bill entitled the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill does not contain a definition of incapacity for work.

The medical test is intended to exclude people rather than make them eligible for incapacity benefit. A test of incapacity based on functional limitations alone is inadequate, unfair and unworkable, and the way in which it will be used for new claimants, compared with people in receipt of invalidity benefit, will be inequitable.

If one wants to determine how the test will work in practice, the type of work that someone can reasonably be expected to do must be included in the Bill, but it contains no definition of the work that will apply to the test.

Our first major criticism, and the reason why a report to Parliament on medical tests is so vital, is that the way in which the test is being developed has no validity. We welcomed the explanation that medical officers from the Department of Social Security gave about how the test has been developed, but that explanation did not comfort us that the outcome of the final deliberations will be a test that has any relevance to determining whether people are able to work.

As we have stated before, it is to say the least very unsatisfactory that the so-called panel of experts who will draw up the medical test have to remain secret from the public, and that their deliberations will take place behind closed doors. It is also unsatisfactory that the Government are not prepared to release the names of the people who are devising the test on behalf of disabled people until after the process has been completed.

A crucial element of new clause 3 is that, when a report is prepared after the medical assessments have been scrutinised, it will be passed to the group of experts for their views. It is important that they should continue to have a role once they have gone public and that they should have some voice in the way in which the test operates.

We are concerned about the fact that it is not clear how the final test will be validated by the group of experts. In Committee, we sought clarification of whether the test will be based on a consensus model, the Government will take views on the test and impose their final solution on the group of experts—regardless of whether they agree—or there will be room for public dissent. We would welcome an explanation from the Government.

I am sure that all my hon. Friends, and Conservative Members, will have received briefing after briefing. I have here a sample of those that I have received from organisations throughout the country. Those organisations carefully analysed the consultation document that the Government published, and the briefings explain why they are so critical of the Government's attempt to introduce a purely functional test that can be applied to the world of work for people with disabilities.

Those bodies also assert very strongly that they have been asked to take part in consultations on a document that changed almost before the ink on the first draft was dry. The whole exercise is such a mutant creature, such a changing phenomenon, that it is not clear at what point the final word will be said.

We welcome the Government's undertaking in Committee that, following completion in August of the final deliberations on the medical test, the form of the new test will be published, and that further public consultation on the outcome of the deliberations will be allowed. I hope that, in the context of this new clause, the Government will be able to assure us that they do indeed intend to engage in that process. There must be new and full consultation when the new medical test has finally been devised.

4.30 pm

We are greatly concerned at the fact that, in the absence of a definition in the Bill, it is difficult— almost impossible — to debate incapacity for work. On this ground also, the new clause is important. We are told that a full definition will be provided in regulations. Without knowing how the Government intend to use the medical test in practice, it is very difficult to look forward to a clear understanding of the relationship between the medical test and the work situation. The Bill itself should contain a proper definition so that we might have an opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny.

Given the consultation document's criticism that case law has

"broadened and blurred incapacity beyond its original meaning",

and given that part of the thrust of the Government's argument seems to be that they need to tighten up the way in which invalidity benefit is currently administered, it is surprising that a precise definition has not been provided.

A clear definition in statute law might have gone some way towards resolving any supposed problems of misinterpretation of the original intention. If the Government had addressed their mind to that point, all the other proposed changes in the administration of invalidity benefit might have fallen away, and it might have been seen as inappropriate to introduce this new benefit. This can only give additional thrust to the theory that the main purpose of the Bill is to cut public expenditure rather than to focus benefit effectively on people with disabilities.

There is little evidence that the only way properly to target—that is the Government's terminology; they used the word "focus" in Committee; we believe that the proper word is "cut"—invalidity benefit is to set about this elaborate new procedure. We believe very strongly—no one has suggested otherwise at any stage of debate on the Bill—that not every person in receipt of invalidity benefit is a genuine case.

It would be absurd to make such a suggestion. However, the dismantling of the whole system and the introduction of entirely new procedures—in particular, the new functional medical test—does not support the Government's contention that they are trying to help disabled people rather than to take essential benefits from them.

If the Government's purpose is genuinely to focus invalidity benefit, why will people who pass the medical test receive benefit at a lower rate? If the purpose is simply to tighten up the rules and ensure that the medical test is properly applied, why will there be a cut in the amount of money available to people with disabilities who pass the test?

This is a crucial question, which the Government must answer. They must tell the public why, if they are simply trying—in their terms—to wean people off invalidity benefit, those who pass will receive benefit at a lower rate.

So new clause 3 is intended to bring a report forward on the medical test, because we believe that the test of functional limitation is inadequate, unfair and unworkable. As a tool for assessing incapacity, the test is inadequate. The Government have based their research on the previous Office of Population Censuses and Surveys scales, which were defined very much for research purposes and not for the purpose to which they are now being applied. We believe strongly that other factors, and not just functional limitation, must be taken into account when using the medical test.

Not only must we look at the individual's medical condition and disability; we must also assess the effect of their condition on their ability to carry out a range of social and functional activities, including the ability to travel to work, and their capacity to sustain functional and social activities within the specific demands and constraints of the workplace. A study undertaken by the Policy Studies Institute suggests that four criteria are important in the assessment of work capacity—age, skills, the accessibility of the job and discrimination by employers—and that a much wider test than the purely functional one proposed by the Government must be applied.

The test, we believe, will produce unfair results. We were encouraged to a certain extent by the fact that now included in the medical test will be open-ended questions for applicants to answer, to explain some of the limitations imposed by their incapacity. But, by their very nature, open-ended questionnaires are difficult to analyse, and it will be hard to produce consistency of treatment as between claimants.

As anyone who has undertaken social research knows, the interpretation of open-ended questions and their answers is extremely difficult. So there will be great differences in treatment, not only within Department of Social Security offices dealing with these matters, but between offices throughout the country. That is the importance of the new clause—that a report will be presented to Parliament so that we can look at the analysis to ensure fairness and equality of treatment throughout the country.

We are also concerned that any functional medical test will fail to take into proper account what has been mentioned in many of the briefings that we have received

on this from organisations such as the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Arthritis Care and others: fluctuating conditions whereby people's ability to work varies from day to day, or even situations in which, as a result of undertaking some task at work on a particular day, they may be prevented from doing it the following day. We are also concerned that the functional test arrangement will not properly reflect the condition of people suffering from long-term debilitating illnesses such as myalgic encephalomyelitis.

We are concerned about people whose disabilities are invisible, particularly those with chronic pain, who often experience difficulty in convincing others that their pain is real. There is a great deal of research on this point, and the sensitivity with which the medical test is applied will be crucial in ensuring that people who genuinely can or cannot work are properly and uniformly assessed. We have no confidence, from the way the test is currently being organised, that it will lead to that conclusion.

Finally, we are concerned about people who have "managed" their disability through the use of medication and so on, but who have great difficulty in undertaking tasks to which the test may be applied. There are difficulties not only in the way in which the medical test will be applied to people's current occupation, but in the way in which it will be applied to all work.

We are very worried that the all-work test will not reflect the relationship between the ability of the individual, through the functional medical test, and the real work opportunities for disabled people. We are worried that that will not be applied in a way that will lead them into real employment because, by the Government's admission, they expect 200,000 people who would currently claim invalidity benefit not to receive the new incapacity benefit, but to end up as unemployed.

That is the reverse of the Government's previous policy, by which they sought to reduce unemployment by pushing people into any benefit they could find that was not unemployment benefit. Invalidity benefit was one such benefit that the Department of Social Security found, but it now wants to reverse that trend and to force people on to the dole queue rather than giving them a proper level of benefit.

The other part of the group of amendments which is crucial aims to link the medical test to the appeals procedure. In Committee, we had some debate about the appeal procedure, but by our proposed new clause 4 we are strengthening the deliberation and looking towards the Government to give further comment and consideration to the way in which the appeals procedure will work in practice.

The mechanism which we are employing is the presentation of an annual report to Parliament so that we can give proper scrutiny to the way in which the appeals procedure operates. Linked to that appeals procedure is the role of the general practitioner and of medical and other professional advisers in the appeals procedure.

There were some welcome comments in Committee about the way in which the appeals procedure would work. We welcome the points, for example, that appeals could be made to a social security appeal tribunal unless otherwise specified, that the GP will continue to have a role, and that a decision of "fit to work" reached by the Benefits Agency medical service will be accepted by the Employment Service, so that people will not fail tests by both agencies and fail to qualify for any benefit. Those points were welcome, but we need much greater clarification of the way in which the appeal procedure will operate.

I know that the Minister said in Committee that further thought and discussion about the appeals procedure were continuing, but it is clear that we need to flag up some of our anxieties even more firmly.

One issue which was mentioned to us since we debated the Bill in Committee and which is important to many organisations representing disabled people, is the current delays in the hearing of appeals—the time that it is taking for decisions to be made. As a result of what we believe to be the more stringent nature of the new medical test—I emphasise that we cannot say for certain the way in which it will operate, because it is not before us to debate—and the arbitrary way in which we believe that it may be applied, not only to current work patterns but to all work employment, it is essential that the Government provide some certainty about the length of time that they would expect the appeals to take.

There will be a growing number of appeals. We must ensure that the Government will commit the resources to ensure that the appeals procedure is effective, and that the time scale in which claimants can expect a decision to be made is satisfactory. It must be especially satisfactory because of the structure of the new benefit. There is a change in rates at 28 weeks. Up to 28 weeks, a lower rate of benefit will be paid than after 28 weeks. Claimants will not qualify for the full rate of benefit until after 52 weeks. Therefore, we must be especially sure that the appeals procedure does not flow over that timespan, and that people do not lose out changing rates of benefit in that time.

Therefore, we very much welcome some consideration and further comment by the Government about the way in which the procedure will work, what resources will be provided and what the cost of those resources will be to the Government, to ensure that a satisfactory procedure is put into place.

4.45 pm

What is crucial, as a result of the much more limited nature of the medical test, is the way in which the reports of medical officers, general practitioners and other medical professionals will be dealt with at the appeals stage. The Government are setting about a system which limits the role of the GP at the initial point of assessment. GPs will be allowed to produce their medical evidence on the condition of the claimant, but will not be allowed to give an assessment about the way in which that condition relates to the claimant's ability to work—or, if the GP chooses to do so, I suspect that that information will be ignored.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I have a constituent who received support from his general practitioner, who was told by the Department's doctor that he was perfectly fit to work and then had three subsequent different examinations by different doctors, all of whom said that he was incapable of working.

This morning, I received a letter—not from Monsieur Bichard, but from the personnel director of the agency, which I thought was a new development—which said cheerfully, "Yes; it is perfectly true that it did take 18 months. He has now got all the money back, and how inconvenient." There was not even a word of apology. Does my hon. Friend think that there will be a great deal more of that in future?

Mr. Bradley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning the way in which the appeals procedure currently operates. Interestingly, evidence from agencies such as citizens advice bureaux up and down the country shows that, when a case has gone to appeal, ultimately the evidence that was given by the GP is upheld at appeal. I therefore suspect that we shall get into more and far more elaborate appeals, which will take an enormous amount of time, effort and cost, and which will fall back very much on the original assessment that may have been undertaken by the GP.

No one suggests that the current situation is perfect; no one suggests that all GPs are happy with the current arrangements; but there is a strong feeling that, if GPs were given far greater guidance, better training and help in preparing the reports for the Department of Social Security, far fewer people might have had to go to appeal and then fall back on the GPs having to draw up new reports—

Mrs. Dunwoody: Or if they did not know anything about medicine, that would help, too.

Mr. Bradley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

We seek greater clarification of the role that GPs and other medical officers and assessments will play, and of the stage at which they will participate. It is feared that this will give rise to a massive number of discontented claimants who feel that they have been harshly treated by the medical test or its harsh interpretation.

The test has limitations because of its functional elements in relating the multitude of different conditions, illnesses and disabilities that people have. It is difficult to fix those into a set of procedures and to make a one-off determination about whether people are capable or incapable of work. I believe that it will cause great distress and anxiety.

I feel that the Government have not understood the threshold that they are trying to determine between capacity and incapacity for work. We are worried—because we have evidence of it throughout the changes that have been made to the social security system—that the guiding force in all the decisions will be the Treasury. Under the social fund, for example, people with exactly the same needs and circumstances are treated totally differently, depending on what time of the year they walk through the door.

Although the Government will deny it, there is a fear that, if the medical test, however it is devised, does not limit the number of claimants to the amount of money which the Government expect the benefit to cost—even if the amount is not set in concrete—they will immediately change the threshold and the weighting of factors within the test to limit even further the opportunity for disabled people to be eligible for the new incapacity benefit.

As all Government policy at the current time seems to be governed by that overriding Treasury figure, which is designed to force down public sector borrowing, but which causes those with greatest need to suffer as a result, that must cloud our judgment on all the Government's decisions.

It is important that the new clause should enable proper scrutiny by Parliament of matters that are not contained in the Bill. It is crucial that Parliament be given an opportunity to look in detail at how the medical test will operate in practice, and at those who have been granted or denied the new incapacity benefit.

We need a report that gives a proper analysis, nationwide and region by region, of how the benefit operates in practice. We also need a proper analysis of how the appeals procedure will work in practice. We need evidence and research on how medical reports, GP assessments and the reports of other medical officers and professionals in the medical field are dealt with, to ensure consistency of treatment by claimants throughout the country.

We also need to ensure that, throughout the whole process, money is not the guiding principle in determining the Government's response to people's genuine claims for incapacity benefit. People must feel confident that Parliament can come to a considered, reasoned and certain decision because the evidence is before us. The evidence is certainly not before us this afternoon.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I hope that the Government will look carefully at the proposals in new clause 3 and the group of amendments. There is a case for having a report to Parliament on the effectiveness of the medical test and I am sure that my right hon. Friends will be willing to reflect on it and consider it positively. I know that they are looking to develop a system that will work humanely and practically.

The Government have offered us the concept of an objective medical test that contains considerable difficulties. At this stage of legislating, we do not know what the series of objective medical tests will be. We are grateful for the consultative document offered to us, but that itself has been changing, even during the consultation process. It is excellent that no less than 80 experts have been called in from outside the Department to offer their opinions and advice. But I suspect that, even if there were 800 experts, they would still face insurmountable difficulty in developing a satisfactory objective medical test.

Having said that, I welcome the developments which it is reported are taking place, even at this stage, although, as the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) suggested, the introduction of additional flexibility may take the test a little further away from objectivity.

We are contemplating a test not of incapacity for work but of functional incapacity. The purpose of the exercise is to establish objective and universal measures in a series of scores in tests. Will my right hon. Friend persuade me that that is not an impossibility? In assessing capacity or incapacity to work, one must consider the interaction in individual cases of a range of factors. One must consider the impairment or illness, which may be a fluctuating condition, in relation to the work experience and skills of the individual in question; his or her education and training; his or her personal household circumstances; and the work opportunities that may be available to that person.

The distinction must not be forgotten between "own work" and "all work"—the distinction between the work which the person in question has previously undertaken —and whether the person would be fit for that work or similar work and any other work of which that person may or may not be capable. If we ignore that distinction we shall inevitably get ourselves into considerable difficulties.

The Department's research makes us well aware of the difficulties that face people over the age of 50 in trying to

[Mr. Alan Howarth]

find jobs, and we are all too aware of the reality of discrimination against disabled people in relation to employment, an issue which we shall have a fuller opportunity to debate on Friday.

I remind the House that the Department of Employment's sponsored research in 1990 found that 6 per cent. of employers candidly and brutally said that they would discriminate against disabled people. Another 25 per cent. of employers admitted that they might discriminate. A Spastics Society study found that 34 out of 94 employers, willing to interview, were not willing to interview a registered disabled applicant with qualifications and experience equal to other applicants. It also found that 53 per cent. of employers use pre-employment health screening. That study by the Spastics Society, entitled "Wasted Opportunities", on the activities of training and enterprise councils in relation to training disabled people, also offers a gloomy account.

The disabled are three times more likely to be out of work and they are unemployed for longer than non-disabled people. At the beginning of this month, the citizens advice bureaux produced a gloomy dossier detailing instances of discrimination against disabled people.

Against that background, it is difficult—indeed, impossible—to talk in terms of an objective medical test that would define a person's incapacity for work, because incapacity for work in the real world depends on the circumstances in which someone finds himself or herself and those circumstances may be adverse. So incapacity is not an absolute; it is a relative matter.

Furthermore, we should think positively in terms of ability rather than disability and of capacity rather than incapacity. The title of the Bill, "Social Security (Incapacity for Work)", is somewhat chilling. Although I realise that it is not intended, I fear that the concept expressed by that title may encourage too negative a spirit when it comes to employing disabled people.

There is a good case for having a report on the lines proposed in the new clause. If we are to have a report, it should look at a range of relevant measures within the overall policy. I hope that, by the time the Bill has completed its passage, the report will cover a partial incapacity benefit. It seems appropriate that we should have not just a single absolute incapacity benefit but a partial incapacity benefit which would be proportionate to the degree of disability of the person being supported.

I hope that an amendment of that kind will be instated in the Bill. I know that new clause 5 was not selected for debate today, but there is no reason why it should not be considered in another place, where I am sure those involved in the debate would want to emphasise the value of gradualism and the rehabilitative experience of moving to part-time work, perhaps en route to full-time work. A partial incapacity benefit would be a useful complement to disability working allowance, under which benefit is cut off at a fairly low level of earnings.

5 pm

Similarly, I hope that a report would cover more generous linking rules, which we do not have an opportunity to debate today, but which I hope will be introduced into the legislation. The trap created by an eight-week rule is a deterrent to employment. I hope that we might move to a two-year linking rule under incapacity benefit parallel to the rule under disability working allowance.

The Government's strategy surely must be to get people into work. That is good for them and, of course, for the Government's finances, about which the Government are legitimately concerned. Rigid rules and rigid cut-offs are not conducive to that end and will, unquestionably, be insensitive to the variety of circumstances and needs. The formula used by the Benefits Agency medical service must, at the very least, be made flexible.

I welcome the announcement by my right hon. and hon. Friends that the terminally ill, those on the higher rate care component of disability living allowance, and those on the prescribed list will not be required to undertake the test. I also think that people who are made exempt in that way should be fast tracked on to benefit, but that is a debate for another occasion. We are unable to debate amendments Nos. 17 and 18 because they were not selected. They too may be the subject of a debate in another place.

As has already been argued, the report should cover the involvement of general practitioners. I cannot bring myself to believe that it is right to suggest that doctors consider that it is beyond the range of their normal responsibilities to play a part in the first assessment. I know that they are to offer an opinion on a rather curtailed basis in the first assessment, but because of some of the factors that I mentioned earlier, and because the personal history and circumstances of each individual should be considered, we should find ways to involve general practitioners as much as possible in the process. I know that many general practitioners would welcome such involvement and recognise it as a normal and proper part of their professional responsibilities.

We need to know what role general practitioners will play in appeals. My right hon. and hon. Friends have said that GPs will have a role in the appeal process, but it has not yet been made clear what that role should be. A report should cover that aspect of the procedures.

The report should tell us a good deal about what is happening in appeals. In recent years, the success rate of appeals involving invalidity benefit has risen. I believe that the figure was 21 per cent. in 1979, and 53 per cent. in 1992. A consistent weight of anecdotal evidence on appeals shows that the success rate of appeals has risen yet further since then. I suspect that the search for economies and the administrative guidance prompting benefits officers to be more stringent has perversely led to higher administration costs. In their unsuccessful attempts to weed out a considerable number of "unjustified" claims, they have incurred administrative costs. That has caused difficulties for everyone, both officials and claimants.

The appeal process has lengthened from 21 weeks in 1986 to 30 weeks in 1992. We should also be concerned that it is possible for a claimant not to receive income during those lengthening periods while they wait for the outcome of an appeal. It would be helpful and proper if the report dealt with that matter as well.

The purpose of the legislation is, very properly, to ensure that there is no waste in, or abuse of, this part of the benefit system. It also aims to ensure that appropriate support is provided to claimants who are entitled to it, and that such support is provided reliably and quickly. The objective of the legislation should be humanity, not

parsimony. It is a part of the benefit system through which we acquit ourselves, in part, of our responsibilities to those who are vulnerable and poor.

There is a good case for having a report laid before Parliament, as the new clause proposes. We are, after all, embarking on an experimental approach that has not yet been fully formulated. For the reasons that I have explained, we cannot yet be confident that it will work. The Benefits Agency medical service will face a massive task. It is estimated that perhaps 600,000 people who currently receive invalidity benefit may have to undergo the test. We will need assurance, therefore, that the procedures and the quality of decision-making are of the necessary standard.

To have a report would be fair to everyone who is sick and disabled, especially those who are rejected at the medical test. They are entitled, as we all are, to see that the system is performing as it should and that proper standards are defined and are being met.

Finally, the Government should consider positively the suggestion to provide such a report as it would be a mark of their respect for Parliament and the public.

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): This is an important Bill and therefore an important debate. The number of people currently receiving invalidity benefit is substantial. The Government estimate that 1.5 million people will receive benefit either now or in about a year, so we are discussing substantial amounts of public resources. More importantly, we are discussing the way in which our society, through the will of Parliament, will treat people with disabilities. For reasons that I think are clear, not least sheer demography, there are likely to be more people with disabilities in our community as we approach the end of this century and a new millennium. The debate is of great importance to social policy.

As hon. Members have said, much depends on the medical test and how we define incapacity for work. I greatly enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth). I agreed with him when he said that incapacity was not an absolute concept but was, inevitably, a relative concept. I want to develop that argument to say that incapacity is relative to the employment position.

The Government's legislation is based on an assumption which, in the current employment climate, many of us would regard as heroic. It assumes that those who fail the strict medical test will, by definition, be capable of work. I assume that the assumption is that with a bit of willingness those people will not only seek, but find, jobs.

Will Ministers say more today than they have done so far, and more than they said in Committee, about how they view the association between medical capacity for work and the true prospects for gaining work? I hope that Ministers will respond and consider policy in those broad terms. Parliament today could not agree to the measure with any great confidence if it felt that the result would be that many people with disabilities which were not serious enough to pass the test would be consigned to poverty because they would be unable to find their way into the employment market. I hope that the Minister will say something about that. A strict medical test, regardless of the employment situation, must make for poor social policy.

I will put forward two employment scenarios relating to the medical test. One would be where the medical test was being applied in full and buoyant employment, where not only were the official unemployment levels very low, but there was a shortage in the labour market and employers were crying out for decent labour. In those circumstances, employers would be bending over backwards to accommodate people with disabilities. They would be heavily into training, they would be adapting their premises and they would in a variety of ways be sensitive to the needs of those with disabilities.

We all know that to assume that people with disabilities —even serious disabilities—are not capable of work represents great prejudice and potential discrimination against such people. There are remarkable people around —we have all had them as colleagues in different walks of life—who, despite many disabilities, are making a major contribution to their workplace and therefore to the economy.

Professor Stephen Hawking labours under the most considerable disabilities imaginable, yet he is one of the most brilliant scientists in the west and has made a major contribution not only to his university, but to the enlightenment of us all. To assume that someone with even such grave disabilities was incapable of work would be a great slur on that man and many others less famous. In the right employment conditions, many people with the most grave disabilities are capable of work and, equally important, should be able to obtain work. In the right circumstances, we might have more confidence about even a strict medical test.

Sadly, the employment scenario that I have outlined is very far from the reality in the United Kingdom. Instead, for many the reality is not employment, but unemployment; there are 3 million or 4 million people out of work, the trends in the labour market are towards less security and permanence and people have to chop and change their jobs.

Increasingly, Ministers and other pundits make a virtue out of that. They say that those are the circumstances that workers will have to face in future; they will have to retrain constantly and no job is for life—even for those with safe seats in the House—and that people should not expect such security. In those changed employment circumstances, it will become more difficult for people with disabilities to find employment. I wonder how the Government would present their Bill to us in that context, which they will need to address.

The evidence so far, without taking account of developments in the most recent years, is worrying for the employment prospects of those with disabilities. In 1989, Social and Community Planning Research estimated that 22 per cent. of people with disabilities who regarded themselves available for work—the so-called economically active as the statisticians would have it—were out of work. If the Government have data for a more recent period, they would be useful, because I suspect that things have changed for the worse, even since 1989.

Another report in 1992, from Stephen Smith of the Spastics Society, found that employers were six times more likely to turn down people with disabilities for interviews even where their qualifications, experience and CVs were just as good as those who were not disabled. We face a problem of discrimination from employers; it is well known to the House and well documented. Other Government studies have estimated that it is 2.5 times more likely for people with disabilities to be out of work than those who are able-bodied.

[Mr. Malcolm Wicks]

A survey organised by the voluntary organisation, PACT in Brighton, also relates to the debate. It found that 40 per cent. of employers in Brighton regarded people with disabilities as unsuitable for employment. That is another example of the prejudice and discrimination that we face in Britain.

5.15 pm

Perhaps the most telling to the House is that many years ago, shortly after the second world war, the House in its wisdom passed a Bill saying that larger employers—those with 20 or more workers—should have a disability quota of 3 per cent. of their labour force. We understand that, despite having had many years to implement that measure, three quarters of employers do not meet the quota. Since 1975 there has been no prosecution to enforce it. That suggests that, although we may willingly pass legislation in the House, we are rather lax in its implementation.

Still on the theme of the association between the medical test and the reality of finding work, I was struck by a briefing that many of us received from the Policy Studies Institute written by one of their senior social scientists, Richard Berthoud, about the reality behind the medical test. He talked in particular about discrimination by employers. I quoted from it in Committee and I shall quote a paragraph today, as it makes an important point. It states:

"At a meeting of the 'panel of experts' convened by the DSS to discuss the medical assessment, a disease was described which caused people to tremble permanently and uncontrollably. People with this disease are not impaired in any way: they could stand, walk, sit, grip, reach and do all the other things required by the medical test. But other people, it was said, could not bear to watch them—they became upset and could not concentrate on their own tasks. As a result of the effect on other employees, no employer was prepared to hire someone with this condition."

The reaction of the panel would be the reaction of many of us in the House—we would be appalled. Many suggested that it was outrageous and that employers should be made to hire those people. But in reality, sadly, many employers will not hire such people because of their effect on other employees.

The document went on to say that most people would agree that employers and employees should not discriminate in that way and that perhaps they should be banned from doing so. However, as long as discrimination persists, removal of trembling and other socially embarrassing conditions such as disfigurement from the assessment criteria would mean that those affected would be denied incapacity benefits and face the punitive treatment offered to the unemployed. Here we have the real and complex association between the danger of failing a medical test, because, objectively, the person can work, and the reality whereby the prejudices of many ordinary people and employees and the prejudices and discriminations of employers mean the person cannot find work.

Again I put it to Ministers: what are the employment prospects of those who may fail the medical test? Do the Government think, even at this stage, that it is wise to bring to the Chamber legislation which, however scientifically well constructed—and we do not know that, because we do not have the details—nevertheless does not seem to take account of current reality?

I have received correspondence from people who say that in practice, in the labour market today, if they have a disability, particularly if they are no longer very young, they find it difficult to get work. Someone wrote to me from Kent saying that his local disability employment adviser had written to him and said that he was unlikely to get a job. Why? He was told:

"Because of the changes in companies employment policy as a result of the recession, your age, your disabilities, which would preclude you holding down a full or part-time job, and the fact that you have not worked since 1987."

The DEE went on to say:

"I am sorry, but you are now unemployable."

I do not know the full details of that case, but that may well be someone who passes the test prescribed by the DSS but fails the most important test of all—the jobs test—and ends up not in employment but in unemployment.

I would like to add to what has been said by hon. Members in Committee and in the House today about those who have conditions that fluctuate from day to day, week to week or month to month and put this important point to Ministers. How will the medical test allow for those who perhaps on the day of the test seem to be relatively able-bodied and therefore capable of work according to the legislation but who perhaps the next day, week or month have a relapse and find that they cannot work? That is of real concern.

I am told by those with ME—myalgic encephalomyelitis—including those who come to see me in any constituency office in Croydon, that on some days, despite suffering for many months, they may feel relatively fit and confident about life and the prospects of work, while on another day they may wake up in the morning and find it almost impossible even to get out of bed, such are the debilitating effects of ME and similar conditions.

The point was mentioned in Committee, but I will put it again to Ministers. How can a test, however sophisticated, allow for such a condition on the day? It appears to be true for those with physical conditions. I suspect, although I am no expert, that it is even more true for those with mental illness, certainly certain forms of mental illness. Again, someone from Croydon came to see me, speaking on behalf of those in the Manic Depressive Fellowship—those who suffer from the terrible condition of manic depression. He told me a similar story—that on one day he may truly be one of the most depressed people in the community and be almost unable to function, certainly not in the labour market and hold down a job.

He used to be a lecturer at a college. After many years—indeed, decades—of battling against his manic depression, he finally had to succumb and leave his place of work and is now dependent on invalidity benefit. He said that on some days he is really down, but because his condition fluctuates from week to week and month to month, at other times he may be almost up in the clouds and almost too active—indeed, hyperactive. It makes him do foolish things. He gives away too much money to his charitable causes. That is a fluctuating condition. How would a strict medical test allow for that?

This is a serious debate. I am not making a polemical point. I am interested in how the Government can devise a test to allow for the reality of people's conditions, because we all know that the prospects of any of us at some stage becoming mentally ill are quite high. We are not talking about small numbers of people, but about a large percentage of men and women. How they will be treated is important.

It would be helpful if the Government could tell us more today about the conditions that will be on the exempt list.

I welcome the assurance given in Committee that, although they are not shown on the face of the Bill—I understand that—people suffering from many other conditions, including those suffering from AIDS and symptomatic HIV, are likely to receive extremely sympathetic treatment from Government when the exempt list is drawn up. If Ministers have a moment today to confirm that assurance, I know that many people would be most grateful.

In my experience, social security, while often presented in terms of policy, grand principle and key objectives, depends crucially on its detail. It is therefore up to the House to take its role as scrutineers of legislation extremely seriously. Again, I offer this not as a polemical point but as a serious contribution to the debate. Having served on the Committee that considered the Incapacity for Work Bill, I have been appalled by the manner in which Conservative Back Benchers treated the Committee in such a cavalier way. I have been on Committees for smaller Bills, but that was my first major experience. I offer, therefore, an innocent essay on what I found. But I was genuinely surprised and appalled by the way in which Conservative Back Benchers approached the Committee.

It is partly a function of the fact that, sadly, the more independent-minded Conservative Back Benchers were on the exempt list and not allowed to serve on the Committee. It was packed, I suppose, with trusties. At one stage—it was a rare moment—a Back Bencher rose to make a contribution and said that he would be very brief. Indeed, he had promised his Whip that he would speak for only four minutes.

Those of us who—at our teacher's feet—studied the British constitution, read textbooks which, I now realise, came from the section called "Fiction". They told us the story that, having been considered in broad terms in the Chamber of the House of Commons, a Bill is then subjected to scrutiny line by line in Committee. That includes this most important matter that we are discussing now about the medical test.

The Bill was subjected to scrutiny in great detail by Opposition Members, but not by Conservatives. I was genuinely surprised that certain Conservative Back Benchers spent more time in conversation with their secretaries on constituency matters in the Committee Corridor than they did in Committee. When challenged on that, because we tried to encourage genuine debate and scrutiny, one Conservative Back Bencher—I forget which one—said, "Don't tell me this. I approve of the Bill. I do not need to be here."

Surely that is not the point. Either we take the scrutiny of such proposed legislation seriously—not least social security legislation, where the detail is so vital; hence the debate today about the medical test and our urging of a report—or we do not. I think that the Bill, in a sense, has become a case study of poor Government and poor parliamentary scrutiny.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I am sure that the Conservative Back Bencher to whom my hon. Friend referred was the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls). My hon. Friend will notice that he has not even attended this evening's debate. I am sure that it has not escaped my hon. Friend's notice that few Conservative Members have turned up for the debate on this important aspect of the new clause. Perhaps that is something that he would want to write into his revision.

Mr. Bradley: The hon. Gentleman was not on the Committee.

Mr. Ingram: My hon. Friend informs me from a sedentary position that the hon. Member for Teignbridge was not on the Committee, but I am sure that when my hon. Friend amends the textbook on the British constitution, this will prove a major part of the new edition.

Mr. Wicks: I am flattered that my hon. Friend was scrutinising my speech with such care and made that timely intervention.

We are dealing with a serious matter. Although I do not want to strain your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of us returned time and again in Committee to one of the recent pieces of social security legislation—the Child Support Act 1991. Why? We now find that that piece of legislation, which went through Parliament and Committee, is causing an almighty row because what we may regard as "the detail" is blood and thunder detail for families in this country. I understand that today there has been a huge lobby of Parliament because people are upset by the detail.

At this stage, the medical test and the Bill are not causing a furore; the Press Gallery is not packed. Whatever parliamentary correspondents do, we find that they do not correspond with Parliament. No journalist ever attended the Committee stage of the Bill. It will be different, however, when the effects of the detail come home to roost. Constituents will turn up in our surgeries, saying, "Once upon a time I would have received such and such a benefit. I have just taken the medical test, but I did not pass: I was told that I was capable of work." My constituents will then say to me, "Mr. Wicks, I tried my best to find work: here are my applications. I have been told that, because I have a disability and am over 50"—or 55—"I shall not be able to find work."

I know what will happen. Conservative Members will say, "How can this have happened? We do not understand it. Who was looking after the detail?" Indeed, I have heard Conservative Members say of the Child Support Act, "I support the principle"—that ritual cry—"but I did not know that it would be like this." I suggest that even those hon. Members who spent hours in the Corridor when they should have been in the Committee Room will say to Ministers, "What has happened to the detail? A man cannot find work; he has a disability; yet he has failed the medical test. Think again."

5.30 pm

This is important. We should draw lessons from our recent experience of scrutiny, or rather lack of scrutiny: Bills, not least social security Bills, should include social impact statements spelling out the implications for people in the real world, and there should be pre-legislation hearings. I remember the Minister of State's saying that he thought that that was a good idea. We need Back Benchers on both sides who, while playing a party role, also take very seriously—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have allowed the hon. Gentleman quite a bit of licence, but I should be grateful if he would now return to the new clause.

Mr. Wicks: You have been very kind, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), I did not speak Welsh, which would

[Mr. Wicks]

have given you an opportunity to intervene earlier; I have done my best with my north London accent. I am glad that you have allowed me to express some of my thoughts, because the way in which we scrutinise the legislation is clearly important.

We should consider very carefully the motivation behind the Bill and the medical test. Have we been presented with a measure that is principally a piece of social policy—including the provision for the medical test, which we think warrants an annual report—or with a piece of financial policy?

In Committee, we were assured that the medical test provision was truly a piece of medicine—a piece of science—which had little to do with finance or the Treasury. I know you will consider what I am about to say very relevant, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Bill contains no impact statement about people, but it contains such a statement about money: we are told that, by 1996-97, gross savings of £1.45 billion will have been achieved.

How can we be confident that the medical test will be objective if we already know the bottom line? The Treasury has set the targets. Whatever the details of the medical test, and whatever the committee of experts may come up with, the threshold for receipt or non-receipt of benefit will have to be set according to financial targets. I have thought hard about this, and I consider it wise of my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) to suggest an annual report on the test if the Bill is enacted—which I hope it will not be; I hope that the House will think again. We should be able to see for ourselves how the test is working in practice—whether it is working according to a financial criterion, or just according to a medical one.

If we allow the Bill and the medical test to proceed, the inevitable consequence will be the impoverishment of many people with disabilities, and their further marginalisation in the community. That is the great worry. In future, more people who do not receive this benefit will find themselves on unemployment benefit or income support: that is clear from the financial statement in the Bill. The Government admit that although there will be gross savings, there will also be marginal costs as a result of the increase in income support and unemployment benefits. Perhaps Ministers will now come clean, and tell us how many more people with disabilities—people whom we should be looking after—will become dependent on means-tested income support if the Bill is passed.

I think that there is an alternative to the medical test. It should be understood that people with disabilities are full citizens who should be part of an active society. The best policy that we could introduce is not about incapacity, but about capacity and full employment. Unless we return to full employment, we shall never be able to integrate those affected by the Bill into the community. If the Government are assuming mass unemployment in the future, it seems that more and more people with disabilities will become marginalised and unable to seek work; more and more will depend on income support. I believe that there is an alternative way forward, in terms of a public policy with decent social implications for people with disabilities which would also make economic sense.

In Committee, Conservative Members—occasionally, when they were present—would throw the following thought at us: "Are you saying that you would spend more money?" I think that we are saying that the right package of economic and social policies for those with disabilities—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is displaying great skill, but we are returning to a Second Reading debate. I ask him to relate his remarks to new clause 3.

Mr. Wicks: I am coming to my final paragraph, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I firmly resist the charge that financial costs are attached to our suggestions in Committee. I believe that there is a way in which the House—and even the present Government—can think about people with disabilities and the range of policies that they need which would not only be desirable in social terms but would make economic sense to our community.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): My hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) usually speaks for the Liberal Democrats on social security matters. Unfortunately, he has been placed in an unenviable position: amendments have been tabled in his name both here and in the Standing Committee of which he is currently a member. As he has no party colleague in the Committee, it fell to me to deputise here—which I do with some trepidation, given the thoughtful speeches that we have heard so far. It is clear that hon. Members on both sides of the House have given the matter considerable attention and thought.

It is apparent to me that the application, or the detail, of the all-work test is so vague, unpredictable and unknown that—having briefly looked through some papers—I may know as much about it as almost any other hon. Member who is present. As I listened to the debate and tried to take in what was happening, I had some horrible ideas about what might be in prospect.

The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) referred to someone in the position of Professor Stephen Hawking. Let us suppose that someone who had not even acquired O-levels found himself in exactly the same medical condition. It sounds to me as though such a person would be deemed fit for work, and able to take on the job of professor of science at one of our leading universities.

The Minister may say that that could not possibly happen—

Mr. Burt: No, it could not.

Mr. Wallace: But I am not entirely persuaded by what I have heard so far. I accept that I have given an extreme example, but I feel that in any event there is considerable scope for injustice and unfairness to be visited on people with disabilities, or what could be described in common parlance—as opposed to the legal terminology that we are about the pass into law—as incapacity for work.

One can perhaps think of a number of such factors, and the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West referred to a report by Richard Berthoud of the Policy Studies Institute which outlined some of the circumstances that could arise.

The report draws attention to the case of a person who is academically well qualified and lives in a town where there is a considerable amount of service industry, especially clerical jobs. That person sustains a serious

injury to his leg but, after it has healed, is able to return to employment and take up the clerical duties in which he was involved before.

Another person in the same town who suffers exactly the same accident might have a different employment history. Perhaps he left school without any qualifications and laboured on a building site. He might have the same physical injuries, but suitable employment opportunities might not be available for him.

We are being asked to accept a test that relates purely to the narrow range of medical functions. It is merely a check list that will be ticked off, or otherwise, but which will take no account of how a particular medical condition can affect someone. It is not simply a matter of whether someone is capable of walking 100 m; there might be psychological effects. A person's previous training and the current job opportunities must be taken into account. What are a person's living circumstances?

In my constituency, many people live miles from the nearest town. An injury that renders them incapable of driving a car might cut off a range of employment opportunities, but, if they lived in the middle of a town, a good number of employment opportunities might be open to them.

Another mental picture of the system being set up is that it resembles the competitions or quizzes that sometimes appear in magazines. One is asked questions A, B and C, and one receives five points for A, two points for B and zero for C, and the points are added up at the end. It seems that we are devising a rigid system under which points will be added together: if one scores more than a certain number, one is disqualified from benefit, whereas if one falls beneath that number, one qualifies.

I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley). He said that the application of such a system places a great deal of power in the hands of those setting the rules. One of the briefings that I have seen believes that the Government estimate that 400,000 current recipients of invalidity benefit will have to undergo a new test as their cases come up for review, and that as many as 250,000 will no longer qualify.

I have no doubt that an estimate has been made—it was probably in the original Bill before Second Reading, when the financial consequences had to be spelt out—of how much saving will accrue to the Treasury. One has the feeling that, as long as there is a strict objective test with a score card, it will be possible to make adjustments to ensure that the anticipated savings materialise, and that is quite apart from the effect that the system could have on individuals.

The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West made another important point. It is not only a question of incapacity for work or otherwise, but of a person's ability to get work even if he or she is deemed to be capable of work. This raises the question of the prejudice and discrimination that is often suffered by people with disabilities. I remember that, in the days when I was my party's employment spokesman, the issue of the 3 per cent. quota arose. It was clear that it was honoured far more in the breach than in its enforcement. I fear that we are ensuring that many people will lose on invalidity benefit, without any obvious road back to employment.

It might not be possible to get them but, in addition to all the figures that the Government would be asked to put before Parliament under new clause 3, it might have been useful to add another one—what percentage of those who have been deemed capable of work got jobs within two months of that determination being made?

5.45 pm

Some element of judgment must come into play, and it is important that general practitioners should have a role. Many doctors are not keen on having thrust on them the duty of being, as it were, enforcement officers on behalf of the Benefits Agency. It is perfectly understandable that they do not want to be the last arbiters, but I am sure that all hon. Members will agree that GPs nevertheless have an important role to play.

In Committee, the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), said:

"GPs retain an important role."

He said that a GP's input would be

"a vital part of the consideration . . . We are not writing GPs out of the picture."

My colleagues and I tabled amendment No.22 because we seek some way to ensure that the role, advice and information of GPs can be properly channelled into those considerations.

The Minister also said:

"The GP's opinion on whether a person is incapable for work is not specifically sought."—*[Official Report, Standing Committee E*, February 1994; c. 351-2.]

He said that after having said that consideration of the GP's opinion was part and parcel of the process. The purpose of amendment No.22 is to ensure that, in regulations, a way is defined

"in which relevant evidence or information submitted by that person or by any medical practitioner or professional health worker will be used during the assessment".

It is our concern that such a method is introduced as early as possible.

The briefings which I think all hon. Members will have received from citizens advice bureaux give examples of cases in which the absence of a general practitioner's involvement at the critical tribunal stage led to benefit being withdrawn and having to be granted again after an appeal, or even in the intervening period.

For example, a CAB in the west midlands reports that a woman in her mid-fifties was examined by a medical officer after four months on invalidity benefit. She was found fit for work, but, at the tribunal, on presentation of a letter from her GP, the Benefits Agency presenting officer conceded that the withdrawal of invalidity benefit had been inappropriate. Similar cases of invalidity benefit being withdrawn but restored after a report from a GP have been reported in Staffordshire and the north-east.

We want GPs to be involved in the provision of essential information. Not only should that be recognised and accepted as part of the process, but the way in which the information is to be channelled into the process should be formally set out. It should not be left to chance or good fortune, or to whether someone has got around to getting their GP's view.

It is not necessarily true that GPs are usually lenient. Indeed, one survey showed that 80 per cent. of respondents believed that their GPs sometimes refused sick notes to people whom advisers considered to be unfit for work. We should trust the medical profession to give its view—a view very often based on long experience of the person involved.

On the day that a person is assessed, he may be capable of carrying out particular tasks and functions, but a medical person who has had the opportunity to see the progress of

a condition, or who has seen the person a number of times, might know that, under stress, in certain circumstances or more often than not, that person will not be capable of performing those functions.

We are trying to secure justice. If the new clause stands as it is, I, like the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West, fear that, in the months and years to come, many more constituents will come to our surgeries asking how in the world it was ever accepted. We shall have to say that some of us warned of the problem at the time. We hope, having issued the warnings, that the Minister is prepared to listen and to do something about it.

Mrs. Dunwoody: One of the hazards facing any legislation is either that it slips through the House of Commons late at night or that it is fairly lightly examined. I am afraid that the Bill and its implications are in grave danger of not being properly examined.

I do not find it surprising that there are no former members of the Committee present on the Government Benches. I remember being stunned in Committee by a Conservative Whip when, in a voice which carried round the room, he said to one of his own Members who was making what I thought was a coherent speech "Sit down you little 'blank' and shut up." I remember being even more astonished when the Member did as he was told. It illustrated simply the difference between Her Majesty's loyal Opposition and Her Majesty's Government, because had I, as a Whip, endeavoured to say such a thing to a Labour Member, I suspect that I might have been in a highly dangerous position.

We are discussing a Bill which will affect some of the most vulnerable people. I find it a horrifying suggestion. It is a cynical move, which is made clear in the Bill by the suggestion that large sums of money are to be saved by the change in the legislation. If it were a straightforward matter of changing a medical examination and of ensuring that general practitioners were not put under unnecessary pressure to support their patients when they did not believe that it was justified, the Government should be able to spell out in exact detail the sort of tests which are to be applied, the kind of hazards that the applicant will have to face and exactly how the applicants will be expected to respond. That has not happened.

Regulations are increasingly used as a trick to hide from Members of Parliament the implications of changes in legislation. It is not the first time that that has happened; it is an increasing habit. The Government consistently introduce regulations, not on the basis of a full discussion of the Bill in Committee, but in subsequent moves after the Bill has reached the statute book. That is not only unhelpful but positively misleading.

The Child Support Agency is an interesting example of that process. We were told of its principle and the House of Commons took on trust the ideas that Ministers presented as a clear impression of what was to happen. We are told that the legislation before us will not damage the interests of the disabled, but that it is simply a matter of ensuring that the medical tests are set out clearly, that people have to comply with certain conditions and that if they are in receipt of the wrong benefit, all that will happen is that they will find alternative forms of benefit or will receive alternative forms of support. Frankly, I do not believe that.

When two of the ricer members of the Government are sitting on the Front Bench, it is difficult to be as vicious as one would want to be in the debate, but I do not believe that the Government are bringing forward the medical tests because they think that they will improve the lot of people who are receiving the wrong benefit: they are looking to save money. If they were not, they would have no objection to the new clause, which sets out a number of sensible, straightforward ideas. What is the objection to telling Parliament how many people attended a medical examination, or what number of people, having attended an examination, were determined to be incapable for work? What is the difficulty?

The Government intend to do something much more straightforward—to try to save money from those who are already among some of the poorest people in our society. We do not have to consider the proposed changes to know what will happen. In case after case in our constituencies people are referred to tribunals. The length of time before their cases are heard is becoming longer. When they eventually get to court, a number of them receive verdicts that they do not accept and they undergo the whole procedure again.

A number of general practitioners support the claimants because they know that the claimants are telling the truth and finally, as happened today, one receives a letter from the agency—not even the Department—saying that it is correct that that man or woman, who has gone through an enormous amount of highly complex bureaucratic machinery, is to be given back their benefit, but only after a long time.

Ministers seem to think that, if people are deprived of their benefit for a number of weeks or, in some cases, for months, giving them a sum of money is all that is necessary. That does not begin to deal with the difficulty.

Mr. Burt *rose—*

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am delighted to give way to the Minister.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Lady mentioned that case a little while ago. I had not heard of it previously. What she says disturbs me and I am more than happy to consider the circumstances. I should not like her to think that I consider that what she has described to be normal or just. I shall certainly look at the circumstances.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I must give the Minister his due. I do not believe that he would consider it normal or just, but the reality is that his Government have introduced legislation which has precisely the effect of that case. The fact that the Minister does not accept it cheers me up only marginally.

Increasing numbers of people who are in receipt of benefit are being destabilised because they are being told that they will have their right to benefit questioned in such a manner that they will have to go through a great deal of re-examination, that they may have to present the case over again, that they may lose their benefit, that they may have to reapply and that it may take some months before the case is cleared up.

In a civilised society, I do not regard that as an acceptable way to conduct matters. It means that, if people are already on benefit, they will tend to try to borrow and beg from everybody they know to keep themselves going while their benefit is stopped, and when they finally receive the money they will be in such difficulty that they will—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is an experienced campaigner in the House and she knows full well that there is a new clause before us to which I wish that she would address her remarks.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I would not dream of upsetting you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in any way.

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): Yes, you would.

Mrs. Dunwoody: No; I would not dream of it.

The new clause addresses the important question about the medical test. The House of Commons ought to be informed at every level of what is happening to those who are in receipt of benefit. When the Bill was introduced, I was horrified by the suggestion that general practitioners were not altogether to be trusted and that, if they had people on their list who were to be in receipt of benefit, we could not wholly take their word on a person's medical condition, because they might be influenced by their relationship with the patient.

In 22 years of general practice, I have met all sorts of general practitioners—some pompous, some intelligent, some less intelligent, some hard-working and some who were not overwhelmed with a desire to kill themselves with hard work. However, one thing that they all had in common was their ability to talk to their patients to a greater or a lesser degree. The idea that they will not be able to tell their patients honestly about their medical condition and about their right to receive benefit is a crazy and ill-founded idea.

I would rather that the House did not pass the Bill because I have grave doubts about it. If we accept the new clauses, we may go some way towards giving ourselves a fall-back position because I suspect that, in a year, the House of Commons will have to re-examine the entire legislation to see whether it is working and what effect it is having on recipients of benefit.

I take the Minister's word for it that he is happy to investigate specific cases. That is helpful, and I shall take him up on it. However, I tell him firmly that I think that the change in the law is not about entitlement to the correct benefit—I wish that I thought it were—but about saving the Treasury money. The Treasury has lost a lot of money and it has to get it back. People in receipt of benefit are a jolly good target.

I must also tell the Minister that I do not think that the Bill will have that effect. I do not believe that it has been thought through. We may find that at the end of its first year of operation the medical tests are not producing the saving of money, and that all that has happened is a change in the circumstances of the people at present in receipt of invalidity benefit.

I regard the Bill as a most unacceptable move. It is doubtful in intent, and I believe that it will be unworkable. The people who will pay for it, as always, will not be all those Tory Members of Parliament who are not here tonight, but the people who are most in need—the people now in receipt of benefit.

6 pm

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): It is quite a challenge to follow that impressive address by my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody).

I rise to speak with some regret at the fact that the Secretary of State has left the Chamber. He is the villain of the piece and the architect of the legislation, and he should be forced to sit through the debate and hear the truth about it being aired—he should even forced to defend it.

As I said in Committee, the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security and the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People are the acceptable face of the Department of Social Security, and it is unfair on them that they should have to sit through 25 or 30 hours of Committee proceedings, and then come to the Chamber, to defend the indefensible.

In Committee, I drew an analogy with the present Government ban on Sinn Fein, under which we see Gerry Adams speaking but cannot hear his voice, so his words are spoken by an actor. In fairness to the two Ministers present, it would have been better if, during proceedings on the Bill, the voice of the Secretary of State had been piped in. It is clearly not those two humane and compassionate junior Ministers who are forcing through the legislation. No, what we see is the hard heart of the Secretary of State in action.

I regret that the Secretary of State has left the Chamber, partly because on Second Reading he said, as my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich has also said —it is worth repeating—that the legislation affects the most vulnerable people in our society. The Secretary of State finds it difficult to recognise vulnerability or compassion, so when he recognises who are the most vulnerable, we must be well aware what we are dealing with.

The amendments concern the most vulnerable people in our community, so they require great concern and great thought. If the Minister is really so compassionate and so worried about individuals having such a long wait for their appeal hearings, and the consequent effects on their benefits and their families—I shall touch on those later —the best way in which to show that his concern is genuine would be to accept amendment No. 26, which would ensure that appeals would be heard within 10 working days. That would show a real acceptance of the vulnerability of the people concerned.

I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, become understandably worried that we are straying from the chosen path when we refer to the Child Support Agency, but there is a valid analogy with the Bill.

One of the reasons behind the amendments is the fact that the Bill will adversely affect individuals; it will not affect whole communities, so there will be no great uproar as there was with the poll tax. Like the Child Support Agency, the Bill will adversely affect individuals who may be isolated in the community. The argument is exactly the same as the argument about the Child Support Agency. We can discuss the principle and largely agree on that, but it is the operation of the detail, and its effect on individuals, that will cause the problems.

Because of your knowledge of your area and the industries in it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will know that any cut in invalidity benefit, such as the cut that will result from the introduction of incapacity benefit, will have dramatic effects on the standard of living of families whose head is someone who, through working in one of the industries with which you are familiar, has suffered accidents or strains on the body, and who is unable to get the money.

I know that you worry when we keep referring to the Child Support Agency. It is because the same principles—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall not worry at all if the hon. Gentleman will base his remarks on new clause 3 and the amendments associated with it.

Mr. Mudie: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

New clause 4 calls for an annual report, which would reveal the facts and figures to enable the House to see the individual distress that will be caused throughout the country.

The Bill is a disgrace, not only because of the content that I have already mentioned, but on constitutional grounds too. Even according to the Government's figures, it is estimated that 250,000 people out of the 600,000 on the existing benefit who will be referred for medical tests will lose their benefit. On constitutional grounds, I worry about the House of Commons passing a law the heart of which is unknown to its Members.

I shall give a brief illustration of how bad the constitutional effects are. Clause 5 introduces a new section of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 that has seven subsections, most of which begin with phrases such as "Regulations may provide". Subsection (2) begins:

"Regulations may make provision as to".

Subsection (3) begins, "Regulations may provide", and so does subsection (4). Subsection (5) begins, "Regulations may prescribe". I could go on.

Those subsections deal with a crucial part of the Bill —the

"Test of incapacity for work"—

which is related to the medical test, yet six out of the seven do not contain provisions that we can argue about with objectivity and detailed knowledge, because everything will be subject to regulation. The detail is not here. It is difficult to deal with the details of the medical tests, because we do not have them.

It is interesting that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) referred to Stephen Hawking. Stephen Hawking makes a mockery of this Bill, because, with his disabilities, he would clearly be eligible for one of the fast-track cases under the legislation. He would go through—he would not be subjected to a medical test, and he would get the benefit.

The Minister may say that he would get the benefit because the Government are not taking age, experience, education and previous work into consideration. I ask the Government what would happen if an ex-coal miner got the same disease as Stephen Hawking.

Mr. Burt: He would get the benefit.

Mr. Mudie: Exactly, but he would not get the benefit because of age, experience and so on—he would get it on purely medical grounds. One of the factors that is wrong with the Bill is that the medical test will be the be-all and end-all, and no other factors will be taken into consideration. Incredibly, here we are in March after a long session in Committee—I think that it was 25 to 30 hours.

Mr. Ingram: It is 34.

Mr. Mudie: We spent 34 hours in Committee. Here we are on Report, and we do not have the details of the medical test, which is at the heart of the Bill.

Can I tell the House anything about the medical test? I cannot do so, because it is not spelled out in the Bill. Can anyone tell the House about the medical test? No. The details of the medical test will come before the House after the Bill has gone through, when we are on holiday in August. The Bill will go to another place, although there are no details of the medical test—and they are not expected until August.

I think that Madam Speaker was in the Chair when my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) was explaining who will draw up the test. There are 80 faceless people drawing up the test. The Minister is so confident about the legislation and its principles that the medical test is being drawn up in secret, and he will not allow the names of the people who are drawing it up to be made public.

In Committee, when we discovered that two of the 80 experts did not wish to have the Minister's protection and were prepared to make their names public, we were told that they were forbidden to do so. Therefore, the disabled organisations which wished to have a dialogue with the experts to ensure that the medical tests were the best that could be worked out among everyone involved could not do so, because the identities of the people who are drawing up the tests are secret.

This secret medical test will be coming in August, and we are discussing the Bill in March. If that is not defensible in the country on a matter that will take benefit away from 250,000 people, I do not know what is indefensible. *[Interruption.]* If the Under-Secretary wants me to give way, I shall sit down.

I shall refer to amendment No. 26 briefly, because I do not wish to take up the time of the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich spoke in telling terms about the amount of time it takes to hear appeals. If the amendment is accepted, it will mean that appeals must be heard within 10 days. I am pleased to know that I have the right amendment for once. This is an historic moment in my speaking history in the Chamber, and I hope that it will allow the Chair to relax. I even know the contents of the amendment, which makes a welcome change.

Amendment No. 26 says that any appeals would be heard within 10 working days, and individuals would be allowed to be represented. Both parts of the amendment are important, but I wish to talk about the first part, because it is especially important. As a result of the Minister's intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich, I hope that he will tell the House that he accepts the amendment.

6.15 pm

If the information provided by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux is genuine, the Government's statistics show a distressing situation. According to the information provided to hon. Members, the length of time for hearing appeals increased from 21 weeks in 1986 to 30 weeks in 1992.

I shall go a bit further in terms of the repercussions for an individual. If an individual has been turned down for benefit and has lodged an appeal, he cannot get unemployment benefit or income support, and is therefore incomeless. I was grateful for the sign of humanity—I do not say this lightly; it is accepted—that brought the Under-Secretary to the Dispatch Box to ask my hon. Friend for details, because the present situation is not acceptable.

At present, it takes 30 weeks for an appeal to be heard, which can mean 30 weeks without income. If the Government's figures are accepted—I intend to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the debate on a later

amendment—they show that the average benefit paid is £79. If a person who is sick long-term appeals against a decision and is turned down, how does he run his home?

I understand that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, get very excited when we refer to the Child Support Agency. However, the same Department takes a decision which lands on people who lead very ordinary lives with very ordinary budgets. It takes a decision that has a frightening financial effect on people, and the Government wonder why there is an outcry.

I challenge the Minister to come to the Dispatch Box and accept that 30 weeks translates into seven months. Would the Minister, without warning—even though, after his considerable time in the House, he may have built up considerable savings—like to have to go without income for the next seven months? That can be the effect of a decision. If that happened to me, without the considerable savings that I am sure the Minister has, the effect on my domestic expenditure would be devastating. However, that is what is happening.

This is no game; this is not semantics. When hard-working people in communities all over the country—according to Government statistics, we are talking about people over 50 on average earnings, manual workers and people who are often in occupations without sick schemes—are off work because of illness, they face up to seven months before a decision is taken and they can get some money flowing into the family. What effect does that have on rent, hire purchase and mortgages? What family's income could withstand seven months with a block on one income?

I am grateful that the Under-Secretary leaped to the Dispatch Box, and I would not for a second challenge his compassion, but I want now to see the proof of it. That proof would be his acceptance of amendment No. 26, which would impose on the bureaucrats who run the system that two weeks is a sufficient time for anybody to be without income, and that an appeal should be heard within two weeks.

Although I said that it was less important than my previous point, the question of representation is important. I recently appealed to a Child Support Agency tribunal, and I made the point that both the child support officer and the chairman of the tribunal seemed to have a thick handbook. I made the point informally after the hearing that it would have been better if they had warned me, as a representative, that they would be using that handbook. It might have saved hours in the hearing.

Incredibly, I was told that representatives are not told, because it is difficult for them to understand those books. Those involved with the tribunal have trouble in understanding them, so the representatives would not be able to understand. They may have got that right in my case, but, as a general principle, it is rather patronising. It seems to be symptomatic of the objection to representation and of a culture in which representation is a nuisance.

In 1990, the Public Accounts Committee looked at invalidity benefit. The Committee's report showed that people with representation had greater success than those who were not represented. The technicality of the proceedings and the regulations makes that straightforward. That point should make amendment No. 26 even more alluring to the Minister, and I look forward to him joining me in the Lobby.

Mr. Flynn: It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friends, and the prophecies of my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) will come back to haunt the Government.

This is a deeply flawed Bill, which has no central heart. We are passing the bare bones of the legislation. We know that the Government are saying—as they said often in Committee—"We are the Government, trust us." Some of us take a rather cynical view of that promise. They have said again and again that they are nice chaps. There was wonderful praise in Committee for the two Ministers who are on the Government Front Bench today. They are saintlike and give all of their salaries to the poor.

We pointed out that there are other people on that Front Bench who are absent now. Those people help to make up the Government's soft man/hard man technique, which is well-known for interrogating prisoners. The prisoner gets pummelled into one state by the crude savage, and then the nice man comes in and offers him a cup of tea and a bag of sweets. That is the kind of psychological treatment that the House and the country are getting from the Ministers.

The Secretary of State—who is absent—is a terrifying sight when we see him in full colour on television. At the Nuremberg rally—the Conservative party conference—he threatened everything under the sun. That was the last time that he descended to bad German and barbed French—"Ich bin ein Führer", or "Après moi, la déluge." It was a terrifying sight. The right hon. Gentleman did not have the list that he had before of all the scapegoats that he was to pursue in the coming year.

The great problem for the Government is translating the party rhetoric into legislation and, in their attempt to do so, they produce atrocious legislation. The new clause gets to the heart of the Bill—the test for incapacity for work. I have sat through many hours of the Committee—as have many of my hon. Friends—and I still do not know the answer to the central conundrum.

It is good to know that Government Back Benchers are unanimous in their support of the new clause—they speak with one voice, it may be said. They are saying that they will approve the new clause, and that is splendid. We must test whether we believe the Government when they say, "We are the Government, trust us." They have enunciated a new heresy today. An entirely new part of the Government's policy has been announced, and can be described as the right to lie.

I have heard of the right to buy, in housing—my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is pursuing an interesting case where the right to buy has become the right to steal—but the right to lie is something quite new. I understand that the Minister with responsibility for open government told a Committee that, in exceptional cases, it is necessary to say something untrue in the House of Commons. The little trust that we had in the Government will be shattered.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): That is a disgrace.

Mr. Flynn: That is what a Minister said this morning to a Committee. One of the national newspapers has quite rightly headlined that as a shocking statement.

Are the Government telling the truth now about the Bill? Our cynicism suggests that the new clause is needed. It asks for very little. It provides that there should be a report to both Houses of Parliament that would reveal the

[Mr. Flynn]

effectiveness or otherwise of the test for incapacity. The Government still want to proceed with the all-work test, which is based on a fundamental misconception—perhaps the Minister can try to explain it to us again. The misconception is that the capacity for work can be defined as an objective test that applies to everybody, regardless of his education, training, work history, personality, age and ability to cope with the consequences of ill-health and disability.

An anonymous army of experts is meeting, perhaps in a secret cave at midnight, to decide on the score sheet on which people will be classified as capable or incapable of work. That is a fundamental absurdity. The case of Stephen Hawking was quoted at length during the Committee. Another case quoted was that of someone who was blind and might not be able do his work, but who might be able to become a Front-Bench spokesman for the Labour party. It is nonsense to suggest that there can be any test for incapacity for work.

Traditionally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the industries where you and I worked before we entered this place, young men who were healthy, fit and in the prime of their lives did the hard manual labour. Towards the final years of their working lives, they would have lighter jobs, such as sweeping up or possibly clerical work, which would be made available to them if their health was failing. That can happen to many of us. We can all go through periods of incapacity from the moment we come into this world, and we can have failing capacity throughout our lifetimes.

In these hard, Thatcherite days, if someone can no longer do his full work, he is thrown out. There is nothing left, and there is no alternative. However, we are entering an age when many alternatives are available. I wish that the Government would take seriously the opportunities provided by the new supercomputers, which will provide thousands of jobs on the information highway. It looks as if we will lose out on that, as we have lost out in many other industrial developments.

Those opportunities will, however, produce work that requires little physical effort. A keyboard must be operated, but little is required in the way of physical strength. That does not mean that anyone can do it. Someone in the unfortunate state that Stephen Hawking is in could not; his brain functions very well, but he can hardly even use his voice.

Some people can work in such jobs and can contribute richly to our society. However, many people could not do so because of their background and often because of an objection—based on their generation—to using high-tech machines, which now affect all available work. People who used to do manual jobs in a heavy industry find that there is nothing else that they can do and that they cannot move to the sunrise industries that are taking its place.

The Bill will have a catastrophic effect on certain areas of the country where many people receive invalidity benefit. That is not because doctors in those regions operate a different regime but because there is a tradition of heavy industry, which crippled and maimed the people who worked in the mines, quarries and steelworks. When workers in those industries finished their careers they were generally very run down and greatly damaged by their work.

6.30pm

The Bill will not only damage people in those areas; it will hit their communities. We shall be taking a vast sum of money—millions of pounds—from small communities. We shall be taking away money that went straight into the local economy. It was not invested in Lloyd's, or on the stock exchange, or spent in Penang; it was spent in local shops and went straight into the local economy. We shall be taking that money out of the economy.

The effect of social security legislation on the great British press has been mentioned. Tonight, one newspaper is carrying a headline about a Minister's right to lie to the House of Commons, but no newspapers will report the debate tomorrow. I once heard hon. Members who take an interest in social security described as social security buffs, as though they collected stamps, were interested in steam engines or must be a special breed to be interested in such an obscure subject. However, that subject involves the livelihood of tens of millions of people and the small disposable income on which they depend on. Few parts of our work can be more important or have a more profound effect on the lives of millions of people. The Bill will not affect the lives of members of the press, however, as few of them receive invalidity benefit.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I have looked closely at the new clauses and amendments and he seems to be very wide of them. Will he return to the subject under discussion?

Mr. Flynn: Of course, Madam Deputy Speaker.

In Committee, we discussed the medical test that lies at the heart of the legislation. The consultation document was the only written sign of Government thinking and certain organisations were invited to respond to it. However, even that document was modified between its publication date and the closing date for responses. We are therefore being asked to approve legislation that is merely a sign of what the Government will do and that does not contain any of the details.

We could argue that the test is not so much a medical test, as has been claimed, as a mechanical test. It is a test of a person's ability to perform certain activities. It does not make sense to have that type of test unless there is some way to relate it to the type of work available in the area, to the job that the person concerned can do and to his or her training and ability. That is our fundamental objection.

We are asking for very little in the new clause. We want "an account of the number of people who attended a medical examination under that part of that Act and a description of . . . such an examination".

The House has been down this road many times before. Hon. Members have referred to the deficient Child Support Agency legislation—the Child Support Act 1991. I cannot find a Back-Bench Member of Parliament who admits to being a member of the Standing Committee that considered the Child Support Bill. There must have been a Committee stage, but no one confesses to having been a part of it, apart from Front-Bench Members, who are the guilty men—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, whether that is true or not, it is not relevant to the subject under discussion.

Mr. Flynn: By asking for the accounts, Madam Deputy Speaker, we shall improve the legislation.

Will it be difficult to provide such an account? The information must be available. The Department must have some way to keep a record of how this disastrous legislation unfolds in the years to come. Millions of people will be affected by the Bill. We need to know how many people have medical examinations.

When questions were tabled about the progress of other new legislation and about disability working allowance, we found that the results were quite different from what the House had expected. When the Bill is enacted we know that there will be confusion and that people will be upset by the unfairnesses of it. It is essential for Parliament to have information about how it is working at regular intervals.

In new clause 3, we are asking for

"an account of the number of people who having attended such an examination were determined as incapable for work".

That is crucial because we believe that the legislation will be a disaster. The Bill is a means to cut expenditure and it will take people off one benefit and put them on another.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are discussing not the Bill but two new clauses and several amendments. I remind the hon. Gentleman of that fact.

Mr. Flynn: I was quoting from new clause 3(c), which asks for

"an account of the number of people who having attended such an examination were determined as capable of work".

How will the test work? What will take place? I am sure that the Minister will be happy to tell me.

The new clause also requires

"an account of the reasons for determinations of capacity for work".

In the absence of any details from the Government, we can conclude only that the decisions will be subjective and will be made on the spot and that the same injustices, unfairness and different treatments that exist with the social fund will result from this legislation. Benefit will depend on whether one turns up on a Monday, or in March, or on whether one comes from one side of the street or the other. We already have an example of imperfect legislation causing great unhappiness.

In new clause 3(e) we are asking for

"an assessment of the medical test by such persons whom the Secretary of State may choose".

The test is new and we are going into uncharted waters without a rudder. Therefore, it is crucial that the Government accept the new clause.

Mr. Burt: I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to a variety of remarks on the amendments. I shall be as brief as I can, but I will try to cover them all. The hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) made many of the remarks straightforwardly, and they were amplified by some of his hon. Friends.

New clauses 3 and 4 would require my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to report to Parliament on aspects of the operation of the new incapacity benefit. New clause 3 wants such a report no later than 30 September 1996 on the operation of the new

"test of incapacity for work".

The new clause also requests details of people who attend medical examinations under the Act between April 1995, when the test will be introduced, and September 1996.

There is a case to be made for the provision of information about the workings of the legislation, but I am not certain that there is a case to be made for the publication of a report as such. We shall collect information of this type, and we believe that we shall do so in better quality and greater quantity than the new clause suggests. It would not be wise to restrict ourselves to the time scales and other parameters of the new clause.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Burt: Not at this stage; I should like to make some progress.

In the case of any social security benefit—new or existing—we routinely collect a wide range of statistical information. This is published both in the annual reports of social security statistics and in specialist studies, which include evaluation reports on specific benefits. It is all the more important that new benefits be monitored in order that their effectiveness and performance may be evaluated.

The new incapacity benefit is a good example of one that will be subject to very careful monitoring. The introduction of incapacity benefit brings a considerable change to the current provision of benefits for the sick and incapable by refocusing the benefit on those who, for medical reasons, are incapable of work.

By September 1996, incapacity benefit will have been in place for 18 months, and we shall have collected much information about its operation. I see no advantage in making reports to Parliament along the lines suggested, but the information will be available to hon. Members from a variety of sources, including the statistics that I have mentioned already, and parliamentary questions.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The hon. Gentleman will know that, increasingly, hon. Members who put questions to his Department are referred to the relevant agency. They are told that the agency must take responsibility for day-to-day operations. The hon. Gentleman has not made a case for not publishing statistics, and he certainly has not made a case for Ministers' refusal to answer questions on the Floor of the House. Why cannot we have a report that is capable of being discussed by Members of Parliament? By his own evidence, he will by then have information.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Lady will be aware that answers to parliamentary questions that come through executive agencies are published, and that Ministers are responsible for answering on the Floor of the House any oral questions that relate to their work. In addition, there are plenty of opportunities for debate in the House about such matters.

Mr. Wallace: If questions such as those envisaged in the new clause are asked, will the Minister answer them, or will he refer them to the executive agency?

Mr. Burt: It will depend on the nature of the question. Hon. Members know that the next steps agencies are being developed in an attempt to separate the operational arm of Government from the policy arm. Policy questions are always answered by Ministers, but questions about operations can be answered more speedily by the executive agencies. Ultimately, however, Ministers are responsible for operations.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I should like to refer to a matter that I raised during a recent meeting with the Minister. Can the hon. Gentleman assure us that, under the new regime, the range of questions answered will be no narrower than in the past? Can he give an assurance that, when an hon. Member presses for an answer from a Minister rather than from the agency, the Minister will not refuse to reply?

Mr. Burt: The rules governing parliamentary questions may be a little more strict than those governing letters. Suppose, for example, that an hon. Member presses for an answer from me about a particular operational matter relating to the Child Support Agency. I take the view that the chief executive should first deal with the query. That is the purpose of the agency. However, if ultimately pressed, I shall answer by letter. Slightly different rules may apply to parliamentary questions. However, such questions are always published, so the information is made available.

I should like now to deal with a number of specific issues in relation to new clause 3. The debate was started with the usual comments about the Government's mean-mindedness. I should like to put in hon. Members' pipes three facts for them to smoke later—if such a metaphor is not politically incorrect these days.

The Government's record on benefits for disabled people is extraordinarily good. Spending has increased by 225 per cent. since 1978-79, and it is currently some £16.5 billion. The disability living allowance, which the Conservative Government introduced, has already brought 500,000 successful claims. Expenditure on invalid care allowance was £4 million in 1978, and it is now £366 million. I could give many more statistics, but I shall not do so. Any suggestion that the Government have been mean-minded in relation to the disabled is absolute fantasy, so I do not expect to hear that argument again tonight.

6.45 pm

The test of medical incapacity for work has constituted the meat of this discussion. What do we mean by "medical incapacity for work"? *[Interruption.]* I tried in Committee to give an explanation, and I am happy to repeat that explanation for the benefit of those who were not members of the Committee and for those who want further clarification.

We mean a restriction or lack of ability to perform the activities involved in working. We do not mean a restriction or lack of ability per se. Nor do we have in mind the fact that the likelihood of getting a particular job is reduced by factors other than medical ones. We are interested in the point at which the ability to do any form of work is substantially reduced—not the point at which all work becomes impossible.

We are trying to establish a threshold above which it would be unreasonable to expect people to work. Many disabled people will choose to work, but benefit will be available to those who do not. This is the Professor Stephen Hawking argument. There will clearly be no question of anyone in a position like that of Professor Hawking being required to work. That that remarkable man is able to work bears testimony to the fact that there are others, similarly disabled, who work—

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Burt: I have too much to get through. Several hon. Members who were on the Committee and who have been present throughout this debate need answers.

The threshold is not one above which it would be reasonable to expect anybody to be able to work. *[Interruption.]* Exactly: if Stephen Hawking can work, anyone can work. Clearly, that cannot be the test.

We are trying, through a process of consultation and consensus, to get a wide range of people—panel members and those they consult—to provide their definition of incapacity for work: a definition that relates functional limitation to a substantial reduction in the ability to do work of some kind. That is what is being discussed at the moment.

A number of points were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), whose contribution I greatly appreciated. My hon. Friend referred in particular to disabled people's disadvantage in the jobs market.

All employment services and training—enterprise and education programmes and services for unemployed people—are open to people with disabilities, often with the entry criteria relaxed. There is a wide range of services and schemes for those who need special help. In 1992-93, 62,978 people with disabilities were placed in jobs. That is an indication of what can happen, and it is a point of great importance.

A number of questions about the snapshot element were raised. Is the medical test a snapshot? No, it is not. It involves the completion of a questionnaire by the claimant, a statement of diagnosis by the claimant's general practitioner, a list of principal disabling conditions and, where required, referral to a departmental doctor for a report or examination.

The departmental doctor who examines a claimant will take account of the variability of the condition over given periods. Thus, the assessment will create an overall picture of the effect of the medical condition on the person's ability to carry out a range of work-related activities, and hence his capacity for work.

This is an appropriate point at which to mention the role of the general practitioner. As I said in Committee, the GP plays his vital role at the beginning of the period of incapacity, when it is still the GP's medical certificate that counts. Of course, it is very important that the GP should feel that he has a continuing role to play and may submit information on behalf of the patient at any stage.

Several hon. Members made a point about whether the GP's role was appropriate. It was alleged that we had suggested that, in some way, general practitioners had not been doing their job. That is not the point. General practitioners themselves have been concerned about their role.

I want to quote from a report to indicate that I am not the only person who is saying this. The medical journal *Monitor Weekly* of 2 June 1993 said:

"More than two-thirds of the 100 GPs questioned by *Monitor* admitted they had signed a sickness benefit form for patients whom they knew not to be sick, or for an illness that would not prevent the patient from working."

That is borne out by other studies, which have shown that it is a question not of GPs' deliberately avoiding the test but of their taking part in a way that they find inappropriate as the gamekeepers in the area of this benefit.

Mr. Ingram: Can the Minister tell us how many general practitioners there are, what percentage the sample represents, and whether he considers it a scientific sample?

Mr. Burt: No one claims that the point made by GPs and what they have said over a period is invalid. Again, I am making the point that GPs retain a role in this benefit right the way through, but do not have the definitive and distinctive role that they had in the past. I see nothing wrong in that.

Turning to other issues, some hon. Members asked about particular illnesses and whether, on their own, they

would be a matter for a decision. The effect of any medical condition or disorder on the capacity to work is of cardinal importance, but such an effect can vary in intensity, over time, from mild to severe. We are taking steps to ensure that the needs of people with such conditions are addressed in developing the new tests. As part of the development of the medical assessment, in-house studies have researched the extent to which certain complicating factors, such as pain, stiffness and fatigue, may affect capacity to work. *[Interruption.]*

This research has been incorporated in the development of the medical test so far. The consultation exercise has informed the debate, and a consensus will be reached, to give sufficient and appropriate weighting to such factors in the medical test.

I turn now to information about the panel and the allegations there. Once again, the hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie), in particular, and the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), suggested that these people were being kept well away from the public, working in secret, working in caves.

All I can say is that members of the panel will certainly have had full access to the reports of the Committee and of these proceedings in the House, and I imagine that they would want to keep well away from hon. Gentlemen like the hon. Members for Leeds, East and for Newport, West if they believe all they read about them.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): That is rough.

Mr. Burt: It is as rough as I get: the hon. Gentleman knows that.

In relation to anonymity, we decided at the outset that the participants in the expert panel exercise should be anonymous, to ensure that they could give their professional input without the possibility of any external influence. *[Interruption.]* We have, however, readily agreed to give details of their areas of expertise. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) wishes to intervene, perhaps she will do so in the normal way, rather than from a seated position.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I would be delighted to, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Burt: I should not, but I will.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am deeply grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Is he aware how many doctors, male and female, sit on how many assessment panels, how many research papers they publish, and how much effort they put into researching a vast number of medical conditions and their implications? Why does the Minister have this poor, weak, pathetic, little group who must be protected, not only, according to him, from hon. Members but also from the general public, because they are somehow terrified that their views would be influenced? How many are there? How often are they protected? Is this the only way in which the Minister protects them, or does he protect them in other spheres as well?

Mr. Burt: Perhaps the hon. Lady will let me complete my remarks about this section, and then she will hear some of the answers.

The group has access to anybody it wishes, and should its members wish to beat a path to the hon. Lady's door, they will no doubt do so. We have readily agreed to give details of their areas of expertise, and the answers to a number of parliamentary questions confirm that that is the case.

Once the expert panel have completed their work, we will give full details of all those who were approached. The idea is that we should issue a report round about August, which will summarise the results of the consultation exercise, the work of the panel and the evaluation exercise and which will also give details of who they are. There will then be an opportunity to consult in relation to the work they do, with a view to trying to get down to a test.

So there is no way in which this work can be said to be done in secret or anything like that. It is very important that the results of the panel's work are published in a formal report, so that they can form part of the debate on the regulations which will establish in law the medical test of incapacity for work.

Mr. Howarth: Before my hon. Friend moves away from the matter of confidentiality, may I press him on confidentiality in another but relevant context? He will be aware that one reason for the increasing number of appeals is that applicants are not made aware of the contents of the reports produced by the Benefits Agency medical service. Will my hon. Friend ensure that in future those reports are made available to claimants? It will show a properly respectful attitude to claimants, and it may mean rather less time, energy and resources wasted in appeals.

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend is right, and I am happy to give the assurance, which I gave in Committee, that the information will be available.

New clause 4 seeks details of those appeals heard more than 10 days after they were made, a summary of the outcome of all appeals, a report on the extent to which medical evidence influenced the appeal outcome, a summary of the reasons for any failure by claimants to attend the hearing, and a report on the use made of claimants' representatives at an appeal.

The Benefits Agency and the independent tribunal service are committed to looking at ways to improve the clearance times for appeals across the whole social security benefit system. There has been considerable activity to identify and eradicate causes of delay, and there are some indications that this is already successful.

Every party, including claimants, representatives and adjudication officers, is entitled under Social Security (Adjudication) Regulation 4(2) to at least 10 days' notice of a hearing. Times run from the date of posting of the appeal papers to the day before the hearing of the case. However, both the claimant and the adjudication officer will wish to prepare submissions before a hearing is confirmed.

Furthermore, the claimant's representative will require time to prepare, and often he or she is unavailable for the designated hearing date, necessitating a postponement. I hope that hon. Members will acknowledge the sheer impracticability of the suggestion that appeals should be heard within 10 days of their being made.

I am not certain what purpose the final two parts of the new clause would serve. Where the claimant is absent, the tribunal will satisfy itself that papers were duly notified and whether the claimant has indicated an intention to be

[Mr. Burt]

present, before considering whether to continue with the hearing. The Department has no obvious interest in the reasons for a claimant's absence or a yearly summary of those reasons. Similarly, it has no interest in the use made by claimants of representations at an appeal.

We are rather confused by amendment No. 22. It appears to seek to ensure that the Secretary of State shall set out in regulations the manner in which evidence and information are to be used in the assessment of incapacity.

If the House is looking for reassurance that all evidence, whether provided by the claimant, his GP or another person, will be properly considered in the assessment of incapacity, I can provide that reassurance. All relevant evidence will be taken into account at all stages, both in the Benefits Agency medical services doctor's assessment of the claimant and in the adjudication officer's determination of incapacity. Nothing will be excluded.

I question the need for amendment No. 24, the purpose of which is to require the claimant's GP to sit with the tribunal where the appeal concerns determination of the capacity to work. I am sure that the medical profession would not wish to spend time and resources in that manner. GPs, and the British Medical Association, have said for some time that acting as policemen for the social security system can undermine the doctor-patient relationship. They have complained for many years of an ever-increasing amount of paperwork.

The new method of assessing medical incapacity will mean that GPs need to complete many fewer statements of incapacity, and that the Department will be writing to them for further reports rather less often. I fail to see, therefore, what purpose amendment No. 24 serves.

In relation to amendment No. 25, our intention is that appeals against decisions made by an adjudication officer on incapacity benefit shall go to social security appeal tribunals. The tribunals comprise a legally qualified chairman, who guides the proceedings and advises on the law, and two lay members. The arrangement reflects the existing provision in invalidity and sickness benefits.

The most sensitive appeals on incapacity benefit will be those which concern a dispute about the level of the claimant's functional limitations. In these cases, we think that the tribunal should have access to independent medical expertise. The members of the tribunal, who are trained and expert in this, will weigh the evidence and they will make the decision.

I believe that the new clauses and amendments will not provide any additional benefits for claimants, and I invite hon. Members to reject them.

Mr. Bradley: The Minister's explanation has done no more than reinforce our view that an annual report is required. He started by claiming how good the Government's record was on benefits for disabled people, but forgot to mention that the purpose of the legislation is to cut £1.45 billion from that budget in the next two years. If that is a mark of success, I despair of the Government's intentions in relation to other aspects of social security.

We have had an interesting and wide-ranging debate, well supported by all my hon. Friends, and especially by the contribution of the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) which, as the Under-Secretary of State said, was greatly appreciated by the Government. It was certainly greatly appreciated by Opposition Members because he fully supported our new clauses and amendments.

We would have had an even more interesting debate in Committee if the Government had not censored the membership of the Committee but had allowed a proper debate among people genuinely interested in the topic, with the knowledge and expertise that would have been greatly welcomed in our deliberations during our 35 hours in Committee. It is a sad reflection on that censorship that not one Conservative member of the Committee has deigned to turn up to speak on Report.

7 pm

By our proposals we simply seek information in terms of an annual report and a report on the appeals procedure to be presented to the House of Commons for proper parliamentary scrutiny. I find it incredible that a Government who claim to be the champions of open government should say that all that information will be gathered by the Government but that they will not present it in any coherent form to Parliament. One can only suspect that their real intention is to gather that information, recognise the realities of the way in which the medical test is operating and suppress the information, because they will not want a genuine debate in Parliament about the operation of the medical test.

The debate could not have made clearer why the medical test should be considered by us today—so that we could have a proper debate about the way in which it would operate in practice. The Minister has reaffirmed that the Government seek a clear threshold on which to base the decision whether someone is capable or incapable of work. It is clear from all the information—all the representations from organisations that represent disabled people throughout the country—that it is inappropriate to set a fixed threshold.

Incapacity is a continuum. One needs to judge the nature of the illness or the nature of the disability against the real world of work. It is incredible to suggest that the Government could apply that medical test—which is not before us—to that concept of own work and all work without explaining the way in which all work will operate in the current employment market.

We must demand that information be presented to Parliament at the earliest opportunity. Reports on the way in which the incapacity benefit will work are crucial. We place clearly on record our total opposition to the Bill because, as all my hon. Friends have said, the reality of the Bill will not bite for at least 12 months. Then Conservative Members will come whining back to the House, as a result of their casework, and say, "We did not vote for this. We did not understand what would happen. We did not understand that the medical test would be applied in this way. We did not understand that there would be a reduction in the amount of benefit available under the new incapacity benefit compared with the previous invalidity benefit."

We must say clearly, through the amendment, that we are voting to oppose the cuts in benefit to disabled people, and to oppose the tightening of the regime on the medical test and applying the reality of people with disabilities to a situation in which at least 3 million people are unemployed. That is what we are voting for. Let no Conservative Members return to the House in future and pretend that they did not understand what they were voting for. This is the opportunity to make their intentions clear.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—
The House divided: Ayes 268, Noes 299.

Division No. 155] **[7.04 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheff'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'ld'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes

Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Egger, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Michael Brown

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 2

INCAPACITY BENEFIT: RATE

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 3, line 21, leave out "£42.70" and insert "£43.45".

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 2 to 8 and No. 14.

Mr. Scott: The amendments deal with the way in which the rates of incapacity benefit and statutory sick pay set out in the Bill will be revised to take account of the genuine increases in benefit rates—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If hon. Members wish to chat, will they please do so outside the Chamber?

Mr. Scott: The amendments will ensure that the rates of benefit will be revised to take account of the general increases in benefited rates from this coming April and also in the April 1995 uprating. Amendments Nos.1 to 7 are straightforward; they simply replace rates of incapacity benefit set out in clause 2 to bring them into line with the new April 1994 rates of sickness and invalidity benefit.

Amendment No. 8 has two purposes. The first is that the amendment will provide for the middle rate of incapacity benefit to be increased, but only if the Secretary of State decides to uprate the higher rate of statutory sick pay before the commencement of the Act. Its second role is to provide for a further increase to the rates set out in clause 2 to take account of any increase in benefit rates that are required in accordance with the April 1995 uprating.

As hon. Members who followed the debates in Committee will be aware, from the introduction of incapacity benefit we are committed to increasing all the basic rates, age additions and dependency increases in line with the general uprating of benefits. That means that the middle rate of incapacity benefit will be uprated in the usual way from 1996 thereafter. I hope that the House will support the amendments.

Mr. Ingram: The Minister gave a very brief outline of what the Government propose to do. I do not know whether he wanted to appear as Father Christmas; perhaps it would have been better if he had put on the guise of one of the Greeks with the Trojan horse. We are not going to have a brief debate because the matters underlying the Minister's announcement are at the heart of some of the Bill's worst aspects. The announcement involves not only uprating, but those affected by the rates.

Throughout our discussions of the Bill, both here and in Committee, we said that the uprating, about which we have just been advised, and which we debated in detail in Committee, would be no less than an assault on people with disabilities. The essence of the Bill—as revealed through the rates that have been increased to take account of the recent uprating statement—involves cutting the amount paid to those with disabilities who are unable to work after April 1995.

The amendments alter only slightly the extent of the cut that those disabled people will face from April 1995. The Government amendments remind us of the analysis of the cuts that was made on Second Reading and explored in detail in Committee.

The Bill extends the short-term incapacity period, as it is classed, from 28 weeks to 52 weeks. That will mean that benefit entitlement will be delayed for a full year, and will result in a lower level of payment than is currently available through invalidity benefit. Often, the needs of a newly disabled person are greatest in the early stages. We discussed that in great detail in Committee, but unfortunately we were unable to convince the Ministers of the merits of our argument. We hoped that the upratings contained in the Government amendments would be much more substantial and would recognise the strengths and merits of the arguments advanced in Committee.

There is a concession to those with a terminal illness or a deteriorating or long-term sickness, but it does not extend to the short-term incapacity period, which has been increased from 28 to 52 weeks. To make someone with a teminal illness or a major deteriorating or long-term sickness wait 52 weeks before receiving the full benefit is nothing short of a disgrace.

While the amendments redefine the short-term incapacity period as 52 weeks, the new all-work test remains applicable at 28 weeks. That means that people who pass the test at 28 weeks will be regarded as incapable of all work, but will not be entitled to full benefit for a further 24 weeks. That delay in the long-term entitlement from 28 to 52 weeks means that the basic rate of benefit will be awarded at two levels and will not be paid at the full rate. No allowance for children and no full allowance for a non-working partner can be paid. No allowance will be based on the claimant's age.

It is worth while dealing in detail with what the Minister briefly set out earlier and to consider how each new rate compares with existing invalidity benefit. We should consider the impact of the changes proposed in the Government amendments on current invalidity benefit claimants.

Rather than being entitled to long-term benefit at 28 weeks, as is the present position, claimants will be paid a higher rate component of short-term benefit for 29 to 52 weeks. That means that less money will be paid as a higher rate short-term benefit, and at a lower rate than the long-term benefit. Further costs are to be made by non-payment of age additions until after 52 weeks, and then only under restricted conditions.

I should like to go back to the preceding debate so that Conservative Members at a later stage—either in our deliberations of the Bill or after the Bill is enacted—cannot say that they did not know what the effects of the measures would be. If they approve the Government's uprating measures, they will be accepting the cuts. If the Government had tabled different amendments that took account of the merits of the arguments advanced in Committee, they would have obviated the need for me to give the following facts for the benefit of the House, especially Conservative Members.

I propose to deal with each category of person who will be affected by the new rates and to compare what they receive under the invalidity benefit system with what they will receive after uprating to consider the loss implications. The greatest loss will be in the 29 to 52 weeks period. The losses will be substantial if the Government amendments are accepted.

A single person who is under 40 years of age receives at present £69·75 in invalidity benefit. Under the new short-term higher rate incapacity benefit, which is payable after 28 weeks for 24 weeks, the same individual with the same illness will receive £52·50 a week. That is a loss of £17·25 a week. Over the 24-week period, the loss amounts to £414. A single person under 50 years of age receives at present £65·20 in invalidity benefit. Under the new benefit rates, that person will receive £52·50, a loss of £12·70 per week and, over the 24-week period, a total loss of £304·80. A single man under 60 years of age and a single woman under 55 receive £61·40 in invalidity benefit. Under the new benefit rates, they will receive £52·50—a loss of £8·90 per week and a total loss of £213·60 over the 24-week period.

The extent of the loss for those with families is even greater. A married person under 40 with two children receives £125·05 in invalidity benefit. Under the new benefit rates, that person will receive £79·40—a loss of £45·65 per week and a total loss of £1,095·60 over the 24-week period.

7.30 pm

A married person under 40 with no children would receive £104·25 per week under the present system and £52·50 per week under the new benefit—a loss per week of £51·75 and a total loss over the 24-week period of £1,242.

At present, a married person under 50 with two children would receive invalidity benefit of £120·50 per week and £79·40 under the new benefit rates—a loss per week of £41·10 and a total loss over the 24-week period of £986·40.

A married person under 50 with no children would receive invalidity benefit of £99·70 and £52·50 under the proposed benefit rates—a loss per week of £47·20 and a total loss over the 24-week period of £1,132·80.

A married man under 60 and a married woman under 55 with two children would receive £116·70 in invalidity benefit. Under the new incapacity benefit rates they would receive £79·40—a loss per week of £37·30 and a total loss over the 24-week period of £895·20.

A married man under 60 and a married woman under 55 with no children would receive invalidity benefit of £95·90 and £52·50 under the new rates—a loss per week of £43·40 and a total loss over the 24-week period of £1,041·60.

Those are substantial sums, but I am putting all this information on record—and there is more to follow—so that Conservative Members who are not present to listen to the information may pick it up in the Lobby and change their minds. They may decide that they do not want to support the proposed changes, but even if they continue to support them, they may put additional pressure on sympathetic Ministers responsible for the Bill and ask them to put more pressure on the Treasury to bring about a different approach to the whole ethos of the measure.

The figures I have given do not illustrate how families will be affected. Those with more than two children will lose an additional £11 a week for each additional child. Over the 24-week period that adds up to a loss of £264. Someone under 40 who is married with three children will face a total loss over the 24-week period of £1,362·60.

Those are substantial losses for people who are going through the difficult adjustment to what is now termed incapacity for work and are having to live off much-reduced benefits. Clearly, it affects families worse than others, because of the impact of a small sum going into the family home. It creates great difficulties for parents trying to sustain their children on a weekly basis on a much-reduced sum of money.

While the major losses will be sustained within the 29 to 52-week period, there will also be losses from 52 weeks onwards, but there are two surprises in the information I am about to give.

A single person under 35, receiving invalidity benefit of £69·75, will continue to receive £69·75, so the loss for that individual is zero. Surprise number one is that we have actually found someone who will not lose under the proposed measures. Unfortunately, the trend does not continue for long, because a single person under 40 who would at present receive invalidity benefit of £69·75, will receive £63·70 under the new rates—a loss per week of £6·05.

A single person under 45 who would receive invalidity benefit of £65·20, will receive £63·70 under the new rates —a loss per week of £1·50. A single person under 50 who would receive invalidity benefit of £65·20, will receive £57·60 under the new rates—a loss per week of £7·60. A single man under 60 and a single woman under 55 who would receive invalidity benefit of £61·40, will receive £57·60 under the new rates—a loss of £3·80 per week.

Hon. Members will want to know when the next big surprise is coming. It is in the very next piece of information and relates to a married person under 35 with two children, who under invalidity benefit would receive £125·05. Under the new rates that person will receive the same amount, so again there will be a loss of zero. It is miraculous that out of all the categories I have listed only two sustain no loss whatsoever.

I do not imagine that there will be much rejoicing even in those households. They will be saying, "If everyone else is losing, for how long will I continue not to lose?". How long will it be before the man from the Treasury knocks on the door of the Secretary of State for Social Security asking to see his secret little list and asking him what other categories of people can bear a cut in benefit?

It is worth while putting on record the other categories and the rates that will apply to them. A married person under 35 with no children, who would receive invalidity benefit of £104·25, will receive £69·75 under the new rates —a loss per week of £34·50.

A married person under 40 with two children, who would receive invalidity benefit of £125·05 a week, will receive £119 under the new rates—a loss per week of £6·05. A married person under 40 with no children who would receive at present £104·25, will receive £63·70 under the new rates—a loss per week of £40·55.

A married person under 45 with two children, who would receive £120·50 at present, will receive £119 under the new rates—a loss per week of £1·50. A married person under 45 with no children, who would receive £99·70 at present, will receive £63·70 under the new rates—a loss per week of £36.

A married person under 50 with two children, who would receive at present £120·50, will receive £112·90 under the new rates—a loss per week of £7·60. A married person under 50 with no children, who would receive at present £99·70 will receive £57·60 under the new rates —a loss per week of £42·10.

A married person under 60 with two children, who would receive at present £116·70 per week, will receive £112·90 under the new rates—a loss per week of £3·80. A married person under 60 with no children, who would receive at present £95·90 will receive £57·60 under the new rates—a loss per week of £38·30.

Certain assumptions are built into those calculations, but it is a reasonable assumption that all spouses referred to in the categories are under 60.

A range of swingeing cuts is implicit in what the Minister has announced tonight. It may well be that the answer to the argument might be that some people receive other benefits as a consequence. However, the Government's own estimates show that only 40 per cent. of claimants will be eligible for income support, thereby falling into the safety net. So a significant number of people will lose substantially as a result of the figures that we are being asked to consider.

I have dealt with the categories of people that fall ill in the period 29 to 52 weeks, and those who are on longer-term benefits after 52 weeks. It is no surprise that there will be a loss for people who fall in the cateogry of up to 28 weeks. That area will have two rates of basic benefit. For people falling sick while in work, the statutory sick pay will be £52·50 a week at current rates. Others,

such as the self-employed, will receive the same rate of sickness benefit of £43·45. No dependant's allowance will be payable unless the dependant is looking after children or is under 60.

The current rate for dependants is £26·90 a week. The potential loss during the first 28 weeks for certain categories amounts to £753·20 for someone with a dependant who would be entitled to an increase of benefit under the old rates.

I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, did not have the benefit of listening to these arguments in Committee. I am sure that you are finding the information riveting. It is not the most declaratory speech imaginable, but none the less it is important to get this information across and on the record. It would have been useful if the Minister had given an indication of the type of cuts that are implicit within the uprated benefits. Ministers have never really accepted what they are doing here. They have argued fast and furiously against all the arguments advanced.

The point has been made time and again, in Committee, on Second Reading and tonight, that while Members in the House may be interested in this, most of the information —probably all of it—is coming from groups who represent those who will be affected by these measures.

These are not scare tactics. I am not trying to say something that will not happen. I am not using points for arguments sake. These are straightforward facts about the reality of this measure and what the amendments relate to.

On top of that, we must take our minds back to the additional pension. It was stated during Second Reading and came up again in Committee, but a commitment was given by the Minister some time back. He said:

"All the rights built up in the years up to and including the 1990-91 tax year will be preserved, whenever the claim for invalidity pension is made, however far in the future that may be. Moreover, such additional pension will continue to be subject to revaluation uprating in exactly the same way as at present."—[*Official Report*, 3 April 1990; Vol. 170, c. 1115.]

We are not very far in the future and the Government are not announcing anything tonight to ensure that that commitment will be adhered to. That adds up to a substantial loss for a particular category of claimants.

Every category, group and individual who is affected by someone in the family or who is conditioned by a disability will lose out under the new incapacity benefit if they become incapable of work after April 1995. I am grateful that the Minister is nodding. I hope that at some stage during this part of consideration of the Bill he will stand up and admit the extent of the cuts.

We have talked extensively in previous debates about the global sums—savings of £550 million in the first year and gross savings of £1·4 billion in year two. Those are great sums, but individuals and families will suffer as a consequence. They will not lose £1·4 billion, but they will lose a lot of important pound coins each week, which allow them to survive, keep them going, give them a bit of dignity and, if they have children, allow them to look after them with some measure of confidence. All that will go.

As I was considering the uprating figures, a particular phrase came to mind of my right hon. Friend the Member of Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). It was an extensive speech, but I shall take just one small part of it. In 1983, he said that he warned the people of Britain not to become sick, disabled under this Government. Those were prophetic words, because what we are now considering in this measure and in rates that I listed show what he meant by that. Those words are coming home with a vengeance to those people who will become incapacitated for work after April 1995. Indeed, in the longer term, it may mean the same for those receiving invalidity benefit.

7.45 pm

We have asked the Minister before whether he is prepared to say that those currently receiving invalidity benefit will continue to receive those amounts uprated for ever more. It is unlikely that he will say that, but throughout the Bill's Committee stage, the Minister and his hon. Friends kept asking Labour Members what commitments a future Labour Government would give. We are not in government at the moment. The Minister is part of the Government. What commitments can he give for people in receipt of invalidity benefits? Will they always receive the same rates? Are there no plans to bring them into line with those who will receive the new incapacity benefit rates after April 1995? I will listen carefully to what the Minister says about that.

Having set out the details of what the new rates mean, it is appropriate to set out how we will react to them. It would be nice to vote against the Government—it is populist in some parts of politics to vote constantly against the Government—but that would be doing a major disservice to those who will receive the new benefits. Although they will receive major cuts as a consequence of these benefits, none the less it would be wrong for the Opposition to vote against what is proposed. Any small amount is to be welcomed, but it is a small amount on a much reduced amount. That is the main thrust of the criticism that I put to the Minister tonight.

We will not be calling an official vote on these amendments, because it is important that we get a bit more than was previously written down in the original Bill. All of the facts and the information needs careful examination and consideration. Perhaps some of my hon. Friends will want to elaborate and add to what I have said. That will all be on record for the future. When Conservative Members consider the matter in future, they cannot complain that they did not know.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I draw the attention of the House to the potential problems that will arise in a community such as mine from the vivid and frightening account that my hon. Friend has just given of the potential and future cuts in invalidity benefit that will occur. I make no apology for returning to an aspect of the problem that I raised briefly on the money resolution after Second Reading—the impact that the changes that the Bill might foreshadow not only for individual families but collectively on the purchasing power of a community.

In that context, I draw the attention of the House and of Ministers in particular to the role that invalidity benefit has played in sustaining that purchasing power and to the impact that any future cuts of the kind envisaged and described so vividly by my hon. Friend will have on the future purchasing power of a community such as mine.

I draw the attention of Ministers to the context in which those changes can take place in a community such as Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney. In 1981, 20,800 people were in employment in the borough of Merthyr Tydfil. Of those, 13,100 were men, 400 of whom were formerly part time. There were 7,700 women in work, of whom nearly 50 per cent.—3,200—were part-time. A decade later, in 1991, only 16,700 people, men and women, were working—

[Mr. Ted Rowlands]

16,700 out of 60,000, in the area where the industrial revolution began. Of those 16,700, only 8,700 men were in work. Those figures take us back to the 1930s; indeed, in terms of the insured population, they are the equivalent of figures for the late 1930s. we should consider the cuts and changes introduced by the Bill in that context.

In communities such as mine, the employment base and the labour force have shrunk, and the number of people in work has not risen but fallen dramatically over the past decade. It is in that connection that we should consider the impact of any future changes in invalidity benefit on, for instance, Merthyr Tydfil, Cynon Valley and Rhymney.

Unfortunately, we cannot produce figures for the number of people receiving invalidity benefit on a borough or even a constituency basis. One must therefore make certain extrapolations. At present, 28,000 people in Merthyr Tydfil, Cynon Valley and Rhymney are receiving invalidity benefit. According to a letter from the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, the arrangements for the Merthyr Tydfil district are not coterminous with those relating to the Merthyr borough, where the number of claimants was 11,946. In Wales as a whole, more than 156,000 people are receiving invalidity benefit.

It is just possible that roughly as many people in the Merthyr borough now receive invalidity benefit as there are men in work. That is a frightening, horrific and wicked situation. Occasionally at Tory party conferences Ministers make speeches implying that we wallow in dependency —that we believe in the dependency culture revealed in the figures that I have quoted. That is nonsense. I do not want to depend on the state, and nor does Merthyr Tydfil. We know—and the Bill demonstrates—just how capricious Governments can be when it comes to sustaining and supporting people in need.

For a combination of reasons, we have been driven into a more dependent society in the past 10 or 15 years. As I have said, because so many people have fallen ill in work and had to stop working, the number of people receiving invalidity benefit is probably nearly as great as the number of men in employment. I am sure that the Government do not welcome that position any more than we do.

Nevertheless, the benefit has been vital. There is one major difference between the recessions of the 1980s and early 1990s and the recessions that hit our area in the 1930s. Up to a point, purchasing power has been sustained in communities such as ours; we have not experienced the absolute deprivation that was so characteristic of south Wales mining communities such as the one that I come from and now represent. The difference lies in the contributory benefits created by a post-war generation who experienced regular employment for the first time and who established a series of rights deriving from that experience, including sickness and invalidity benefits.

That has been an extremely important factor in sustaining the purchasing power of the community. While the number of people in employment has shrunk, invalidity and other contributory benefits have developed for the reasons that I have given. What will happen if we cannot rapidly reverse the decline in employment, and if the cuts described by my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) are introduced in the next year or two? What will happen to those who have accrued rights to invalidity benefit as a result of their employment over the past 10, 15 or 20 years and who, having fallen ill and requiring the prop of that benefit, receive a much reduced amount? The result must involve a potential reduction in the purchasing power of communities such as Merthyr Tydfil, Rhymney and Cynon Valley.

I ask the Minister, as I did when we discussed the money motion, to consider the ripple effect of the changes made by the Bill. On the money motion, I mentioned the number of people who would receive no benefit of any kind. As my hon. Friend has pointed out, future beneficiaries will receive much less than those who receive invalidity benefit now.

There is another aspect. Can hon. Members imagine the envies and jealousies that will grow up between neighbours in every street in close-knit communities of the kind that I represent? There will be two distinct classes of invalidity beneficiary: those receiving existing rates, and those who will receive the much lower rates. I do not know what kind of society the Minister represents, but people compare such rates in the club or on the doorstep. Word gets around. As I listened to my hon. Friend, I envisaged the pattern of my surgery work following April 1995. We have had the Child Support Agency this year; next year, it will be invalidity benefit. At least hon. Members will not be short of work, at least in our surgeries. The difference between beneficiaries will not be merely marginal.

As I said when I spoke on the money motion, the changes made by the Bill will affect not only the individuals and families of the future who may depend on invalidity benefit, but the purchasing power and therefore the economic health of societies such as ours in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney.

Mr. Jamie Cann (Ipswich): I, too, welcome the uprating—albeit small—in the amendment. I must add, however, that I see it in the context of what has passed before my wondering eyes during the past few weeks, in my first Standing Committee. What has happened to a scheme that will be very important to hundreds of thousands of people has been largely unreported by the press and, judging by the appearance of the Press Gallery, it will be largely unreported today.

Cut after cut has been made in the existing invalidity benefit scheme, and time periods have been extended to save money. When we ask for reasons, we are confronted by the smokescreen erected by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State—but particularly by the Prime Minister. In June last year, he said that it beggared belief that the number of people receiving invalidity benefit could have increased from 700,000 to 1·5 million over, I think, five years. The implication was that many recipients of such benefit did not really deserve it.

There is no evidence to support that view, especially in the five reports commissioned by the Department of Social Security. According to the most authoritative report that I have seen—from the Policy Studies Institute—29 per cent. of the extra cases have been people of pensionable age, drawing the benefit instead of pension for tax reasons, 16 per cent. results from the increase in the number of women in the labour market, 13 per cent. result from the gradual increase in the number of disabled people in the relevant age groups—another demographic factor—and only 42 per cent. relate to a genuine growth in the rate of claims in a stable population of disabled people.

We must ask ourselves why. Is it because more people are receiving sick notes who should not be, or is it because

people on invalidity benefit are finding it increasingly difficult to get back into the job market? Everyone whom I have read on the subject has found that it is the latter, not the former.

8 pm

Why are we introducing the new medical test that will apply to new applicants? There is no logic to it, because it does not apply to previous applicants. The Government apparently believe that half of them are scroungers but they will continue to get invalidity benefit at the previous rate, whereas people who pass a new and more difficult test will receive less. What equity or fairness is there in that? It is nonsense and it is a smokescreen.

The truth is that the Bill is about reducing public expenditure to pay for the Government's mistakes. It will gross the Government £550 million in the next financial year starting in April 1995 and £1,450,000 in 1996-97. It is not only I who say that. Every voluntary organisation that deals with invalidity benefit and disabled people says that. It is best encapsulated in a brief quotation from Ann Robinson, the chief executive of the Spastics Society. She said:

"The Government claims to be scrapping Invalidity Benefit on the basis that many people who can work are claiming it, but we've yet to see any evidence of this. This legislation is about reducing public expenditure, not ensuring the right benefits reach the right people. Once again, disabled people seem to be getting a rough deal as a result of Government cost-cutting. This new benefit will not meet the needs of disabled people who cannot work."

I know it, the House knows it, the voluntary organisations know it and, very soon, the country will know it.

Mr. Mudie: It is a pity that the Chamber, like the Standing Committee, is devoid of Government Back Benchers as they are the people who will enable the measure to be passed and put into effect. It is a shame that the Benches are empty now but at 10 pm the Lobbies will be full and the measure will be passed.

The devastating figures outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) show the effect of the measure on ordinary families in which the breadwinner has the misfortune to fall ill, have an accident or suffer from long-term sickness. The figures are also devastating to the Government's integrity.

Let us remember the origins of the Bill. They are similar to those of the Child Support Agency, which has been mentioned so often. That agency was formed on the basis of the then Prime Minister deciding in an off-the-cuff speech that we should chase errant fathers, thus pushing hard-working people into bankruptcy. The situation now——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. We are discussing Government amendment No. 1, which does not refer to the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Mudie: I had just finished with the Child Support Agency because I realised that you would quickly decide, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the amendment did not relate to it. However, this measure is similar, especially as we are dealing with amendments to the uprating of benefits.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann) said, it was the present Prime Minister who said that it beggared belief that the number of those in receipt of invalidity benefit had jumped from 600,000 to 1·4 million in the space of 10 or 12 years. The Prime Minister's remarks gave the impression that a number of people in a healthy nation—as the Prime Minister put it—were wrongly in receipt of the benefit. That may be so; if it is, it should be considered and legislated on. No one would complain about that.

However, in the first five paragraphs of his Second Reading speech, trying to sell this ugly, nasty and mean measure to his Back Benchers and to the House, the Secretary of State said that the review of the social security system was intended to

"safeguard the position of the most vulnerable".

That is important because it establishes the fact that the Secretary of State understands that those in receipt of long-term benefit are the most vulnerable. However, still within the first five paragraphs of his speech, he said that the

"sums devoted to sickness benefits"

should be

"properly focused on those who are genuinely too unwell to work".

"Focused" and "genuinely"—there will be no difference between the two sides of the House about the use of the words. Any money available should, in the Secretary of State's words, be focused on those who are genuinely vulnerable and genuinely unwell.

I dare not ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I know that you cannot participate in the debate, but I wonder what picture is forming in your mind. Someone listening, perhaps naively, to the Secretary of State would believe that some people were receiving money unfairly and not according to the rules so they were to be weeded out and benefit focused on genuine cases.

In the same part of his speech, the Secretary of State also said:

"The Bill is not an attack on the sick and disabled; it is the very reverse. It is designed to protect their benefit against those who abuse it. As a result, it will make their benefits sustainable despite the other pressures on the social security system."—[*Official Report*, 24 January 1994; Vol. 236, c. 35.]

If you will permit me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall emphasise the key notion, which is that the available money should be devoted to, and focused on, the vulnerable and genuinely unwell, that their benefit should be protected so—this is most important in terms of the amendments—that their benefits are sustained. That presents a picture of weeding out those who wrongly receive benefit but protecting the genuine.

I challenge the Minister not to acknowledge that a person who is long-term disabled and who will be eligible for incapacity benefit under the operation of this legislation in 1995 will not be worse off in benefit terms than a person receiving benefit before the operation of the legislation in 1995. In other words, there will be two types of disabled people.

We accepted a given level of benefit for some people before 1995. My hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride spelt out the amounts but I am not sure whether you were in the Chamber at the time, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I believe that Madam Deputy Speaker was in the Chair. My hon. Friend said that a married man under 40 with two children in the last six months of his first year of benefit loses £1,095. Is that protecting and sustaining the most vulnerable?

I see that the Government Whip is raising his eyebrows, but I am quoting the Secretary of State. It was on that basis that the Bill was sold to the House. Does it sound as if the

[Mr. Mudie]

Secretary of State is protecting and sustaining the most vulnerable? A married man of 50 with no children will lose £1,132 if he has been ill for more than six months——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am having a little difficulty in discovering to which amendment the hon. Gentleman's figures relate; perhaps he can advise me.

Mr. Mudie: With permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am nearing the end of my remarks so I hope that you will not be unduly worried. The fact is that my comments are in order. The amendments deal with the uprating of benefits. The figures were read out by my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride and were unchallenged by Madam Deputy Speaker because they were a comparison of invalidity benefit currently paid to an individual and what will happen when the Bill becomes an Act.

You will now see the relevance of my remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Ministers may say that they will sustain the most vulnerable, but the figures expressed by my hon. Friend show that Ministers will do nothing of the sort. The Bill is not an attack on wasters or on abusers. It is a deliberate attack on the most vulnerable.

As we said in Committee, our treatment of those who have the misfortune to be off work due to illness for a long period of time is a mark of our society. That illness affects them physically and financially and it affects their family. My hon. Friend has done a service to those people. The only trouble is that Conservative Members, who are not in the Chamber, will troop through the Lobby and will vote for those rates of benefit.

As has been said, in a couple of years' time, when the disabled and the ill are in our surgeries, they will say that they do not know how the legislation was passed. They have no excuse not to know because the rates have been spelled out. The grand idea is that the Bill attacks abusers, but it has been shown for what it is—a nasty, mean measure that attacks the most vulnerable in our society.

Mr. Scott: In drawing this short debate to a conclusion, I acknowledge that it was right and fair of the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) to set out in detail the impact of the changes to provision for incapacity benefit which the Government are making through the Bill. I make no complaint about that. It put the Bill in an acutely personal light and it is right that we should all be aware of that impact. Obviously, those of us who were responsible for drawing up the new proposals were aware of that. The hon. Gentleman has brought it to a wider audience, and I cannot complain.

When we came to consider the scope and the role for incapacity benefit as opposed to invalidity benefit, which will be removed in 1995 except for the existing caseload, it was also right to consider the level of benefit, especially the add-on bits which formed parts of invalidity benefit over the years. In part at least we carry the sentiments of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) with us, because the main factor in the reduction in invalidity benefit for new entrants after April 1995 will be the absence of additional pension. The House will remember only too well the remarks of the hon. Member for Garscadden in that debate when he acknowledged, at least in passing—I do not suggest that it was a considered view on that benefit—that additional pension was perhaps an anomaly in the present-day social security system.

I believe that that is an anomaly because additional pension was introduced at a time when the ability of people to make other provision for their future was much less common than it is today. A substantial percentage of those in receipt of invalidity benefit today have other resources, in savings or in income from their previous employment. Additional pension in those circumstances had become an anomaly. Many others will have other resources available to them.

Although everybody who was in Committee is aware of the fact, it is worth emphasising that there will be no loss to the existing beneficiaries at the point of change for so long as they continue to qualify for the benefit. I have made it clear before, but I reiterate it if the hon. Member for East Kilbride would like me to, that it is the intention to continue to uprate that entitlement in the usual way in subsequent years.

8.15 pm

Let me turn to the basic principle of the Bill. The hon. Member for East Kilbride spoke only from the Front Bench and therefore it is not entirely unreasonable to make a point that I know was made frequently in Committee. I do not want ot tease him too much about it, but, in criticising our efforts and intention to constrain the growth of the social security system, by constraining invalidity benefit in particular, by altering its scope, by introducing the objective medical test and by taking away some of the add-ons to the existing benefit, is he making a commitment to restore the present situation in future years if there should ever be again a Labour Government?

The Government believe that we have a clear duty to contain the growth in spending on sickness benefits and to introduce an affordable system which focuses benefits on those most in need. Our proposals for restructuring will provide a basic income for all those who cannot work and they will focus resources on the genuinely long-term sick. That is the right way to tackle the situation, as long as we ensure that no one suffers a reduction in benefit when the new proposals are introduced. The Government are determined to make provision affordable in that area.

Before I sit down, I wish to deal with a point made by the hon. Member for East Kilbride on the terminally ill. As he knows, the terminally and seriously ill will receive benefit for the first 52 weeks. Those receiving the lower rate of short-term benefit will receive a significant increase after 28 weeks; and incapacity benefit, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is not intended to meet the extra costs of the terminally ill or severely disabled. Disability living allowance is available to help with extra care need, and the hon. Gentleman will know that the care component is payable immediately to the terminally ill. We have set out what I think are satisfactory and well-regarded arrangements to ensure that applicants are put on a fast track.

I said in Committee that I would consider the arguments for bringing forward the longer-term rates of benefit. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said earlier, we are considering the points that were made and we hope to reach conclusions on them in the near future. Obviously we shall ensure that everyone is informed as and when we reach those conclusions.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) reiterated, perhaps at slightly greater length, the points that he made in Committee. I understand the economic impact on his constituency. I make two points in response to his comments. In the first instance, all

the existing caseload will continue to be entitled to their existing benefit, uprated as usual, so that there should be no immediate impact on purchasing power in his constituency. It is perfectly proper for him, as a constituency Member of Parliament, to put forward the impact of any Government policy on his constituency's economic prospects, but it is not the purpose of invalidity or of future incapacity benefit to underwrite, as it were, the prosperity of all those living in that area.

I made it clear when I responded to the hon. Gentleman's questions on the money resolution that I understand the role that invalidity benefit played at a difficult time in Merthyr Tydfil, in other parts of Wales and elsewhere. However, I do not believe that, in the long run, that is the purpose of invalidity benefit.

Mr. Rowlands: A little earlier, the right hon. Gentleman rested his case for the change on the ground that the benefits were created when people could not create occupational benefit rights. The point that I was trying to make, further to those on the money resolution, was that, as a result of the shrinking number of people in employment in our area, we shall not have a new generation creating those rights. At the same time, the available benefit will reduce for those who are entitled to it. It worries me that we are being driven backward into more of a dependency culture than ever before.

Mr. Scott: I do not wish to stray too wide of the debate, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will take all sorts of opportunities to impress upon other parts of the Government the contribution that they can make to the economic health of his area. I must also emphasise the fact that, although existing beneficiaries may lose entitlement under what will in future be incapacity beneift—in essence, it will be the continuation of their invalidity benefit after 1995—if they come off benefit, they may be able to get back into work or they may qualify for other benefits. Nobody will be left with no resources whatever.

I understand what the hon. Gentleman said about the problems that can arise, especially in small, tight-knit communities, when people in similar circumstances are on two different rates of benefit. However, to avoid that, unless we were to leave the whole system intact for ever —that would not be realistic, sensible or prudent—we should have had to take their entitlement away from existing beneficiaries and reduce their benefit to the level of incapacity benefit that was being introduced. In recent years that has been virtually unheard of, because when there are changes in social security provision we have always endeavoured to ensure that people's existing entitlement is not reduced at the point of change, even though those who become entitled in future will have a lower entitlement.

The amendments provide an uprating for the range of benefits now and make provision for benefits to be upgraded again in April 1995. I understand that Opposition Members may feel that the benefits are inadequate, but I welcome their undertaking not to vote against the amendments.

Mr. Ingram: We started out not knowing whether this would be a lengthy debate. The Minister said that it would be short, but I suspect that it has probably grown longer than he expected when he gave his one-minute introduction to the amendments.

The debate has been useful because it has drawn out much of the principle underlying the Bill, and we shall pick up the different messages that the Minister put out about that. He made a sterling defence of many aspects of the Bill, but some of us can read between the lines and see some of the other approaches that he might have liked to be used in defence of disabled people.

No one denies that it is the role of Government constantly to examine the way in which benefits are paid and the overall budget for social security provision. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) set out the Opposition's position on that clearly on Second Reading. The Minister tried to tease me a little by asking whether what we had said amounted to a commitment on my part to restore the benefit. He will not be surprised to hear that I do not intend to be teased in that way. That is no part of the purpose of the debate or of our approach to the Bill.

We have exposed the full effects of the measure. Indeed, the debate has brought them into sharp focus. The Minister recognised that it had served that purpose, and in doing so it has served the nation well, because now people will know what is coming next year and beyond.

The Minister gave me the assurance that I sought on the overall question of maintaining the uprating and the present level of invalidity benefit. I accept that assurance in the spirit in which it was given, but others may tell me that the Minister made the same commitment on additional pensions. I hope that in two or three years' time we shall not be back with the same criticism on invalidity benefit as we have had to make on additional pensions.

The Minister is right to say that it is not our intention to vote against the amendments, because they give a little more money than before, although still a lot less than current levels of invalidity benefit. For that reason, it would be wrong for us to vote against the amendments, and we accordingly accept them.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 2, in page 3, line 25, leave out '£56·10' and insert '£57·60'.

No. 3, in page 4, line 10, leave out '£26·40' and insert '£26·90'.

No. 4, in page 4, line 12, leave out '£10·95' and insert '£11·00'.

No. 5, in page 4, line 12, leave out '£32·30' and insert '£33·10'.

No. 6, in page 4, line 14, leave out '£10·95' and insert '£11·00'.

No. 7, in page 4, line 14, leave out '£33·70' and insert '£34·50'.

No. 8, in page 4, line 14, at end add—

'(7) Any order under section 150 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 (up-rating orders) made by the Secretary of State before the commencement of this section shall include provision—

(a) making such increase (if any) in the sum specified in the provision inserted by subsection (2) above as the amount of short-term incapacity benefit at the higher rate as is necessary to make that sum equal to the higher rate or, if there is only one such rate, to the rate of statutory sick pay payable after the order comes into force; and

(b) making such increases in the other sums specified in the provisions inserted by subsections (2) and (6) above in Schedule 4 to the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 as would have been required if the provisions in question had been in force at all material times.'.—[*Mr. Scott.*]

Clause 4

POWER TO PROVIDE FOR THE TRANSITION TO INCAPACITY BENEFIT

Mr. Burt: I beg to move amendment No. 9 in page 9, line 1, leave out subsection (11) and insert

'(11) For the period of three years from Royal Assent a statutory instrument which contains (whether alone or with other provisions) any regulations under this section shall not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House.

(12) A statutory instrument—

(a) which contains (whether alone or with other provisions) any regulations made under this section, and

(b) which is not subject to any requirement that a draft of the instrument be laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament,

shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 10 to 13.

Mr. Burt: These amendments relate to the regulation-making powers. Members on the Standing Committee will recall that during discussions on clause 4 a commitment was given to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) to look again at the period for which those regulation-making powers would be subject to affirmative resolution. It was suggested at that time that a period of three years might be more appropriate.

New clause 1, which we dealt with earlier, introduced the three-year period for regulations covering the transition to the new test of incapacity. Amendment No. 9 now gives effect to that for regulations made under clause 4. New subsection (11) will ensure that the regulations will be subject to affirmative resolution for three years from the date of Royal Assent. Additionally, new subsection (12) provides that where the regulations under clause 4 are contained in a statutory instrument that is not subject to affirmative resolution, negative resolution will apply—that is, after the three-year period. That was omitted during the original drafting of the clause.

Hon. Members may ask why we have decided on a period of three years. Why not, for example, make regulations always subject to the affirmative procedure? *[Interruption.]* Indeed, I hear that question spilling from the lips of Opposition Members.

We recognise that there will be a great deal of interest in the regulations made under the Bill. They are likely to be complex—the very reason for enshrining such matters in secondary legislation—and modifications may need to be made to deal with problems that emerge. In the light of that interest we think it right that the amending regulations should be subject to the affirmative procedure.

Eventually the new system will settle down—three years is a reasonable estimate for the transitional period —and, I hope, will find acceptance on all sides. From time to time there may need to be small sets of amending regulations dealing with what we expect to be relatively minor matters. We do not think that, given a choice, the House would want to debate these. There would, however, have to be a debate if the regulations were subject to the affirmative procedure. If we place amendment under negative procedure after three years, the House will have a choice whether the issues are important enough to merit a full debate.

In addition to extending the period for application of affirmative resolution to the transitional regulations, I have tabled amendments Nos. 10 and 11 to do the same with the regulations covering the test of incapacity. Because of their complexity, it is quite possible that we shall not get the regulations right first time and that amendments will be required both before commencement of the Act and in the early days of operating the new test. The regulations will now be subject to affirmative resolution for the period of three years from the date of Royal Assent.

Amendment No. 12 corrects an omission in the current draft of the Bill. Subsection ((3) of clause 6 lists all the regulation-making powers included in clauses 5 and 6 that are to be subject to affirmative resolution. However, subsection (7) of new section 171A has been excluded from the list. The amendment corrects that situation.

Amendment No. 13 clarifies the reference to new section 171D. Subsection (2) of the new section merely sets out a particular case of the power given by subsection (1).

The amendments are largely technical and give effect to a more sensible treatment of the regulation-making powers. I commend them to the House.

Mr. Bradley: I welcome the fact that the Government have used the affirmative resolution procedure for the regulations, as promised in Committee. I am especially pleased that the Minister spotted the omission of subsection (7). We would have tabled an amendment to that effect ourselves if the Government had not done so.

Mr. Burt: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman certainly would have done.

Mr. Bradley: However, we must place on the record yet again our opposition to the way in which the legislation is being dealt with by regulation. I shall not rehearse the arguments on that subject, but in a sense the Government have made the case for us. The Minister said that the regulations would be complex and that the Government do not expect to get them right, but expect to have to amend them. What a way to introduce legislation. They admit that they do not know what they are doing; yet they legislate by regulation which we cannot amend and to which we can only vote yes or no even if we know that the Government have got it wrong. That is an extraordinary procedure to adopt and the Government have condemned themselves out of the Minister's own mouth.

However, we welcome the fact that a three-year period will apply to the regulations. All my hon. Friends will welcome that, because, unless the Government change the law on elections, three years should take us through until after the next general election, when we shall have the pleasure of introducing sensible regulations and legislation to deal with the real needs of disabled people in this country.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6

TEST OF INCAPACITY FOR WORK: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

8.30 pm

Mr. Ingram: I beg to move amendment No. 23, in page 11, line 44, at end insert

'but any such regulations shall take into account that it is in the public interest for disabled persons to make available their special knowledge through voluntary work and through appointment to relevant bodies and committees.'

We feel that this amendment is very important. We hope that the Government will treat it seriously. Throughout proceedings on the Bill, they have treated many of our arguments in a genuinely serious way and we ask that this amendment be given the same balanced approach. We also ask that it be judged not merely on its cost implications —I suspect that the overall cost of implementing the amendment will be small in terms of the cost of the overall Bill. I hope that we will not get into a cost implication argument.

The amendment simply calls on the Government to provide in regulation a means by which people in receipt of incapacity benefit—the new benefit—or the existing invalidity benefit will be allowed to do voluntary work or work in a user body or committee without fear of their entitlement to benefit being affected. The Bill as it stands already provides an exemption for local authority councillors. Their work as elected representatives will not debar them from entitlement to invalidity benefit or the new incapacity benefit.

That principle must be right because to do otherwise would undermine the fundamental democratic right that disabled people should not be debarred from fully participating in local authorities on the ground of cost. I hope that that is one right that will never be dispatched to the dustbin of history by the Government but will be constantly protected and supported by them.

In Committee, the Under-Secretary made a further concession—that the disregard that will apply to members of disability appeals tribunals will be extended to members of the advisory board which deals with the disability living allowance. That concession is welcome. However, it does not go far enough, and that is why we have tabled this amendment. It is right to extend that concession, but why will the Government not go one step further—we argue that it is a small step further—and concede a similar disregard for those people with disabilities who carry out such useful voluntary work on a range of committees and bodies, which benefit from the input of a disabled person?

We can all give examples of organisations, bodies and committees which would benefit greatly from the input of a disabled person. Disabled persons should be able to serve on any committee as of right but there are specific bodies, organisations and committees which would benefit greatly from the input of a disabled person because they understand the problems associated with not only their own disability but disabilities in general.

Clearly, bodies such as school governing bodies, community health councils and the boards of voluntary organisations which have been assisting Labour Members to understand the underlying importance and effect of this Bill would benefit from having disabled people serving on them and giving advice in that specific way. That would cover the whole breadth of voluntary organisations.

As I said, many boards, committees and groups would benefit from having disabled people serving on them. Of course, the argument will be that they should be debarred by virtue of the fact that they will lose their benefit.

By allowing the disregard for those serving on the DLA advisory board, the Government have partly accepted that argument. However, they do not go far enough—they do not take the logic of the argument and extend it further. If it is appropriate to allow the disregard for those serving on the DLA advisory board, why is it not appropriate for those serving on the Social Security Advisory Committee and the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council?

That question was raised in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn). It was interesting to see the Minister's response. He said:

"We have made a concession tonight. It is a little hurtful for the hon. Gentleman to suggest that we should go further. There is an end point and one can only go so far."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 22 February 1993; c. 364.]

The concession did not go very far at all. I do not know why the Minister was hurt by our questions, other than the fact that he accepted and understood the point that we were making and the need for the concession to be extended. The end point has been reached much too quickly. It is not that we wanted it to be reached in the way that it was in Committee but our arguments were dismissed. I am sorry that we hurt the Under-Secretary's feelings; however, it was not our intention to bother about his feelings but to have our argument accepted by the Government.

We must examine the existing legislation which deals with certain aspects of the principle of those with disabilities serving on various committees. The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 lists a number of bodies on which it is desirable to have someone who has a knowledge of disability or who is disabled. These include the housing advisory committees, the social security advisory committee, the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, the Transport Users Consultative Committee and other relevant advisory committees which deal with the range of utilities and other bodies. The 1970 Act is reinforced by the Disabled Persons Act 1986 which set out the need to include the experiences of people with disabilities on councils, committees and other bodies.

Why should we ignore the purposes of those Acts of Parliament? The Acts were laid down after careful debate and consideration in the House. There was a genuine recognition that disabled people needed much more positive discrimination and much more support in coming into the wider community, without feeling in any way that they would be debarred or suffer as a consequence.

That is why I ask the Government why they will not go further with the concession that they made in Committee about those who serve on the DLA advisory board. Why not take the concession a step further? If it is on the basis of cost, let us be told that. If it is not on that basis, where is the principle?

Why will the Government not accept that there is a lot to be gained not only by disabled people but all of us for disabled people to serve on these important advisory councils and committees which advise the House, local authorities and a range of other bodies? Clearly, to go that little step further would be a great boost to disabled people who want to serve and who do not want to operate under the fear that they may lose invalidity entitlement by serving on such bodies.

[Mr. Ingram]

In tabling this amendment, we recognise that the Government intend to introduce a new provision to allow incapacity benefit claimants to engage in up to 16 hours voluntary work a week. That was said by the Secretary of State on Second Reading and reiterated in Committee. Clearly, that provision will be welcome. However, the Government have not said that the concession will apply to existing invalidity benefit recipients—those who are in receipt of benefit at present and those who will be eligible for invalidity benefit before April 1995.

Once again, that raises the question why the Government, having gone so far, will not go that little step further. If it is on the basis of cost, let us hear the cost arguments. If it is because of some other underlying principle, let us hear it. The House should debate why the Government have no intention of conceding that in relation to the areas in which they have made a concession, and taken it a little step further.

The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux has set out the argument well in a briefing document which I understand has been given to all hon. Members. It would be useful to set out the background that was related in the document. NACAB says that it and other agencies which depend on volunteers, such as the Volunteer Centre UK, the National Association of Volunteer Bureaux, Mencap, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation and Arthritis Care, are experiencing problems with people who are claiming invalidity benefit and who wish to become volunteers.

We know that working as a volunteer is only permitted at present if the work is considered to be therapeutic, and that is defined as medically beneficial to the claimant. However, NACAB has pointed out that many claimants suffer from medical conditions where their work as a volunteer is not medically beneficial, but neither is it harmful. Clearly, undertaking voluntary work may encourage people back into a normal work environment. It may give them confidence in themselves, and may encourage them to seek full-time employment. It gives them a sense of dignity, and an awareness of what they can and cannot do in a normal work environment. By working as a volunteer, they may be encouraged back into work; assuming that work is available to them.

NACAB points out that, in its experience, the current rule means that recipients of invalidity benefit are reluctant to become volunteers and that those who are already volunteers are giving it up as they fear that it will affect their entitlement to benefit. It has given a couple of examples, and it is worth putting them on record so that we understand the debate in relation to the amendment.

NACAB cites a case in the west midlands where a volunteer was asked to attend an interview with the Benefits Agency about his medical condition. That individual suffers from osteoarthritis, and clearly had some days when he had great difficulty walking. The man had previously been in industry but had to give up because of his health. He fears that he is to lose his benefit.

Another example—again from the west midlands—is that of a volunteer who received a request to return her invalidity benefit book to the Benefits Agency because of her work at a NACAB office in the west midlands. She had previously contacted the Benefits Agency to confirm that she could do such voluntary work, and she had obtained a note from her doctor which stated that it was therapeutic. The Benefits Agency did not even question her first, and her benefit was subsequently reinstated. However, she suffered two weeks of distress as she clearly thought that she was to lose her invalidity benefit.

In a previous debate on the rates of benefit, we set out the level at which the rates are being paid at the moment under invalidity benefit and the rates which are to be paid. Those are not princely sums, and they do not make people feel like millionaires. They are not walking around with pound notes coming out of their pockets, but when someone feels that he is to lose benefit, it causes him great worry.

That is the underlying import and purpose of the amendment. It is important, and I am sure that the Minister will genuinely respond to it, but we need a clear statement tonight from the Government that nobody need fear losing their entitlement to invalidity benefit, or incapacity benefit, by carrying out voluntary work. Many disabled people benefit from their work in the voluntary sector, and the voluntary sector also derives extensive benefits. It is not just a case of input from the person with the disability. Everyone else benefits greatly from working with disabled people.

Those areas have the benefit of the disabled volunteer in terms of the valuable input which those people can make to an understanding of the wide range of issues dealt with in advisory groups and committees. Those people make major contributions, and it simply cannot be right that they have any fear hanging over them. That fear, of course, denies the rest of the community the invaluable input of an important group of our citizens.

By accepting the amendment, the Government will send out a clear message in advance of the debate which is to take place in the House on Friday. It will be another step forward for disabled people, and they will benefit from knowing that they are to be welcomed into the voluntary sector. That would give them confidence and the understanding of their fellow workers that they are to be welcomed into the work place. It would give them an understanding that there is a future for them.

8.45 pm

The amendment deals with such issues, and tries to set out the way forward. If the Government are not prepared to accept the amendment, I hope that we will hear tonight whether they are prepared to have it debated elsewhere, and to allow it to be reconsidered during the final stages of the Bill. I appreciate that Ministers are reluctant to accept amendments tabled by the Opposition but, if they are not prepared to accept it, they should at least give a message that they are prepared to accept the principle underlying it.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Like the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram), I welcome the Government's decision on the social security uprating that volunteers on incapacity benefit will be able to do up to 16 hours of voluntary work a week without losing their benefit. I speak personally on the matter, and on behalf of the all-party parliamentary panel on charities.

There is no question that people have been deterred by the rules of the benefit system, which effectively discourage them from undertaking voluntary work. I will mention one instance from a report sent to the hon. Members by the Cleveland council for voluntary service. A volunteer called Anne says:

"I have had serious problems with my health and confidence. I went to Middlesbrough Volunteer Bureau because I wanted to do something that would help my confidence. I got involved with an organisation which takes aid to children in a Romanian orphanage. I really wanted to go to Romania myself to see what my fundraising had achieved. I was told that if I went my benefit would be suspended while I was away. I promised that I would take a mobile phone so that I could be contacted if a job came up but the benefit office still would not let me go and pay my benefits."

Like the hon. Member for East Kilbride, I hope that the Government may find it possible to bring in the new concession earlier so that it applies to recipients of invalidity benefit as well as incapacity benefit. That would be a graceful and appropriate feature of the Government's new initiative, "Make a Difference", to encourage volunteering. I think that it can only have been an oversight that it was not announced when the initiative was launched last week.

I know that an explanation was given in another place that it would be impractical to do so because the concession would depend upon the operation of the new objective test, but I do not understand why that should be so. I hope that the additional change will be made.

Clear advice should be given at all events, to the Benefits Agency medical service to disregard voluntary work. It must be clear to all concerned that there can be no presumption that someone who undertakes those hours of voluntary work is fit for other work on account of that. There is a qualitative difference between voluntary work and paid employment. Voluntary work can be much more varied and flexible than paid employment is likely to be. The psychological frame of mind associated with voluntary work is different because there is always the feeling that if the stress and strain becomes too great, it is possible for the volunteer to withdraw.

Nor should we insist that voluntary work must be "therapeutic", although I believe that it is—in almost every case such work enhances the well-being of the person who undertakes it.

As has been argued, we should extend the exemptions. I welcome the extension to include people who undertake voluntary work as councillors, members of disability appeal tribunals and members of the disability living allowance advisory board, but I want the concessions to go much further and to cover the whole range of public service committees and organisations, which have been substantially extended, as we know. As long ago as the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, the desirability of disabled people serving on such committees was stated, but we are a quarter of a century on and we need to make better progress.

The deregulation task force has a sub-group on volunteers and benefits. I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister will want to listen carefully to what it has to say, perhaps shortly.

Charitable and voluntary activity benefits the giver and the receiver. Like the unemployed, retired people and many others, the disabled are able to give something to society in that way and to gain new skills and fulfilment. The bonds of our society are strengthened in the process. Voluntary work by the disabled is not only of direct and immediate value to society but, by enhancing their skills, morale and health, should be seen as an investment.

My right hon. Friend the Minister may tell us, however, that a cost problem is associated with bringing the concession forward. I very much hope that if that is the problem, he will share it with us and explain the cost-benefit analysis that his Department has made.

A year ago, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

"We must do more to recognise, support and encourage the habit of volunteering, which cements together our society and is one of the great glories of our lives."

I agree.

Ms Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): It gives me great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), as I entirely agree with his remarks. I also welcome the opportunity to follow the many excellent comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram).

I sincerely hope that there will be no opposition to amendment No. 23 and that the Minister will feel able to support it. Clearly, it is in the public interest that disabled people should be able to give us all the benefit of their experience and abilities.

Clause 6 takes into account that a person's incapacity for work should not prevent him from making a valuable contribution to the community as an elected representative or a councillor. All hon. Members present must know of people who are suffering from chronic illness or disability, but who serve their community as elected representatives and in many other capacities.

Hon. Members who served on the Standing Committee that considered the Bill, who are unfortunately notable by their absence from the Conservative Benches, may recall that I quoted in support of my argument a senior Member of Parliament asking the Government to consider such an amendment. The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon quoted the Prime Minister, and I have here a press release issued in 1987 by the then Minister of State for Social Security and the Disabled, who subsequently became the Prime Minister, as hon. Members know. At that time he said:

"Experience shows that people with long-term sickness or disability can give valuable services as councillors even though they cannot undertake normal employment. It would be wrong if they were deterred by the rules of the benefit system from contributing to local democracy as elected representatives."

I certainly hope that the Prime Minister will recognise that that is what the amendment is about. It recognises the valuable contribution that people can make, through voluntary work and appointment to serve on public bodies. That involvement and that contribution should not make someone fear that he will lose his benefit because he will be judged fully capable of paid employment.

All hon. Members have had considerable dealings with voluntary groups and community organisations in their constituencies. I am sure that hon. Members may have referred constituents with problems to the relevant voluntary group and community organisation for their support and expertise. There is no doubt in my mind that groups that deal with cancer, arthritis, heart disease and so forth can be an instant source of support. We should recognise the contribution made by volunteers who join such groups.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride has produced many valuable arguments. For example, he welcomed the Minister's announcement that volunteers who receive incapacity benefit will be able to do voluntary work for up to 16 hours per week, but said that we want that concession to be introduced as soon as possible, so that

[Ms Rachel Squire]

it can apply to recipients of the existing invalidity benefit. My hon. Friend also made many splendid remarks about the range of organisations to which volunteers may contribute and the essential role that disabled people can play by advising certain committees and by being consulted in fulfilment of the terms of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride also mentioned the fact that disabled people who wish to be volunteers fear that they will lose their benefit by doing such voluntary work. He quoted some examples that were cited by citizens advice bureaux. Once again I remind the Minister that two people may well be able to get out of a chair, sit down again, perhaps walk 50 yards, use their hands and carry out what we regard as the other normal physical functions, but that there may be vast differences in the time, effort and discomfort involved. A person with chronic arthritis may need three or more attempts just to get out of a chair, whereas somebody like me can get up in 10 seconds flat without any difficulty. This distinction must be recognised when we are dealing with the contribution that people can make as volunteers, as opposed to paid employees.

I have mentioned the public's interest in the Government's acceptance of this amendment, but there is also the personal interest of the disabled person doing voluntary work. It can only benefit individuals to have their worth and their contribution to the community recognised, reaffirmed and enhanced through voluntary work. There is no substitute for the help and support that a disabled person can provide for someone else who has recently been afflicted with the same or a similar disability. That is why there are so many voluntary groups providing specific support.

9 pm

The Government have made great play of attracting people to serve on public bodies. Opposition Members tend to refer to such bodies as quangos. In any case, the Government have tried to demonstrate how eager they are to attract a diverse range of people and of experience and a cross-section of the community. If the Government are serious about that, they ought to support the amendment and, thereby, ensure that no sick or disabled person will lose benefit because he or she contributes to a public body or will be deterred from serving.

Mr. Pike: Many councils are about to devolve housing functions further down the line. Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be wrong if a disabled person were unable to play a voluntary role in that sector? Such people could make a special contribution by representing the interests of the disabled in general.

Ms Squire: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. It is vital that disabled people be given an opportunity to make a full contribution to the development of housing. We have all seen new buildings that were supposed to make provision for disabled people but whose doors are not wide enough to take a wheel chair.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride, I remind the Minister that on Friday of this week the House will deal with the Second Reading of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. I understand that, earlier today, the Prime Minister suggested that the Government might actually support that Bill. Unfortunately, I missed the right hon. Gentleman's comment as I had to deal with other business. There is no doubt that, if the Government tell a disabled person, "Your choice is between voluntary work with no incapacity benefit and benefit with no voluntary work," they are indulging in gross discrimination.

By doing that, the Government will deny sick or disabled people valuable opportunities to live a normal life, to rebuild their confidence and to gain the skills that could eventually help them to return to paid employment. That is discrimination of a deeply offensive nature. How can the Government claim to be caring, compassionate and committed to community care if they behave in such a way? How can they close the doors of opportunity and benefit to the individual and to the community as a whole?

I urge the Government to recognise, encourage and applaud the unique contribution that disabled people can make to the community and to support the amendment.

Mr. Scott: I should like to start by saying that I found the arguments of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) particularly persuasive. I know that the hon. Lady has much experience of the voluntary sector and I listened carefully to her remarks.

I shall not urge the House to accept the amendment, although I agree warmly with the principle behind most of it. The only part that gives me some concern—I shall return to that matter in the course of my remarks—is the last few words:

"appointment to relevant bodies and committees".

I want to enter a reservation about that.

In practice, the regulations that we have in mind already are intended to include reference to voluntary work, so I see no reason to specify on the face of the Bill that the regulations should do that. It is our intention to provide a regulation-making power to specify that, where a person undertakes more than a prescribed amount of work, he will be treated as capable of work.

The amendment introduces to the regulation-making power a reference to people with disabilities who are involved in voluntary work and the valuable contribution that they can make to it, through appointment to relevant bodies and committees, and states that it should be a fact to take into account when making regulations under the power. It makes no material differance to the regulation-making power as currently drafted because the regulations allow us to specify any category of work.

Hon. Members are already aware of our intentions for the regulations made under this clause. We intend to carry forward the therapeutic work rule, allowing people to undertake work up to a limit of 16 hours and/or £43 a week, where it is accepted as beneficial to their condition. Equally, we are bringing forward special rules for both councillors and disability appeal tribunal members.

As the House is already aware, however, we are extending the special rule for disability appeal tribunal members to members of the disability living allowance advisory board. It will allow the first day of attendance at DLAAB meetings in any one week to be disregarded. Only further days of attendance that week would affect a person's benefit. It recognises the fact that allowances paid for a day's attendance to DLAAB members would consistently take them above the therapeutic work limit.

Mr. Pike: I would be grateful if the Minister could explain how widely he sees the therapeutic benefit being interpreted. It is possible for it to be interpreted extremely

tightly or fairly liberally. Most hon. Members, and certainly those present at the moment, would prefer a liberal interpretation.

Mr. Scott: It generally is interpreted in a liberal way. If the hon. Gentleman has the details of particular circumstances in which he feels it is being interpreted in a more restrictive way, I would be grateful if he would contact me about them.

Mr. Dewar: I did not have the advantage of serving on the Committee. I just want to follow the Minister's argument. Is he saying that this amendment is unnecessary because everything that it attempts to do is already contained in the Bill, in the regulation-making powers or in the way in which the Government intend to use those powers?

Mr. Scott: I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance, with the reservation that I have entered about relevant bodies and committees. I would not want to rule out that altogether, but there would be power in the regulations to include them. At the moment we have voluntary work and therapeutic work, and we have the special arrangements for disability appeal tribunals and the disability living allowance advisory board. If we were to go beyond that in specifying relevant bodies and organisations, I should want to consider carefully the extent of it and how particularly relevant it was to the purpose of the special arrangements that we are already making to allow and indeed encourage recipients of incapacity benefit and severe disablement allowance to undertake voluntary work for up to 16 hours a week without any effect on their benefit.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced at Second Reading our intention to introduce the regulations. I believe that the change is not just consistent with the Government's wider objectives to encourage voluntary work but is regarded highly and supported right across the House and in another place. The work done by charities and voluntary organisations is immensely important. As Minister with responsibility for disabled people, I am constantly in touch with a whole range of voluntary organisations.

I may have told the House on another occasion that the previous holder of the French equivalent of my job always regarded as one of the glories of this country the infrastructure of voluntary and charitable effort and the way in which these bodies supported and worked with the Government at both national and local level in order to achieve their different objectives.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Would my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Scott: If my hon. Friend will give me a moment to end the sentence, I shall certainly give way to him.

The work done by those organisations is immensely important and it has a second role that is important, in that it can be an important and significant way of helping people to make a gradual transition back to full-time work.

Mr. Howarth: May I ask my right hon. Friend for additional clarification? He said that it was the Government's intention to ensure that recipients of incapacity benefit and severe disablement allowance would benefit from those concessions. Is it also their intention that the concessions should be applied to recipients of invalidity benefit or, if he is not able to say that immediately, will he say that the Government are prepared to look sympathetically at that possibility?

Mr. Scott: At the point of change, although people who are on invalidity benefit at the moment will continue with their existing entitlement to the rate of invalidity benefit that they at present draw, they will be in receipt of incapacity benefit at that point, so they will qualify under the new arrangements. I hope that that deals with my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Howarth: I am simply asking, are the Government prepared to bring forward that concession?

Mr. Scott: I have had a number of representations about bringing forward the scheme in advance of the April 1995 date. In part for the reason that I have just mentioned, I would want to give careful consideration to the implications. We are studying the scheme. I am not without sympathy for the idea, but I cannot give my hon. Friend a straight answer at this moment.

Certainly, the role of the provision is immensely important to the individuals concerned and to the charities and voluntary organisations that benefit from their important contribution to their work. It is also, I think, important in enabling people to make a gradual transition back to work. I hope very much that recipients of incapacity benefit and severe disablement allowance will be able to take advantage of the new provision to build up their confidence and experience in a range of ways.

I therefore hope that, acknowledging the Government's altitude towards voluntary work, the concessions that we have already made and the fact that I have shown that we are perhaps open to persuasion on a number of other points that might be included if we accepted the amendment as a whole, the Opposition will not feel it necessary to press the amendment.

Mr. Ingram: I reiterate and reinforce the compliment that the Minister of State paid to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) on her contribution to the debate. I hope that the many strong points that she made will force him just that little bit further —perhaps not tonight, but in his further deliberations.

It was a pity that the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) was not on the Committee with us; we would have welcomed his contributions to our proceedings. It is a mystery that he was not a member, given his expertise and knowledge.

Mr. Scott: It is nothing to do with me.

Mr. Ingram: I notice that the Minister says that it is nothing to do with him, so we can perhaps point the finger elsewhere.

The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon told us about the deregulation task force. That is a group dealing with volunteers and benefits. I do not know whether it is an expert group of 80 or indeed whether its members are experts at all, but I am apprehensive about what it is likely to come out with at the end of the day. My mother always said to me, "If you can learn something new each day, you are progressing," and I have learnt something new today about the deregulation task force and the group dealing with that area. It is something that I will have to consider further.

[Mr. Ingram]

I am perplexed by the Minister's reluctance on the issue. Obviously he supports the weight of the argument. He understands the logic of it. He understands the principle underlying it. We pressed him on the subject of costs. He did not come back and say that there were significant costs there, and obviously it is not a cost argument that is debarring him from accepting the amendment. I listened carefully to what he said about the final part of the amendment, which gives him some cause for worry and concern, and I appreciate that he perhaps needs further time to examine it.

While listening to the Minister's response, we considered whether it would be worth while to push the amendment to a vote. Many groups and individuals outside the House would be glad to know that we were prepared to argue for it and vote accordingly. However, we are prepared to give the Minister a little longer to consider the points that have been advanced, not just in this debate but in all the representations that have been made to him by voluntary groups, his hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon and others involved with disabled people.

I hope that what we have argued will become a matter of fact. If the power exists in current regulations, I hope that in the near future we shall see a change accordingly.

Mr. Scott: As the Opposition have been consistently critical of regulation-making powers, I make the point that if we wished to make the change, it would be comparatively easy to do so.

9.15 pm

Mr. Ingram: We have been critical about how the Government use regulations, not about regulatory powers. I do not want to go back over the 48 references to regulations in 11 pages of a 17-page Bill or the increase in statutory instruments since 1985. Until then, an average of 2,000 statutory instruments were used by Labour and Conservative Governments, but, since 1985, there has been an exponential growth and the current figure is now well in excess of 3,000 and we expect that figure to continue to rise.

If the power exists, I hope that the Minister will be prepared to give genuine consideration to changing the regulations. But it still leaves hanging the question of those on invalidity benefit until April 1995. Why cannot they be given that small concession? I hope that the Minister will be prepared to go back and talk to those who hold the purse strings and will make the final decision, and that we shall see a positive development in that regard.

The debate has added to the weight of knowledge on the subject, and I hope that the Minister can use it to good advantage in the future. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 10, in page 13, line 27, after '(3)' insert

'For the period of three years from Royal Assent'.

No. 11, in page 13, line 28, leave out 'the first' and insert 'any'.

No. 12, in page 13, line 32, leave out 'or (6)' and insert '(6) or (7)'.

No. 13, in page 13, line 35, leave out '(1)'.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Clause 7

RATE OF STATUTORY SICK PAY

Amendment made: No. 14, in page 13, line 42, at end insert—

"(1A) Any order under section 150 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 (up-rating orders) made by the Secretary of State before the commencement of this section shall include provision making such increase (if any) in the sum specified in the amendment made by subsection (1) above as the amount of statutory sick pay as is necessary to make that sum equal to the higher rate of statutory sick pay payable after the order comes into force.".—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Clause 11

TRANSITIONAL AND CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISION

Amendments made: No. 15, in page 15, line 36, at end insert—

"(1A) The power conferred by subsection (1) above is not exercisable in respect of any matter for which provision may be made under section 4 (power to provide for transition to incapacity benefit) or section *(Power to provide for the transition to the new test of incapacity for work)* (power to provide for the transition to new test of incapacity for work).";

No. 16, in page 15, line 37, leave out subsection (2). —*[Mr. Scott.]*

Mr. Bradley: I beg to move amendment No. 27, in page 16, line 7, at end insert—

"(2A) Where a person is entitled to a disability premium by virtue only of satisfying the test of incapacity for work—

(a) those so entitled on the day of commencement shall be entitled to a transitional award of income support, housing benefit or council tax benefit, as appropriate on the same basis as awards of incapacity benefit under section 4 of this Act;

(b) after commencement, he shall be entitled to such a premium from the date of claim, provided that he can produce medical evidence of ipcapacity for work during the previous 364 days.".

This is the final amendment on Report, and I hope that the way in which the Minister dealt with the previous amendment will flow through to this amendment as it deals with an aspect of transition arrangements which the Government have not dealt with fully to date. I feel confident that the Minister will be able to support it. The amendment seeks to enable people receiving the disability premium to have the same transitional protection as those on incapacity benefit and to allow for immediate entitlement to premiums through backdating.

Some people now claim a disability premium with one of the means-tested benefits without receiving one of the qualifying benefits such as disability living allowance. In such cases, people may be entitled to the premium, provided that they can show that they are incapable of work. The incapacity test is the same as is now used with the invalidity benefit.

The Bill introduces a new test of incapacity to work to be applied across all relevant incapacity benefits. That, of course, will include disability premium. The amendment, therefore, seeks to ensure, first, that there is transitional protection for people on the disability premium at the time of change and, secondly, that an immediate entitlement to the premium is possible, provided that medical evidence is submitted.

I am sure that the Minister is aware that, according to the 1992 figure, the benefits of 424,600 income support recipients include the disability premium, but no mention has been made of transitional protection for claimants of the disability premium.

Many people qualify for the disability premium through a qualifying benefit, or if they are registered blind, but those most likely to be affected by the introduciton of incapacity benefit are those who qualify only on grounds of the incapacity condition and who have submitted medical certificates to the Benefits Agency. They include people who are unable to qualify for national insurance benefits or who cannot qualify for severe disablement allowance, perhaps because they are not 80 per cent. disabled. Access to the premium via the incapacity condition is therefore particularly important for women.

The amendment seeks to clarify what arrangements are being made to protect, at the time of change, people who receive the disability premium by way of the incapacity condition. We also seek clarification about the full year's wait for benefit. Currently, the disability premium is payable after 28 weeks of incapacity for work. With the introduction of incapacity benefit, which in effect extends the definition of short-term incapacity to 364 days, the qualifying period for the disability premium has likewise been extended to a year. Using the 1994-95 figures, someone under the age of 60 faces a loss of £19·45 per week, which amounts to a loss of £466·80 during the period from 28 weeks to 52 weeks. It is estimated that the change will save £20 million in 1995-96 and £25 million in 1996-97. Those figures were given in column *598* of *Hansard* on 14 February 1994.

At the moment, certificates from a general practitioner have to be presented as evidence, which can include the backdated medical certificate—Med 5—to prove incapacity to work in a previous period. That could happen when claimants are not aware of their entitlement. Will the Minister clarify whether, as no premium will in future be payable for 52 weeks, there will be provision for backdating, by a Med 5 certificate, for 52 weeks?

At what point will people applying for the disability premium have to undergo the new functional test? Will they have to undergo it immediately? Will they then have to wait a full year before they receive benefit? Will the test be at the 28th week? Will claimants then have to wait a year for payment?

At what intervals is it anticipated that someone will have to be tested or re-tested? Have the Government any estimate of how often the condition of claimants who pass the medical test and who are in receipt of incapacity benefit will be subject to reassessment or be requested to fill in a new questionnaire? Have the Government given general consideration to the review of incapacity cases?

Evidence from citizens advice bureaux already shows that many claimants are not identified by the Benefits Agency at 28 weeks and lose out on the disability premium. How would the Benefits Agency ensure that people on income support were identified and put in the queue for any medical assessment after the first 28 weeks?

We are trying to flag up the anomalies that we believe are in the system. I recognise that the Government have already indicated that they recognise that there will be anomalies. In this case, while some people will have to wait a full year before receiving the premium, those who qualify because they receive severe disablement allowance will get the premium from the 28th week. Are there any plans to iron out anomalies in the new incapacity benefit?

The Government have already conceded that they will have carefully to consider transitional arrangements in their framing of the regulations. They have admitted that they may not get them right first time and may have to amend the regulations. Having considered the complexities of transitional arrangements, I have some sympathy with the Government.

It is important, however, that the amendment identifies a particular issue, and I hope that the Government will respond to it. I see that they may well do so soon and I shall speak slowly to ensure that we get some response. It is an important issue and may be typical of the range of potential difficulties on transitional arrangements because of the complexities of the current system, the interrelation of benefits and the additions to those benefits that apply to disabled people.

Having made those rather brief and technical remarks on the amendment, I should welcome the Minister's comments on the amendment and perhaps some more general comments on the time scale and the way in which he hopes to handle the transitional arrangements.

Mr. Scott: As the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) has acknowledged, this is a complex matter. I understand that the amendment seeks to protect access to the disability premium for the long-term sick.

I should assure the House that it is very much the Government's intention that there should be consistency of treatment in the application of the new and transitional incapacity arrangements.

Existing cases will be protected at the point of change. For sickness and invalidity benefit recipients, protection will take the form of transitional awards of the new incapacity benefit. I do not believe that such a mechanism is necessary or desirable for the income-related benefits. We are not changing the amounts of the income-related benefits in general or the disability premium in particular. The benefits will remain the same; there will still be a disability premium. We shall simply be amending the rules for the premium to reflect the new incapacity provisions.

We are talking about those who qualify for the disability premium on incapacity grounds alone. The long-term rate of incapacity benefit will replace invalidity benefit as a passport to the premium. It will include those with transitional awards of long-term incapacity benefit.

The new medical test will apply to existing disability premium cases on the same basis for existing contributory benefit cases. It is a test that applies across the benefits system wherever incapacity is an issue.

The hon. Gentleman referred in particular to the reassessment of reviews of people who undertake the medical test. It will depend in essence upon the advice given by a departmental doctor to adjudication officers on the period in which the effects of the disability are likely to persist unchanged. For some people it may be for life; for others for a relatively short period. It would depend very much on the assessment of the impact of their particular condition on them, and it would be for adjudication officers to decide when any such case might be called forward for review for a reassessment of their entitlement.

Exemptions from the medical test for income-related benefits will broadly be on the same basis as that applicable to incapacity benefit cases. Those aged 58 or over at the point of change, the terminally ill, those suffering from a list of specified conditions or those receiving the highest rate of the care component of disability living allowance will not be required to undergo the new medical test. Those who have the premium because they have been incapable

[Mr. Scott]

of work for 28 weeks will be treated as satisfying the new test and will continue to qualify for the premium while they are incapable. If an adjudication officer decides that they are capable of work, the premium will be withdrawn, as now, unless payable on other grounds.

9.30 pm

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that a period of incapacity occurring immediately before a claim for income support, housing benefit or council tax benefit will, as now, count towards the qualifying period for the premium. Such a claim would, of course, be considered in the light of the rules applying at the time. For a claim to be made after the introduction of the new arrangements, the new test will apply. Our aim is to protect existing benefit recipients from a drop in benefit at the time when the new arrangements are introduced. That clearly does not apply where a claim starts after the date of change. There is no reason to give the same protection to them as for existing cases.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about the possibility of backdating. If backdating evidence is provided, immediate entitlement will still be possible. The new all-work test, however, will still be possible. The new all-work test, however, will need to be satisfied at the start of the income support claim. The Benefits Agency medical service judgment will be needed to judge that the person was incapable of all work for the previous six months. That is in addition to the GP's evidence for the six months before that. Pending that evidence, the premium will be paid from the outset of the claim.

I hope that I have covered most of the points of this particularly complex issue. I do not think that our intentions vary widely from those of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Bradley: I welcome the Minister's comprehensive explanation. This is an extremely technical matter, and it is incumbent on all of us on the Opposition Benches to look carefully at his explanation to ensure that it covers all the different angles of the complex nature of income-related benefits and their interrelationship with disability premiums and other premiums that may be applicable to them. It would be sensible for us to look carefully at them and to see how they relate to the other transitional arrangements that will be introduced at later stages.

I am sure that when the Bill leaves this House and is considered in the other place, their Lordships also will be concerned to ensure that protection at the point of change is forthcoming on a whole range of complicated individual cases. It would be sensible at this stage to look carefully at this and similar complex matters. In that light, and with your permission, Madam Speaker, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

9.33 pm

Mr. Scott: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I have no intention of making a lengthy speech at this late hour. I believe that we have had a good and constructive Committee stage, and today we have had a good and constructive Report. I am sure that further proceedings on the Bill will be characterised in the same way.

Opposition Members and, indeed, some of my hon. Friends, have pressed me today on a number of commitments that I gave in Committee to consider a number of specific issues, such as linking rules, treatment of the terminally ill and broadening the definition of training, and we had specific mention today of the importance of voluntary work. I warned the Committee that a number of these matters were complex, and would necessarily take some time to explore.

I share the disappointment of hon. Members who have taken a particular interest in the Bill that it has not been possible to complete that consideration in time for today's proceedings, but I repeat my commitment to continue to consider the issues carefully and constructively. Let me also remind the House that, if amendments are required, there will be a suitable opportunity for them to be moved in another place; the House of Commons would then have an opportunity to consider the issues again.

The Bill fundamentally reforms benefits paid to those who are incapacitated for work. First, it introduces a new, more objective medical test. As the House knows, the Government are committed to a test that focuses only on medical factors in determining entitlement to a benefit paid on the grounds of medical incapacity. We consider that logical, right and proper.

Opposition Members have complained that they have been unable to debate the detail of the test; I think they are aware, however, that the detail is subject to wide-ranging, on-going consultation and evaluation, and in due course will be set out in regulations. What we have been able to do—I pay tribute to the constructive approach adopted by both sides, in Committee and today—is consider the principles underlying the new test. The genuinely sick will satisfy the requirements of the test.

The second element of the reform is consideration of the appropriate level of provision. In Committee and again today, we have debated each component of the benefit. I know that Opposition Members hold different views about the appropriate level, but I believe—and the Government believe—that, with the passage of time, some elements of invalidity benefit, such as additional pension or dependency increases for adults when there are no children to care for, have become anomalous. On the question of additional pension, there is at least some agreement between the Government and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

We have also introduced a new definition of long-term incapacity—52 weeks, which I consider a more appropriate measure and a reasonable definition. It is important to emphasise at this stage, lest there be any misunderstanding outside the House, that the Government have fully protected existing recipients of invalidity benefit: there will be no cash losers at the point of change.

Mr. Flynn: Does not the Minister agree that, although the Bill has been sold as an attempt to rid the system of abuse, it reduces in three ways the amount that people will receive in future—people who, as the Government admit, are incapable of work?

Mr. Scott: I have just said that there will be no cash losers at the point of change. That is very important. A number of speeches made in Committee may well have

misled people outside the House into believing that they will lose money at that point, which is why I wanted to emphasise on Third Reading that they would not.

We remain committed to a contributory income replacement benefit paid on the ground of sickness. I believe that our reforms will help to make benefits for those who are incapacitated for work affordable and sustainable into the next century. I also believe that the Opposition's approach to the Bill manifests their lack of will to achieve that aim.

Without the Bill, expenditure would continue to grow without being clearly focused on the long-term sick. I remind the House that, in 1979, expenditure on invalidity benefit was £2·4 billion; in 1993, it was £6·1 billion. It is forecast to rise to £8 billion by 1997. Governments across Europe, in North America and in Australasia are all considering or implementing reforms in this regard.

I believe that any responsible Government would have to take steps to deal with the rapid and sustained growth in expenditure and the number of recipients, and the fact that the benefit is no longer focused solely on those who are sick. I commend the Bill to the House.

9.39 pm

Mr. Wallace: I shall be brief. The Minister said that there will be savings for the Treasury, and the Opposition parties understand that that is the whole purpose of the Bill. He said that there will be no cash loss during the period of change for those currently in receipt of invalidity benefit but, as I understand it, those who are not today incapacitated for work but who are so incapacitated after 1995 will be worse off as a result of the introduction of the new benefit than they would otherwise have been.

As the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) said in his intervention on the Minister, we are talking about people whom, even under the new strict test, the Government accept are incapacitated for work.

It is interesting to note that, although it is an undeniable fact that the number of people currently receiving invalidity benefit has increased threefold since 1975, work done by the Policy Studies Institute has shown that, among men of working age, the number starting a period of invalidity benefit has fallen from 465,000 in 1977-78 to just under 200,000 a year in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

One of the explanations for the overall increase is the number of people who continue on invalidity benefit longer than they would have done in earlier times. Of course, one of the big differences between 1975 and 1994 is the unemployment rate.

We now fear that, under what the Minister called a "medical" test, which is more like a mechanistic test, more people will be deemed capable of work but will nevertheless not be able to find it. I believe that we shall be condemning the most vulnerable members of our community to suffer as a result; and, as has been said, this measure will bring people to our constituency surgeries in 1995 and beyond.

We shall do our best for them, but we shall at least be able to say that we warned the Government what would happen; I hope that Conservative Members who vote for Third Reading tonight will be able to look their constituents in the eye with an easy conscience when the time comes.

9.42 pm

Mr. Flynn: There are three methods by which the Government are introducing massive cuts—and they are cuts, because the Bill is about saving £1·5 billion.

The first method is the change in the second six months, the reduction of benefit from the 29th to the 52nd week. It will affect people who have passed the Government's incapacity test. They will lose up to £1,000 in that time during the second six months.

The second method involves the abolition of the earnings-related additional benefit. It is not a handout, but an insured benefit, for which people paid from 1978 to 1991. They are entitled to it. If an insurance company announced that it was not going to pay out its premiums, it would be in court on a charge of fraud. The Government are perpetrating a deceit.

The third method is the introduction of the new test. Having listened to the debate in Committee and here today, I do not see how it could possibly work, as it is wholly impractical. It is impossible for a set test to ascertain whether a person—a bricklayer, barrister or brain surgeon —is incapacitated for work. Such a system cannot possibly work.

9.43 pm

Mr. Bradley: I, too, pay tribute to my hon. Friends for the constructive way in which they have dealt with the Bill and advanced their views in Committee. Clearly, we have been disappointed throughout the various stages that the Government chose not to allow that constructive debate through their own Back Benchers in Committee—although, as always, the Minister of State and Under-Secretary of State treated constructively the issues that the Opposition raised in Committee.

It is important to note that, in Committee, the Minister and his Front-Bench colleagues gave assurances that they would introduce by way of regulations some of the key issues, only some of which we have had the opportunity to debate this evening. I flag issues such as fast-tracking on to long-term benefit, the linking rules and, crucially, training.

We have not had an opportunity to debate training, and the way in which that will impinge on people's benefits. Again, the Minister gave assurances at earlier stages of the Bill that he would carefully consider that, as well as the definitions of "own occupation", all-work tests, "therapeutic earnings" and the other issues that we have managed to raise. It is important that we make it absolutely clear that we will be pursuing those matters carefully when the regulations are made on those points. We shall not forget the concessions that the Government made in Committee, and we shall ensure that they are brought forward.

As the Bill leaves the House, I am absolutely certain that a vigorous and detailed examination of it will occur in another place. I look forward to dealing with a considerable number of amendments that may be tabled to reinforce our opposition to the Bill. I warn the Government that our opposition to the Bill does not end this evening. As we have highlighted, it will be a boomerang, like the Child Support Agency, which will come back to thwack the Minister on the head in about 12 months' time, when the real implications of the legislation are seen by the public.

I am sure that the Minister will support the sentiment that, as consideration comes to an end, it is important to pay tribute, as we did in Committee, to the voluntary organisations which represent disabled people in the

[Mr. Bradley]

country. On a day-to-day basis, they represent the interests of disabled people so thoroughly and effectively, and when a major piece of legislation such as this comes before Parliament, it is apparent how effective and important they are in providing all hon. Members with detailed information so that we may effectively debate crucial parts of that Bill.

I pay tribute to organisations such as the Disability Alliance, the Disablement Income Group, the Spastics Society, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Arthritis Care, the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, the all-party alliance, the all-party disabled group and many others too numerous to mention. They have worked extremely hard on our behalf over the past few months to ensure that Parliament has been able to debate the measure as effectively as possible.

The quality of the debate has been down to them, and we should put our tribute on record. I know that hon. Members have received invaluable information from voluntary groups which represent disabled people in their constituencies, which have been able to pinpoint how it will affect constituents specifically. That case work will come back to haunt the Government when the Bill becomes law in April 1995.

What is absolutely clear, and what has formed the backcloth to the deliberations, is that the Bill has been introduced not because the Government believe that they have to consider carefully and to rationalise benefit to disabled people, but because they have been told clearly and brutally by the Treasury that they have to make cuts in their departmental budget, and they have seen disabled people as a soft target.

They have used the invalidity benefit scheme without proper analysis or proper understanding of the needs of disabled people who are currently in receipt of invalidity benefit. They did not have a complete understanding of the nature of someone going on to invalidity benefit, or of the disjointed nature of those people's opportunities to return to the employment market.

There has been no recognition by the Government that, in the current climate of 3 million to 4 million unemployed people, having a medical test which enables a functional assessment of whether people can cope, not only with their current career, but with a sudden exposure to the all-work test, will mean that any job which may become available —I stress may—will, somehow, become available. In reality, with mass unemployment, that hope will not come to fruition for disabled people.

People will be denied incapacity benefit; and not only will they have to go on to the unemployment register but, as analysis of the legislation over the coming years will show, it is most likely that they will become the long-term unemployed of the future. There will not be opportunities for them in the employment market, despite any attempts that the Government may make on access schemes for returning to work.

When employers are looking for flexibility, and want to drive down wages because of the additional costs and burdens arising from the shift of sick pay on to their budgets, they will not want to employ people with disabilities.

Mr. Wicks: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would take a comprehensive Government programme across Departments to ensure that people with disabilities, many of whom will fail the new medical test, receive training for work in the current difficult economic circumstances? Does he further agree that there has been no sign whatever of the Government's taking a comprehensive approach to that important problem?

Mr. Bradley: I fully support what my hon. Friend says. The Government ask the Opposition what we would do. We are conducting a review within a comprehensive framework. One cannot consider benefits in isolation: one must consider training and employment as a whole, and the economy in general. That is what the Labour party is undertaking, and we shall make our proposals for the benefits system, including benefits for disabled people, in due course when the overall review is completed.

Our purpose now is to oppose what the Government are introducing—to oppose not only the medical tests, which are nonsense in the context of the real world of employment, but the cuts in benefits. We have emphasised, and the Minister has honestly admitted, that the Bill is about more than ensuring that the new incapacity benefit goes only to people who pass the medical test. As the Minister has readily confessed, it is also about reducing the amount of money available for people on the new benefit.

Conservative Members must be absolutely clear what they will be voting for. They will be voting to introduce a new benefit for people with disabilities that will be paid at a lower rate than that received by people currently in receipt, and genuinely in need, of invalidity benefit.

When their constituents ask them why they are receiving less money than someone else who has genuinely been assessed as entitled to the previous invalidity benefit, Conservative Members must not say that they did not know that that would happen. It has been made perfectly clear that, having got through the hoop of the medical test, people will still receive the new incapacity benefit at a lower rate, and there will be other significant changes.

We have touched on the subject of additional pensions. We can argue about their role within the overall contributory benefits system, but we must stress that the new benefit will include no age allowance for women claimants between 45 and 55—or up to 60 for men. There will also be a lower level of benefit between the 28th and the 52nd week of the claim, and there will be no dependant's allowance for people under 60 without children.

It must be clear to Conservative Members that they are voting for that cut in benefits. They must also be clear that they are voting for medical tests that neither hon. Members nor you, Madam Speaker, have yet had the opportunity to see. We do not know how the medical tests will work in practice. When he opened the debate, the Minister said that it was unfortunate that we were having to debate the legislation before the consultation on the medical tests had been completed.

It was in the Government's hands how they timetabled the legislation. Surely it would have been more sensible to complete the consultation on the medical test, and allow all hon. Members to review it and give their views in the normal way. The Government could then have brought forward the final decisions on the medical test, so that the test could have been debated in the light of the other changes that they wish to make on incapacity benefit.

It was in the Government's hands to bring forward the medical test in that manner, rather than steamroller the Bill

through in unseemly haste, without any real understanding of its implications, and having to rely on regulation after regulation being tabled in the coming months and years to ensure that in some way they can skew the new benefit to meet their financial targets. That will be the purpose of the medical test.

The Government claim to have a proud record on increases in the money available for disabled people. That may have been true at one time, but the sorry story is that, over the past few months, the Government have set about dismantling the support for disabled people and the benefits generally available through the welfare state.

Mr. Scott *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Bradley: The Minister shakes his head. He proudly introduced—we supported him on this—the independent living fund. Because of the financial success of the fund, because of the number of claimants who are benefiting from it, and because of the number of people who are able to live more independently in their own homes as a result of a cash contribution from the fund, what did the Government do? The Treasury said that the fund was successful, but it was costing money, so the Government would have to cut it. That was the first stage in the process of dismantling benefits for disabled people. This Bill is the next stage.

I know that the Minister sits there with a heavy hear having to listen to this debate. I believe that he would have liked to fight the Treasury, but he was overruled because of the Government's economic incompetence and the promises they made at the last general election—they believed that they would be able to fool the electorate into believing this—that the economy was sound and public finances were sound.

We knew that that was not the case, and now we must suffer the consequences of their decisions. But we are not the ones who will suffer—the people with disabilities will suffer. The most vulnerable people in our society will suffer from the Government's incompetence.

It must be clear to all hon. Members that, when they vote to implement the legislation, they are voting to cut the amount of money that will be available for disabled people in their constituencies. Hon. Members should not believe that work will be found for disabled people. They know from the cases they deal with, and from the high levels of unemployment throughout the country, that job opportunities for people with disabilities are at the very least tenuous.

Throughout the proceedings on this Bill, we continued vigorously to oppose what the Government are doing. We were determined to tell the British people that the defence of benefits, the defence of the needs of the most vulnerable and the defence of disability benefits is in the hands of the Labour party.

People cannot trust the Government. The dismantling of disability benefit will continue. *[Interruption.]* The Under-Secretary will be the first to start screaming when his constituents in Bury, North come to him about this matter. He will be the one on local television and in the local media saying, "It wasn't me. I didn't know what I was doing. I apologise to my constituents." However, they know who the guilty people are. We will continue to oppose the Bill, root and branch, and ensure that the defence of disabled people remains in the safe hands of the Labour party.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:

The House divided: Ayes 302, Noes 276.

Division No. 156] **[10 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Ellerton, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'sh'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bex'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheff'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert

Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should like to raise with you the question of lying. I understand that lying in the House is totally out of order, and any hon. Member who accused another hon. Member of lying would immediately be asked to withdraw the remark or to leave the House. Today, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that Ministers are sometimes entitled to lie to the House. Would you deprecate any lying, whether by a Minister or anyone else? If there were lying, would we be in a position to say so?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will recall that whatever took place today did so in Committee. I have already made it clear today on another issue that this is an internal affair in that Committee. If anything has gone wrong in the Committee, it is for the Committee to report to the entire House, in which case I will deal with it; but it is for the Committee to deal with anything at this stage.

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Watford): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. In the event that you were to investigate the point of order raised by the hon. Gentlemen, no doubt you would realise that the Chancellor of the Duchy, far from condoning the practice mentioned, said that the only circumstances in which he could envisage its being justified were when a Chancellor of the Exchequer was faced with difficulties in the market; and he quoted a number of Labour Chancellors.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to allow discussion on this. I have made my ruling and explained the procedure to the House.

Pastoral (Amendment) Measure

10.15 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): I beg to move,

That the Pastoral (Amendment) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

The Measure consists of a number of detailed amendments to the Pastoral Measure 1983; hence its short title. The common thread that runs through all those amendments is that they bear upon the disposal of redundant Church of England churches. I hope too that it will be a common thread uniting us all in the House that the future of our church buildings in England is not merely of concern to the Church of England but affects our wider English society as a whole.

Our parish churches are part of our national heritage and are often highly valued as a focus for the life of many local communities. The Measure would make the best possible arrangement for the future of those buildings and everything associated with them in the very few cases where they can no longer be used for their original purpose. To put matters in perspective, I should inform the House that, of some 16,000 Church of England churches, some 20 to 30 are declared redundant each year and 10 to 20 new places of worship are opened each year.

Both the Church of England General Synod and our own Ecclesiastical Committee saw the Measure as acceptable, desirable and non-controversial. Many of its new provisions stem from a report produced by Mr. Richard Wilding in 1990 at the joint request of the Government and the Church Commissioners. Those provisions, together with other parts of the Measure, are explained in detail in the comments and explanations furnished by the General Synod and annexed to our Ecclesiastical Committee's report. In view of the comparatively late hour I shall not attempt to expound all the provisions in detail, but it may be helpful if I highlight two or three aspects of the Measure.

The Measure contains positive provisions for safeguarding what the Pastoral Measure 1983 called "redundant" churches. For example, it provides for a new source of finance to help dioceses with the interim repair and maintenance of those buildings, when declared redundant, until a final decision is taken about their future, and it strengthens the covenants that protect the building in the hands of any new owner. A number of sections deal with the redundant churches fund, the body that exists to preserve carefully selected churches for which a new use cannot be found but which are of such historical and archaeological interest and/or architectural quality that they ought to be preserved, in the interests of the nation and of the Church of England.

That fund is financed partly by the Church Commissioners and partly by the Government, so it exemplifies the partnership between Church and state in dealing with that part of our heritage. The fund now has almost 300 churches in its care and it is about to celebrate its 25th anniversary. As well as helping the fund to perform its functions even more effectively and to make the best possible use of its resources, the Measure also gives the fund a new name—the Churches Conservation Trust—which emphasises more positively the nature of its work and the fact that the buildings under its care are no longer "redundant" but have taken on new leases of life as assets in perpetuity for the benefit of the Church, the nation and the relevant local community. I am sure that the House will agree that the churches conservation trust is a more positive-sounding title than the redundant churches fund.

Our Ecclesiastical Committee, in its report on the Measure, draws attention to the ecological importance of churchyards and burial grounds. Although their primary purpose is obviously as a resting place for the bodies of the deceased, it is very much in accordance with the Christian view of things that they should be places not only of death, but of life.

It may surprise some of my honourable colleagues to learn that many of our churchyards are sanctuaries for a rich variety of wildlife, which is finding it ever more difficult to survive elsewhere, especially in urban environments. I am glad to be able to assure the House that the Measure takes care to ensure that nothing threatens or undermines that living dimension of churchyards. Indeed, the Church of England and organisations associated with it are taking active steps to encourage wildlife conservation in our churchyards and to provide relevant information and advice. I have placed a few examples of the material that is now available in the Library for those Members who wish to pursue the subject.

As I have already explained, the Measure is positive, forward-looking and uncontroversial and deals with something that is of concern to the Church of England and the wider community. I therefore commend it warmly to the House and invite my colleagues to supprt the Measure and the motion standing in my name.

10.21 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am obliged to the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison). He has presented the measure to the House in fair and reasonable terms and I think that the House will give him cause to feel justified that he can secure majority support for the Measure. Without being excessively partisan, I might say that there will be more Conservative Members attending a debate about redundant churches than there would be for a debate about human redundancies, but that would be to stray into areas of conjecture and argument which may not be appropriate. Suffice it to say that the measure deserves to be accepted.

It is right that we should be concerned about the future of those churches which are surplus to requirement, whether it be because of a shift in population or a marked decline in attendance, but the right hon. Member for Selby was right to remind us that new churches are being established even when old ones are redundant. Churches are important, as the right hon. Gentleman says: not merely do they serve as places of worship, often for centuries, but they are of enormous architectural merit and even with declining attendances their importance in the local community remains significant.

The Government sometimes have most peculiar views about the teaching of history. It seems to be rather less fashionable than it used to be and some of the things that the Government want children to start studying are rather quaint. I know that one or two Conservative Members who were involved closely in education will share my view that history which does not place the local community at its heart is not necessarily relevant to the child or to the community.

The parish church is often extremely important in any study of local history, not merely because of the memorials to the locally great and good that can be found on the church fabric, but because the church was the heart of community life. It was the centre of local administration in the past. Architecturally, it was important not merely because of its aesthetic qualities but because the community, through sacrifice, often ensured that the building was created as a work of art and a landmark.

Without the spires and towers of parish churches in the east of England where the land is flat and relatively featureless, the landscape would seem much more barren and less pleasing to the eye. Although the population in some of those districts may have departed, to be replaced in some cases by occupants of holiday caravans in the summer, the church is still important because it serves as a landmark, a focal point and something to grace the landscape.

Churches exists not simply to adorn our countryside, although it is useful that every three or four miles a parish church stands with spire or tower as an attractive part of our heritage. I only regret that the House has not afforded a Second Reading to my hedgerows measure, which would have complemented parish churches. Some Conservative Members may come to regret their decision to block my Bill.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is deviating from the subject.

Mr. Hardy: I regret that deviation, Madam Speaker.

I am delighted that the right hon. Member for Selby referred to the change in title, because it is entirely appropriate. I am also glad that I took part in the discussion on the Ecclesiastical Committee, when I spoke in recognition of the fact that the buildings and land around churchyards are important.

As more wealthy members of our community move away from towns and into the countryside, derelict farm buildings are rapidly becoming less derelict and are likely to be modernised. The habitat of ruined barns or derelict farm buildings is disappearing fast, as is the population of barn owls. Redundant churches and parish churches that remain a vibrant part of the community may soon provide the only habitat for the barn owls that remain. Their population has dramatically diminished in many parts of England in the past few years, perhaps because of the shift of Conservative supporters from town to countryside. To some extent, the Measure makes up for that shift in population, which may sometimes be regarded as regrettable.

As the right hon. Gentleman said, churchyards are not merely repositories for the dead or places where the bones of the "village Hampden" remain interred, if I may quote Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard", which remains one of the finest poems written in the English language. It gives a flavour to the historic and social importance of the land around our churches. It is right that the fund should have a new title so that those responsible for it will be reminded of the value of our churchyards.

As the right hon. Gentleman recognised, the natural history aspect of redundant churches can be vital. Those that are redundant in the middle of a town provide peace and sanctuary, and are commendable. In the countryside, which is often featureless, barren and, in some areas, increasingly deprived of natural historic interest, the remaining churches can be extremely useful.

The change in the title and the amended arrangements included in the Measure deserve to be approved. I join the right hon. Gentleman in commending the Measure to the House.

10.28 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I gladly support what the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has said. Indeed, he uttered hardly a word with which I did not totally agree.

This is a good Measure and it is important that the House approves it. But this may be an appropriate opportunity to recognise the fact that we shall face increasing problems in the coming years in maintaining the fabric of our historic churches. As the hon. Member for Wentworth just said, they are frequently the central buildings in villages and towns, a focal point and, collectively, the glory of English architecture. But they are incredibly expensive to maintain. The drift away from many town centres and villages means that more and more churches will be considered for redundancy. I hate to use the word in this context, but it is now a familiar one.

The problem at its most acute is to be seen in the recent report on London churches. The city contains some of the greatest churches in the country, a number of which—if the report recently produced by Lord Templeman is implemented—will cease to exist. It is an appropriate time to recognise that, as well as the fact that the House will have to return to the subject on numerous occasions.

We now have state aid for churches that are in use, which is good, but insufficient. If we believe that we are dealing with some of the glories of English architecture and accept, as I certainly do, that no nation that allows Salisbury cathedral or Sherborne abbey to crumble deserves to call itself civilised, we must recognise our obligation. That duty has been increased by the financial mismanagement of the Church of England in recent months. There has been an appalling waste of resources. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends on the Front Bench might find not the subject either interesting nor important, but some of us do. The financial problems of the Church of England will make the difficulty of maintaining our historic churches that much greater.

There are other problems. I fervently hope that the concept of the two integrities works and that both those who welcome the ordination of women and those who do not can still continue to worship side by side in the Church of England. But we are already beginning to see a drift from the Church. Although the hon. Member for Wentworth and I took different sides of that argument in the Ecclesiastical Committee, we recognise the common problem. If there is a drift away from the Church, it will accentuate the difficulties that the Church faces in maintaining its historic buildings.

I wanted to put down one or two markers this evening. My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), who introduced the Measure with commendable brevity and his usual lucidity, will, I hope, talk with his fellow Commissioners about the difficulties and ensure that we have opportunities to debate them again in future. The change of title of the redundant churches fund is entirely appropriate, and I welcome it. But that will not solve the

[Mr. Patrick Cormack]

problem of the maintenance of the fabric of our historic churches. It is merely a contribution which, although important, will not ensure that the buildings that grace so many of our towns and villages are secure into the next century. Without further assistance from Church and state they will not exist.

In approving the Measure tonight, I hope that we will not think that we are solving the problem. We are contributing towards its solution, but the problem will grow as the years pass. We shall see the problem at its most acute in the city of London. The way in which it is tackled there will be tremendously important for the future of the Church of England and its buildings.

10.33 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I should declare an interest, albeit not a financially beneficial one, as a trustee of the Historic Chapels Trust, which is referred to in embryo form in the appendix to the Ecclesiastical Committee's report that accompanies the Measure. That report recomends that there should be a parallel organisation to the redundant churches fund to exercise a similar role in relation to places of worship other than those of the established Church. I serve under our former colleague Sir Hugh Rossi on that trust, which was set up to do precisely that job.

I and my right hon. and hon. Friends welcome the Measure and the useful development in the framework within which the redundant churches fund operates. We welcome the fact that one feature of the Measure is that it can co-operate more fully with the Historic Chapels Trust.

The Historic Chapels Trust is in a more difficult position than the historic churches fund because it does not have the procedures for acquiring churches—we have no purchase price—which the redundant churches fund has. In certain circumstances, a church is made over to the redundant churches fund for care; it must then care for it using funds that come jointly from Church and state. It does an extremely good job. The fact that our trust has been formed on the basis of an analogy of that body is a tribute to its good work over the years and the respect in which it is held.

I have visited many of the churches held in trust by the redundant churches fund and it does a first-class job. We have to find funds with which to acquire important historic chapels; we have either to raise money to do so or to hope that they will be handed on.

Some denominations do not consider themselves to be in a position to hand over their buildings; indeed, they need to realise the sale price of the building or land to finance other developments. So they are in a position even more intense than that described in the City of London, where to some extent the other churches in the diocese are looking to benefit from the endowments of those churches. In the case of Nonconformist chapels, the actual value of the land and building is also at stake.

I welcome the change of name included in the Measure. The new name more accurately reflects the work which the former redundant churches fund has done and I welcome the greater flexibility and smoother handover of churches for which the Measure provides.

The redundant churches fund and the Historic Chapels Trust share responsibility for buildings which deserve to be maintained without drastic alteration. There are quite a few churches which, if made redundant, can be put to another use and can be adapted. Some good and sensitive schemes have maintained particularly the external appearance of a building. There are several in my constituency. We might regret seeing a church passing out of use, but those schemes represent a sensible alternative.

The churches which the fund is dealing with and the chapels that gradually will be acquired by the Historic Chapels Trust need to be kept as they are. They reflect traditions and styles of worship; they contain fitments and works of such quality that ought to be retained; they illustrate much of our history; they are archaeologically significant. Therefore, to convert them would be unacceptable. That is the common thread which runs through the work of both bodies.

Clause 2(2)(c) specifically opens the way to co-operation between the redundant churches fund and the Historic Chapels Trust. For example, we might ask the Churches Conservation Trust—the former RCF—to help us in the management of a particular building if it had others in the immediate neighbourhood, and it would be a more practical arrangement for it to keep an eye on the building for us. Such mutual agreement and understanding is much facilitated by the measure. Therefore, I am pleased that it is gaining support in the House.

Let me refer to one or two specific problems. The first lies precisely at the bridge between our two bodies—the problem of private chapels, where worship has been according to the rites of the Church of England.

Chapels of ease, or privately owned places of worship, are firmly part of the history and tradition of the Church of England. However, they are not eligible to be transferred to the redundant churches fund because they are private chapels. They are not really a priority for the historic chapels fund, as it has the charge of all the other denominations, including Jewish synagogues, to consider. Chapels which have been places of Church of England worship would be a strange application of priorities for a body with such limited resources.

In the first few months of the Historic Chapels Trust, we had just such a case; the Church of St. John the Baptist, Matlock, Bath, which is a notable building and very much part of the Church of England, but which happened to be a private chapel—a chapel of ease. Thankfully, it has been taken on by the Friends of Friendless Churches—another invaluable organisation. But it fell between our two bodies. The redundant churches fund must look again at the problem of the chapels of ease, which form part of the Church of England tradition. Because the redundant churches fund has the best accumulation of experience and understanding, it should take care of them. It is not appropriately a job for the historic chapels fund.

The issue of City churches was referred to by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). I was surprised to find that the redundant churches fund was so rarely mentioned in debates and discussions following the publication of the Templeman report. That might have been because quite a lot of the initial criticism of the report came from those who hoped that not so many churches as is envisaged would be made redundant.

I share the hope that a larger number will remain in use for worship. I particularly hope that arrangements that now exist for the use of some of those City churches by other denominations will continue—for example, St. Nicholas's by the Free Presbyterians; St. Benet's, Paul's Wharf for

Welsh services; and St. Anne and St. Agnes for Lutheran services. I very much hope that those arrangements will continue, perhaps in some new form, if the status of those churches changes.

If it is anything to go by, the list of churches falls precisely into the category that I mentioned earlier; churches that must not be significantly altered, because their interiors as well as exteriors are so important, partly because of the sheer quality of the work that they contain, but partly also because they represent a style, tradition and layout of buildings for worship which was so much swept away by the Oxford movement, the "Ecclesiologist" magazine and all that flowed from that, and which is therefore so little apparent.

Anyone who looks at the physical appearance of Church of England buildings sees it through a Victorian glass. It is seen through what happened in the 19th century. One has to pick out a limited number of churches, many of them concentrated in the City, to have any understanding of what the Church of England was like in the two preceding centuries. Therefore, those buildings and their interiors are particularly important.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): One of the things that knits the architectural and building importance with the importance of retaining churches for worship is that many of the communities—for example, the Welsh community and, in the case of St. Anne and St. Agnes, the Lutheran community—combine a centre for community worship in a city which otherwise does not afford them a church of their own, and in a structure and environment in which they feel comfortable. That is uniquely the case in capital cities that require more diversity of church provision than elsewhere.

Mr. Beith: I agree, and I hope that none of these nominations will be driven out by new arrangements that result from the Templeman report or by greatly increased costs that might result from it. It is possible under both the redundant churches fund and the Historic Chapels Trust for buildings still to be made available for worship from time to time, but both bodies avoid being put in the situation for which they are not designed—maintaining buildings that are in normal regular use for worship. That is the job of neither body. They would have to be differently constituted if that was their purpose.

The fund will have to consider City churches. Let us look at the Wren churches with notable interiors—St. Mary Abchurch; St. Benet's, Paul's Wharf, which I have already mentioned because of its Welsh use. It is a lovable church, both externally and internally. Most hon. Members probably see it only as they go along that elevated stretch of road beside the Mermaid theatre. The lovely little brick church below them has a wonderful interior as well as its charming exterior. The churches of St. Peter, Cornhill, St. Mary-at-hill, and St. Margaret, Lothbury, have remarkable interiors as well as exteriors. I therefore think that the fund may well have to involve itself in at least some of them unless different results come from the Templeman report than we expected.

The redundant churches fund does not operate in Wales, but the representative body of the church in Wales has now set about creating an alternative to it. That is more or less in operation. That has, quite properly, led a Select Committee to make clear the need for a body on the Nonconformist and "other denominations" side, paralleling the fund being set up to deal with the churches of the Church in Wales. A recent report from the Committee put that view quite strongly.

I am sorry that no Minister from even the Department of National Heritage, let alone the Welsh Office, is present. I hope that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, whose constituency contains a number of very interesting churches and chapels, will pass on my comments to those concerned. I also hope that the Welsh Office will look favourably on the work done by the parallel body to the redundant churches fund in Wales, and also consider the need to create something similar to the Historic Chapels Trust in that country—whose many chapels cannot possibly be sustained by today's worshipping congregations.

A characteristic of chapel building in both England and Wales—as of church building in the City—was its almost competitive nature. In a number of instances, more buildings were put up than were probably ever needed: it is not just a question of decline. We have inherited that problem, but some of the buildings are of such importance and distinction that we must take very good care of them.

I welcome the work that the redundant churches fund is doing. I also welcome the measure, which I believe will help it in that work, and the co-operation in which it can engage with the Historic Chapels Trust and similar bodies in Wales—if they are created, as I hope they will be.

10.45 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): First, let me say how grateful we should be to all those who have managed to keep churches throughout England out of the hands of the redundant churches fund, and who manage to raise the money—with great community effort—to keep those churches available not only to the present generation, but to future generations.

Any hon. Member who wishes to see that in action need only visit St. Anne's in the South Lambeth road, which will show them what a poor community has managed to achieve—with the help of some grant-giving bodies, but also with great enthusiasm on the part of a small number of activists and a larger number who hold the church in great affection.

Let me also say how grateful the House will be to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), and to others who pay attention to these issues—on the Ecclesiastical Committee and elsewhere. I do not think that the House takes for granted the Committee's residual role in dealing with the changes to canonical and synodical measures. On behalf of those present and not present, let me thank my right hon. Friend for his competence: we are grateful to him, and to those who advise him on matters both controversial and non-controversial.

10.46 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): We should welcome the measure, but let me introduce a note of caution. Regular readers of *Private Eye's* "Nooks and Crannies" will know that perfectly good churches have often been subject to various manoeuvres in an attempt to make them redundant and eventually—through a number of procedures, including a recommendation by the advisory board—to have them demolished. I hope that the report means that the Church of England will make a more

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

determined effort to provide for the preservation of valuable sites, rather than yielding to the entreaties of Mammon. The Church, like many other organisations, faces a shortage of money.

Whatever our views on religion, the fact remains that many churches are a focal and important part of the town or landscape. They are objects of beauty, which were established with great affection—both by the patrons who provided the money, and by those who built them. We should not ignore that; wherever possible, we should try to treasure and preserve such churches.

I hope that the change in the title of the Churches Conservation Trust represents an important change of emphasis in an area of difficulty, which I recognise. Churches are sometimes very large, and expensive to maintain and heat. I agree with the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley): often dwindling congregations have raised the money to keep such churches in existence. If that happens, so much the better, because it was the original purpose.

Although the churches may be very roomy during some services, that is none the less the best use for the buildings. It is often difficult to find an alternative use for a redundant church and at the same time retain some of the dignity and elegance with which the church was originally built. For example, burning rubber tyres in the aisle of an abandoned church may not be the most dignified use to which a building can be put.

It is important that the Church of England makes an effort at conservation, rather than face the possibility of making more churches redundant than is strictly necessary, which is what the Templeman report for the City of London implied would happen.

Chapels have been mentioned. The independent Upper chapel at Heckmondwike is a beautiful chapel which was made redundant many years ago. Its interior was ripped out and sold by the trustees, despite the fact that it was a grade II listed building, which means that the interior should have been retained. It is not a Church of England establishment, but it represented the aspirations of its builders to be seen as just as important as the Church of England. Observers might mistakenly think that it does belong to the Church of England because of the theological dispute that was current in the 19th century.

The chapel has lingered on, but not because of its owners, who regard it as merely so many bricks and pieces of stone held together by mortar, and, I suppose, see it as coming between them and God. For people who attend church, it is an important building that should be retained. It is one of two remaining grade II listed buildings in Heckmondwike, so, if it were demolished, 50 per cent. would go at one fell swoop,

The chapel has been retained because of the local authority's persistence in refusing to give listed building consent. Credit is due to the authority for the fact that, despite criticism, attacks and suggestions in the press that the redundant building should be flattened, it is still standing. I hope that it will be converted into something useful, such as flats.

At one time, a firm was involved—I hope that it still is—which has a reputation for doing decent conversions of churches into something that people need and want. I highlight that possibility as an illustration of a grade II listed building that there has been pressure to demolish. I hope that the measure that we are discussing means that we are casting aside the attitude that churches are finished with once worship ceases in them. We should redouble our efforts to ensure that they are retained for a decent and useful purpose.

Mr. Beith: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman mentioned the Upper chapel at Heckmondwike, whose story has been tragic. I hope that he will take some consolation from the fact that the Historic Chapels Trust is taking on not only a small former Quaker meeting house in Farfield near Bradford but the magnificent and enormous Unitarian church in Todmorden, with which he will certainly be familiar and which it was far beyond the resources of its existing congregation to maintain.

Mr. Cryer: There is some good news about. I do not want to repeat myself, but I hope that the measure reflects a change of heart because there have been some depressing reports in *Private Eye* to the effect that some valuable buildings have been discarded and, unfortunately, found their way on to the scrap heap. That is something to be avoided, so I hope that the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) can assure us that the Measure represents an improvement in the spirit of the Church.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Pastoral (Amendment) measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

PROCEDURE

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. Raymond S. Robertson be discharged from the Select Committee on Procedure and Mr. Alan Duncan be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

EMPLOYMENT

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. Andrew Robathan be discharged from the Employment Committee and Mr. David Nicholson be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

AGRICULTURE

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. Martyn Jones be discharged from the Agriculture Committee and Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Ambulance Personnel (Long-service Awards)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10.54 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health for coming to the House.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): It is a pleasure.

Mr. Shepherd: I am glad that it is a pleasure, because it is also a pleasure for me to discuss an important and much-neglected subject, which may be small in span, but which means a great deal to many people.

My hon. Friend will know, as one who regularly walks through the Palace that at the entrance to the Terrace, there is a magnificent display of medals, which cover examples of virtually all the medals in existence, and many that used to be awarded. There are two spaces in that display and they are significant. One of the spaces is for a medal which is in existence, but is not displayed; one is because no medal exists. There is an existing medal for long service and good conduct in the fire brigade.

The medal which exists and is not displayed is the police service long service and good conduct medal, but the medal which is missing is for the ambulance service long service and good conduct medal. Tonight I want to address that piece.

My introduction to and contact with the ambulance service began some 20 years ago, when I came into the House. Before that, my only contact with the ambulance service was as a client at the age of eight when tender hands picked me off a fence on which I had impaled myself. I was enormously grateful and I am still most grateful for their care now.

My good friend and helper in the constituency, Harold Morgan, was a leading ambulance man who inducted me into the mysteries of the ambulance service, for which I have enormous gratitude. I remarked to him that I had not received a single complaint of failure on the part of the ambulance front-line personal of the Hereford and Worcester ambulance service in the entire time that I have been in the House. There may have been criticisms sometimes about shortcomings in administration, but the record of the ambulance men on wheels or on the ground is clean and remarkable and I can only call it meritorious conduct.

I pass the ambulance station outside Hereford each time on my way into the city. As all of us who represent rural constituencies know, we travel a great deal around them and I pass that station often. I cannot help but think every time I do so that it is all too easy to take those people and that service for granted. It may be right that we should take the service for granted, but I do not think that it is right to take the personnel for granted. We ask them to do a great deal for us and, on occasions, when we are in no condition to do it for ourselves.

I can do no better than to demonstrate the regard with which the ambulance personnel are held—certainly in my part of the world and I have no reason to believe that it is any different anywhere else—by quoting from a letter written by a general practitioner from Ledbury, which is not in my constituency, but is not a million miles from it. The letter concerns the service of leading ambulance man Kevin Pendlebury Bowe and alas, was read at his funeral on 1 March.

The general practitioner wrote:

"Although all the local ambulancemen inspire confidence, the sight of Kevin arriving during a tricky situation always allowed us to breathe a sigh of relief. He was unflappable, good humoured and supremely competent. He obviously took a great interest in his work as a paramedic—he was one of the first of this relatively new breed of ambulancement that we came across—but he always excelled. This was never at the expense of compassion and of this I can speak as one of his transported patients as well as a colleague."

My understanding of my constituents and others who are in the ambulance service is that that is not necessarily exceptional. It is the rule. I can think of no better tribute.

One of the great mysteries is why we are discussing the subject at all. I look in the telephone directory and see that the advice for emergencies is to ring 999 for the police, fire and ambulance services. Those are all front-line civilian services. Perhaps the work of the police is that much closer to the front of our consciousness because it is extremely well covered by the media—sometimes I think that, for the police's sake, it may be too well covered, but that is another story.

The fire brigade always makes marvellous television, with big red fire engines, flashing lights, great turntable ladders, belching hoses, people running about, smoke and fire. That is all good stuff, with drama and visual impact, and it is always effective.

However, always in the background is the ambulance service. It is the ambulance men who have to pick up the bits—often the bloody bits. As that involves intensely personal suffering and agony, we are usually treated only to the sight of a stretcher being loaded into the ambulance and the doors being shut. Nobody really understands the extent to which the ambulance personnel are involved.

As for comparability, the police are often exposed to violence and to physical and psychological risk. No one gainsays that; theirs is a difficult profession. Firemen, too, are frequently at physical and psychological risk. We cannot ignore the dangers in areas afflicted by terrorism, where there is also the risk of violence. However, we must not forget that the discreet, unforthcoming ambulance personnel are also at risk of violence and of psychological trauma as they go about their work. As for physical risk, let us not forget that not so long ago an ambulance man was killed on active duty in Leicester.

In Northern Ireland the mischief of the terrorist is a particular hazard. Ambulance men are not alone in facing that; the police and the fire service also suffer—but they all find that it induces nervous stress. Even in tranquil Herefordshire, even in the calm pastures of my part of the world, ambulance personnel have been shot at in the course of their duty. Nowhere and nobody is free from that risk.

I mentioned the psychological risk. It could be said that continual attendance at nasty road traffic accidents hardens the mind and calluses the attitude, so that it all becomes just so much more meat. But I cannot accept that that is true. All three front-line services—the police, the fire brigade and the ambulance service—attend traffic accidents. They all have their parts to play, and the experience is always traumatic.

I have only to reflect back on especially horrendous incidents such as the recent tragic accident on the M40 involving a minibus full of schoolchildren from Hagley,

[Mr. Shepherd]

which caused immense traumatic stress among the ambulance personnel involved. Ambulance officers are then seriously involved in counselling to unscramble the psychological mess that has been created. The trauma cannot be overcome simply by hardening, callousness or anything of that kind. Those tragic events always get to people.

All the time, as the work goes on, there is a continuing growth of expertise, which is developed through training, training and more training. That shows in the results, in the performance and in the delivery of service.

There can be no doubt that there is comparability between the front-line services. Even if an ambulant man wrecks his back and injures himself to the extent of disablement, perhaps by lifting victims in awkward circumstances, so that he has to be moved from the front line to the lighter duties of taking non-ambulance patients from home to hospital, so be it. They are the sympathetic interface between the health service and patients, who are often elderly and confused. It is a help if people are transported with care, consideration, sympathy, friendliness and the skill which is so often shown.

I first started chasing this medal in the early 1980s. My instantly get-atable files are traceable to 1987, but I recollect that I started this in the early 1980s. I recall receiving a letter from the chief ambulance officer of the Hereford and Worcester ambulance service, Cliff Orme, dated 7 September 1977 in which he recalled our previous exchanges on this matter. He said:

"Sadly incidents such as the massacre at Hungerford . . . clearly indicate the danger and responsibilities facing ambulance services who work in the 'front line' with their colleagues in the other emergency services.

It has for some considerable time been the view throughout the rank and file of ambulance services in the U.K. that a long service medal should be awarded to ambulance staff, indeed Chief Ambulance Officers I know have pressed for this over a number of years without any success."

The chief ambulance officer also referred to a letter that I wrote to the Prime Minister in August 1987. The Prime Minister replied to me saying:

"This question has been considered several times in the past and most recently last year"—

that was 1986—

"Although there has been some sympathy with the suggestion, particularly in view of the dedicated service by ambulance staff, it has consistently been rejected mainly because it was felt it would be invidious to single out ambulance staff for such an award when many other groups of NHS staff give equally long and loyal service.

However the Secretary of State for Social Services recently asked officials to give further thought to the feasibility of a long service award for all NHS staff. In view of the number of interests involved, including possible repercussions on other public services, it will be some time before a final decision can be made."

I let that run while I waited for the consultation and discussions.

I then wrote again one year later. In a letter dated 19 July 1988, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who was then the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, said:

"I am afraid this process is taking some time, but we do hope to resolve this issue in the near future, and we will take account of the points you have made."

Time rode on and I had to take up the matter again. I controlled my patience as best I could. In November 1991, I wrote again to the Secretary of State for Health. The present Secretary of State, in her manifestation as Minister for Health, wrote a letter to me in December 1991 saying:

"The deliberations referred to in the then Prime Minister's letter to you of 18 September 1987 resulted in the conclusion that the introduction of a centrally sponsored long service award for NHS personnel generally would not be appropriate.

Further consideration is, however, now being given to the possibility of introducing a long service and good conduct award solely for front line staff in the emergency ambulance service, similar to the Crown awards already granted to members of the police service and fire brigades. A specialist working group has recently been set up to consider this, and held its first meeting on 2 December."

I thought that progress was being made and we were getting there but it was not so.

I let that run for a little while until I took the matter up with my hon. Friend the Minister who is here tonight. He wrote to me, referring to a letter that I had written to the Secretary of State in May 1993. I must compliment my hon. Friend—he must soon be qualifying for his own long service and good conduct medal in the Department of Health. He said:

"The working group"—

mentioned in the Secretary of State's letter of 6 December 1991—

"completed its work last year and recommended that a Crown recognised Long Service and Good Conduct Medal should be instituted for staff who have served for 25 years in the emergency ambulance service. I am inclined to accept the report's recommendations but have first asked officials to consult NHS management about the report."

I drew attention to my concern that 25 years was a long time, given the physical work involved and given the comparison with the armed services, which has 18 years, and the fire service, which has 20 years. I said that most people entering the ambulance service came in as mature people aged about 25. Therefore the chance of reaching 25 years—that is, 50 years of age—without doing themselves an injury was going to be difficult.

I am pleased to say that my hon. Friend the Minister responded to the point for one reason or another—maybe I was not alone in making it. My hon. Friend wrote to me on 25 August 1993 saying that I would be pleased to know that, following the consultation exercise, officials were drawing up a formal proposal for a medal to be

"on the basis of a qualifying period of 20 years, on a par with the Fire Service".

I fel that that was good news. I waited in keen expectation and anticipation, but, not hearing anything, I took the matter up again at the start of this year.

My hon. Friend again responded to me with a letter on 17 February. He said:

"I am pleased to say that a proposal for a Crown-recognised Long Service and Good Conduct Medal has been forwarded to the appropriate quarter for consideration and it is hoped that this will result in a positive recommendation to the Queen."

My hon. Friend went on to say that there were

"many hurdles to be overcome"

before he could say whether the proposal would be accepted.

My purpose tonight, after my rather long preamble, is to say that the ambulance service has been patient. There have been many hurdles, consultations and considerations and still we are going to the "appropriate quarter" and there are "many hurdles" to be overcome.

Will my hon. Friend give an insight into what the appropriate quarters for consideration might be? What are the many hurdles which have yet to be overcome? I would

like to know how to address the hurdles? What must I do to try to secure a well-deserved medal for long service and meritorious conduct in the ambulance service?

It has long been the wish of the ambulance service that it be regarded equivalently with the police and fire services, and I hope I have demonstrated its patience. In a sense of frustration some years ago, the chief ambulance officers themselves recognised that yearning and introduced their own recognition of long service and good conduct. However, we all know that that is less satisfactory than the real thing—the Queen's award or the royal warrant—which I am seeking tonight.

My hon. Friend will appreciate that the chief ambulance officers' award cannot be worn on the left breast, but must appear on the right. That may make it stand out in a crowd, but there will always be the feeling that it is somehow second best, and that the best really should have pride of place on the left breast, as is the case with other medals and in other services.

We might be treading tonight down a path which has been trodden before. The 12th stricture of the royal warrant for the fire brigade long service and good conduct medal is that it is a condition of the award

"that the grant of any unofficial or local long service or good conduct medal for wear in such a Brigade shall be discontinued, and that any unofficial or local long service medals, if already granted, should not be worn by a recipient of Our Fire Brigade Long Service and Good Conduct Medal."

I am certain that those who wear the unofficial good conduct and long service medal would gladly put it to one side in favour of something which held the royal warrant, which they could wear with even greater pride.

The royal warrant for the fire brigade medal seems to me to be an excellent model for the derivation of a royal warrant for an ambulance service long service and good conduct medal, and perhaps that could be used quickly. On 1 June 1994, it will be the 40th anniversary of the institution of a medal

"honouring those who have rendered long and meritorious service as members of the Fire Brigades of the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands".

I am sure that the police and fire services will join enthusiastically in celebrating the inclusion of the ambulance service in this form of royal and public recognition. Can we celebrate that 40th anniversary with a birthday present for the ambulance service and fill the empty space at the entrance to the Terrace?

11.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): It is a pleasure to be here to reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd). I have never said that before about an Adjournment debate and I do not expect to do so again.

Ambulance men and women deeply deserve recognition for the wonderful service that they give to the public. I shall not attempt to match the eloquence with which my hon. Friend has described what they do, save to say that we have a magnificent ambulance service which has gone from strength to strength in recent years.

Many people have not yet become aware that in almost every front-line ambulance that answers a 999 call there is a paramedic—a man or woman who is highly trained in saving life through all sorts of manoeuvres and techniques that even a general practitioner might not always attempt. Indeed, it has sometimes been known for the general practitioner to defer to a paramedic on his or her arrival. Paramedics know precisely what to do to maintain life and to stabilise patients in those first vital moments after a medical emergency or an accident and before getting them to hospital.

Ambulance men and women deserve the great gratitude of the public. Many people, including my hon. Friend, have had first-hand experience of what they achieve and his area's ambulance service, the Hereford and Worcester, which is led by a legend in the ambulance world—Mr. Cliff Orme—is a very fine example. It has done extraordinary things to achieve high levels of performance in the time within which it responds to 999 calls. It has an excellent patient transport service for non-emergency cases and has gone further because it is at the forefront of involving the public in life-saving techniques. When I last visited that service I was told that 10 per cent. of the people in one large town in the area had received first aid training —a remarkable performance and one that is probably not matched anywhere else.

I am aware that Cliff Orme, in his distinguished time in charge of the Association of Chief Ambulance Officers, campaigned for the medal that we are discussing. In the short time remaining, I can tell my hon. Friend only that there has been progress. There has even been progress in achieving a Crown-recognised long service and good conduct medal since I last wrote to him. I cannot answer his question about the appropriate quarter to which the matter was forwarded, but such matters are processed somewhere in the Byzantine passages of the Cabinet Office, whence it will have to be forwarded to Her Majesty, whose ultimate decision it is.

I agree with my hon. Friend that there is every reason to think that the ambulance service should receive such recognition, in line with the fire, police and other services. I cannot say what the outcome will be, for the reasons that I have outlined, but I will do everything that I can to encourage the process.

In our role as junior Ministers—I think that we are sometimes described as "Parly Charlies"—we are always slightly insecure. In the presence of the Whip, I can say that we never know when we may be shuffled out or elsewhere, or when we may have to change our duties. However, in the remaining time for which I hope to stay in my role as a junior Health Minister with responsibility for the ambulance service, if I achieve one thing I hope that it is a long service and good conduct medal for that service.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 9 March 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 2) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Mr. Secretary Lang presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to British Railways (No. 2): And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Tuesday 15 March, and to be printed. [Bill 65.]

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 3) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Mr. Secretary Lang presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to British Railways (No. 3): And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Tuesday 15 March, and to be printed. [Bill 66.]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Investment

1. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the average investment per employee per annum in manufacturing in the period from 1987 to 1991.

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): During the period 1987-91, investment per employee in manufacturing averaged £2,700.

Mr. Cran: Despite progress, does my right hon. Friend agree with the aims of the National Manufacturing Council for the need to double investment in the next few years? Does he further agree that there has never been any excuse for investment such as our competitors achieve, because of the increased level of profitability that this country has had under this Conservative Government and the previous one?

Mr. Heseltine: I very much welcome the work of the National Manufacturing Council of the CBI and am much encouraged by the ambitious targets that it has set. I agree that the present economic statistics are as favourable as I can remember.

Mr. Cousins: Does not the President of the Board of Trade realise that the figures for investment per employee depend on the number of employees? Is he saying, therefore, that the 600 Pirelli workers in the cable factory at Eastleigh, who lost their jobs last year because there was no house building to support their cable production, were part of a cunning plan to improve British statistics?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that a major change is going on as British industry achieves higher levels of productivity. He would serve his country far better if he recognised the need to do that, and stopped making ridiculous party political points out of the exercise.

Mr. Jenkin: In promoting investment, may I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his speech last week in which he complained of Euro-sclerosis? Is not Euro-sclerosis bad for British investment? Will he join me in congratulating our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on maintaining the blocking minority in the Council of Ministers to stop damaging legislation coming—

Madam Speaker: Order. That does not relate one jot to the main question. The President will reply to the first part of the question, please.

Mr. Heseltine: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for his reference to the Stockton lecture that I gave last week. It is vital that the whole of the Community addresses the issue of competitiveness. From that we will all gain.

Small Firms (Interest Rates)

2. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the average rate of interest on loans from financial institutions to small firms and the average period for repayment.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): The most recent Bank of England study shows that the average margin over base rates is slightly under 3 per cent. for businesses with a turnover of less than £10 million. For term loans, 26 per cent. were repayable over a period of up to five years, and the remainder over longer periods with 15 per cent. repayable over periods exceeding 20 years.

Mr. Hain: It is difficult to reconcile the daily experience of small firms with the Minister's answer, because they are being strangled by short-term loans at prohibitively high interest rates that do not appear to bear any relation to the base rate. Why do not the Government establish new joint ventures with the financial institutions and the banks to provide long-term, low-cost finance, like our more successful competitor countries? Or is he happy to perpetuate the curse of the British economy—short-termism?

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman prepared his supplementary question before he heard the answer. What we have seen, and what the answer shows, is that many of the long-term loans are taken out on favourable conditions. We currently have the lowest base rate for some 20 years —5.5 per cent. That is welcomed by British industry.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: While one recognises the present very low base rates and low rates of inflation, which can only be good for investment intentions for small and other companies, does my hon. Friend recognise that there is a demand among smaller companies for longer-term, non-equity finance? In that regard, will he

accept our congratulations on the new venture capital trusts and ensure that those trusts look at amounts below £2 million, which will be relevant for smaller firms?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He rightly points out some of the schemes that have been taken forward—and, indeed, some that were announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his recent Budget statement.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the Minister acknowledge that as businesses benefit from the recovery, their ability to repay loans can be inhibited, because they are being squeezed by large companies by which they are owed money but which are slow in repaying it? What progress are the Government making towards presenting firm—as opposed to general—proposals to ensure that companies are not prevented from paying their debts because their customers do not pay them?

Mr. McLoughlin: As the hon. Gentleman will know, we are currently consulting about the problem of late debt payments. Overall, our information suggests that the position may not be as bad as it was, but I accept that it is a serious issue. Once our consultations are concluded, we shall announce our considered opinion.

Animal Traps

3. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many animal traps were exported from the United Kingdom in each of the last three years.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): The information requested is not available from official sources.

Mr. Banks: May I remind the Minister that in this country we still manufacture snares—which slaughter large numbers of wild animals—and leg traps? I know that the Minister is an animal lover; is it not inconsistent that leg traps, whose use is illegal in this country, should be exported, and will he close that loophole?

Mr. Needham: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. He will know, however, that the Department of Trade and Industry is not responsible for the design of animal traps, which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and that the Department of the Environment is responsible for United Kingdom policy within the European Union. I shall pass on the hon. Gentleman's comments to my right hon. Friends in those Departments.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in many parts of the world, rodents and other pests cost countries immense amounts of money, and also have a tremendous impact on food sources? Is it not good, therefore, that British manufacturers are supplying equipment to deal with the problem?

Mr. Needham: I hear what my hon. Friend says. I understand, however, that there are no significant exports of such traps from this country.

Gas Industry

4. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the regulation of the gas industry.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): Together with the Office of Gas Supply, I will shortly issue a consultation paper on the future regulation of the gas industry.

Mr. Lloyd: Is the Minister aware that, for a little more than 10 years, British Gas has operated a domestic meter replacement programme, which has undoubtedly been in the interests of the domestic consumer? Will he assure the House that, as that programme has begun to slip, he will take steps to ensure that the consumer interest is served, and British Gas returns to the programme that it originally promised?

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's concern, which relates particularly to a factory in his constituency. As he knows, this is a matter for British Gas and Ofgas, and I understand that discussions are in progress.

Mr. Ian Bruce: How has regulation of the gas industry compared with the days of public ownership, in terms of the delivery of better service and lower prices? Can anything be learned from our other denationalised industries?

Mr. Eggar: Since privatisation, domestic gas prices have fallen by more than 23 per cent. and industrial prices by more than 30 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Bennett: Is the Minister fully committed to ensuring that the Energy Saving Trust works effectively? If so, what steps will he take to ensure that the gas industry contributes financially to the trust, so that it can save energy, rather than allowing it to go on being wasted as it is now?

Mr. Eggar: I understand the importance that is attached to energy efficiency. The achievement of carbon savings by that means is one of our Rio commitments. Discussions are in progress with all interested parties.

Mr. Robin Cook: Is the Minister aware of the widespread disappointment that three of British Gas's five new business headquarters are located in the south-east, and that the furthest north is in Nottingham? Can he think of any reason, for business purposes, why British Gas should not put one of its headquarters in the region from which the gas comes, or where the majority of consumers are? Will he press British Gas—if it does not wish to become South-East Gas—to distribute its new area headquarters in the north, Scotland and Wales, to provide a regional identity that matches some of its loyal customers in those regions?

Mr. Eggar: Coming from the party that set up many of the nationalised industries, all of which had their headquarters in London, that is pure humbug.

Manufacturing Industry

5. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his plans to assist manufacturing industry in the regions.

Mr. Heseltine: All United Kingdom manufacturers will benefit from the underlying strength of the economy and the best set of economic indicators for many years. Our

new initiatives for integrated regional offices and business links will help to ensure that manufacturers in the regions can take full advantage of this.

Mr. Milburn: Are not the 200,000 British manufacturing jobs that have been lost since the last general election a sign not of success but of Government failure? When will the Secretary of State take positive action to stem the haemorrhage of skills, talent and enterprise from regions such as the north, or is he content, as usual, merely to sit back and see the country's future being poured down the drain?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman does not understand that most of the jobs have been lost because of the drive for efficiency and improved productivity on which the future of those companies depends. There is no choice but to make our industries competitive. If right hon. and hon. Gentlemen wish to see this country's economy cut to ribbons, all they have to do is say that we should overman it and have levels of productivity that are not world-competitive.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Will my right hon. Friend continue with his splendid set of policies, which have played an important part in the spectacular resurgence of British manufacturing in the past two years, and which have led to an increase of 1 per cent. in manufacturing output in the month of January alone?

Mr. Heseltine: In the spirit of your instructions, Madam Speaker, the answer is yes.

Dr. Bray: Does the President of the Board of Trade realise that, as the recovery gathers momentum, the new jobs will occur in the areas of high service employment, not in the manufacturing areas of Scotland, Wales and the north? Does he not realise, therefore, that special incentives are needed for manufacturing industry in those regions?

Mr. Heseltine: I do not believe in the overly simple generalisations in which the hon. Gentleman dressed his question. Large parts of our manufacturing industry are extremely competitive today and stand poised to seek the upturn in world trade which is evidently on its way.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Although I recognise the immensely improved economic climate that has been brought about as a result of the Government's policy for manufacturing industry—not least the base rate, interest rates and the establishment of business link, one of which is, I am pleased to say, in Macclesfield—will my right hon. Friend accept that the reintroduction of capital allowances would be of immediate benefit to manufacturing industry and would perhaps bring investment based on success, which this country needs?

Mr. Heseltine: I appreciate my hon. Friend's kind remarks about business link, and I am delighted that Macclesfield is one of the first centres to have such a facility. He will remember, however, that manufacturing output in the fourth quarter of 1993 was 2.2 per cent. higher than a year ago, and that continued opportunity exists without any change to the fiscal arrangements, which must be a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: I am sure that the President of the Board of Trade is aware that, for many purposes, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Welsh Office have a dual role in attracting inward investment to Wales. I am also sure that he, as a good European, will accept that many regional authorities in Europe are playing an increasing role in attracting inward investment. Does he agree that the Welsh Office should have the lead role in attracting that investment to Wales?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is well aware of the remarkable achievements that have taken place in Wales as a result of the activities of the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency in the past 10 years. I should have thought that he would support and build on them, without looking for structural change.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that what most assists manufacturing industries in the regions is long-term low inflation, which we now have, low interest rates—we now have the lowest since 1972—and the fact that we have the lowest level of strikes since 1891? Does he agree that those three trends would be reversed if the Labour party ever got back into power?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has little to worry about, because it is evident from Labour Members' questions that there is not the slightest chance of that party ever getting back into power. The fact is that the economic circumstances are now as good as any that I can remember. We must all back British industry in its quest for increasing world markets, enjoying the fact that exports are at an all-time record level.

Mr. Beggs: Will the President of the Board of Trade examine closely the opportunity to keep our highly skilled engineers in the shipbuilding industry at work by making available for ship conversion the small element of assistance that is available in other European Union countries?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will understand that that is a complex issue. Broadly, the policy of Her Majesty's Government is to seek to eliminate those subsidies, not to increase the numbers available. However, we must always consider what specific effects they may have on British shipyards. Recently, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry was able to announce that we were able to give temporary help to Swan Hunter in the difficult circumstances it faced.

Mr. Batiste: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the biggest threat to manufacturing industry in Britain would be the danger of the high social costs that would follow the implementation of the social chapter, and that it would make so much of our industry uncompetitive in world markets? What representations has my right hon. Friend received from industry on that subject?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the question of the social chapter. It so happens that, by coincidence, I have a press release from the CBI which addresses that point specifically in terms of the Labour party's policy on the social chapter. It says that it

"ignores the rest of the world, ignores the whole purpose of the single market, and ignores the unemployed."

That, of course, is why people ignore the Labour party.

Industries (Leicester)

7. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will take steps to assist the traditional industries of Leicester.

Mr. McLoughlin: I recently conducted the annual review of city challenge, which is available in the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituency. A decision on future progress will be made shortly. The first business link in the country opened in Leicester on 27 September, with some £725,000 funding from the Department of Trade and Industry. Combined with the other measures that we are taking, we are doing a considerable amount in Leicester.

Mr. Janner: What would the Minister say to Mr. Charles Bradshaw, the managing director of a major clothing company in my constituency, who complains that the Government have allowed numerous manufacturing companies in Leicestershire to go to the wall, that Leicestershire's industry has suffered enormously and that they are looking to the Government for real help in reviving manufacturing industry? What help in reviving manufacturing industry and getting it off its knees are the Government intending to give?

Mr. McLoughlin: I can only say that if the person to whom the hon. and learned Member is referring is complaining, he is probably disappointed with the representation that he is getting in the House—a disappointment with the Opposition which is shared by Conservative Members.

Mr. Burns: Is my hon. Friend aware that Marconi Radar of Chelmsford has a manufacturing base in Leicester, and does he accept that the damage done to GEC Marconi in Leicester by the Opposition parties and by certain newspapers will only have been redeemed—hopefully—by the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) on the "Today" programme the other day? Will he congratulate our hon. Friend on seeking to redress the imbalance caused by the Opposition parties?

Mr. McLoughlin: That does not need an answer from me. I am always happy to congratulate my hon. Friend.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Is the Minister aware that there are 30,000 jobs in Leicester and the surrounding county in the traditional industries of clothing and textiles and that, if the multi-fibre arrangement is phased out by 2005, many of those jobs will disappear? Would he estimate how many jobs will be left in 10 years' time?

Mr. McLoughlin: We all recognise the importance of the traditional industries in Leicester, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. May I point out to him that, in the Leicester travel-to-work area in January 1986, unemployment was 9.7 per cent. and that the latest figure is 8.8 per cent.—a reduction of more than 10 per cent? I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that.

Company Donations (Political Parties)

8. **Ms Primarolo:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a list of donations given by companies employing members of his deregulation task forces to political parties.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): That information is not known to my Department or to me. The implication behind the question shows the essentially puerile approach of the hon. Lady and her party to the serious need to reduce business costs as a means of reducing unemployment.

Ms Primarolo: Did the Minister make an assessment of health and safety records, or of the breaching of any regulations by those companies before he appointed them? Did he ask consumer groups for their views of the companies, or was he concerned only to know how much the companies had donated to the Tory party?

Mr. Hamilton: I was concerned to know only how to improve the competitiveness of British industry by getting rid of redundant regulations and making more cost effective those that are necessary, and hence reducing unemployment. Unfortunately, the hon. Lady is more interested in playing party games.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Will my hon. Friend consider a list of donations by trade unions to members of the Opposition Front-Bench team, and will he consider whether it would make them worth employing for the deregulation task forces?

Mr. Hamilton: The difference between us and the Labour party is that it, as a wholly owned subsidiary of the trade union movement, is concerned to load extra costs on British business and to destroy jobs, whereas we are concerned to listen to the voice of experience in British business, to reduce those costs and to promote employment.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Is the Minister satisfied that he gets good value for the millions of pounds that his Department spends on company investigations, bearing in mind that, although there have been 82 published reports, only four directors, and no company auditors, have been disbarred? Is he concerned about the fact that, to investigate companies, his Department has often been known to hire accountants from companies that are themselves the subject of investigations, and that—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."]—partners from companies that have been criticised by his Department often sit on the disciplinary panels—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have brought to the attention of the House several times lately the fact that Question Time is not a time for debate. We are dealing with direct questions. Will the Minister respond?

Mr. Hamilton: In deciding whether to pursue prosecutions against those who have breached company law, we follow the normal rules by which all parties in government have always operated. We take proper legal advice, and we believe in acting by due process of law.

Food Retailing (Regulation)

9. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on progress in removing regulatory burdens, other than opening hours, on food retailing businesses.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A review has been completed of controls on a number of foodstuffs covered by European

Community hygiene directives. Departments are also looking at the problems caused to retailers by food temperature controls, and at the scope afforded by the EC general hygiene directive to simplify existing domestic regulations.

Mr. Nicholson: Has my hon. Friend had the opportunity to study the horrifying material in the book by Christopher Booker, a man of Somerset? Will he act on that material? If he opens the book at random, on page 145 he will see how a local government official went into a shop—not, alas, in my constituency—said, "I have the power to close businesses like this down," and then visited the shop, a bakery, three times during the following six months. Will he act to help shops in my constituency that, again at random, have come to my attention, such as those in North Curry and Kingston St. Mary?

Mr. Hamilton: As I appear in the book, I hope that my hon. Friend was not referring to me as part of the horrifying material. We should all be grateful to Mr. Christopher Booker for the publicity that he has given to some of the horrors of over-regulation and excessive zeal by some enforcement officers. I assure my hon. Friend that that is one of the items well to the fore in the deregulation initiative.

Ms Coffey: Is the Minister aware of the considerable concern in the north-west about the impact of out-of-town shopping centres on existing town centres? Will he talk to his colleagues in the Department of the Environment with a view to changing planning law to make impact on existing retail businesses a planning consideration when deciding on new applications? If he cannot do that, will he assure retail businesses in the north-west that they will not go totally out of business and lose thousands of jobs simply because of the present inadequacy of the planning laws?

Mr. Hamilton: As an act of kindness, I shall show my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment the hon. Lady's question.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will my hon. Friend congratulate the Prime Minister on his achievement at the last Edinburgh summit, which means that 75 per cent. of all EC legislation must be tested for employment measures? Will he urge the Community to take that further so that it can create more employment?

Mr. Hamilton: I shall do precisely that in Brussels tomorrow. It is vital that Europe does not continue to export jobs to other parts of the world as a result of failing to cost the impact of the regulations that it has sometimes unthinkingly issued in the past. As for the future, we shall provide a systematic mechanism for costing the impact of regulations. I hope that it will produce better regulations.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of illnesses caused by food poisoning and that it is vital that food safety is not imperilled by deregulation? Will he give us an absolute guarantee that safety in this matter is paramount?

Mr. Hamilton: I agree that there is a sensible point of view to be taken on this question. In our deregulation initiative, the costs for business will not necessarily be the deciding factor in the decision whether to allow a regulation to continue or to be introduced. It is always a question of balance. As the hon. Gentleman knows, losing one's balance can sometimes get one into trouble.

Exports

11. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the change in United Kingdom exports over the past year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: In the first 11 months of 1993, export volume was over 3 per cent. higher than in the same period a year earlier.

Exports to non-EC countries, particularly south-east Asia, have risen rapidly—11 per cent. higher in 1993 than in 1992—and UK exporters are well placed to expand volumes when European demand picks up.

Mr. Spring: My hon. Friend will be aware that much of our increased trade is with the booming economies of Asia. But is he aware that a trade mission from the Suffolk chamber of trade and commerce is currently in Malaysia and Singapore? Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating that mission on securing orders which will boost employment in the county of Suffolk?

Mr. Needham: I echo what my hon. Friend says. The chamber of commerce mission there has been very successful. Despite the efforts of Mr. Andrew Neil and others, it has achieved more orders than last year.

Mr. Purchase: The House will welcome the export efforts of our major companies, but, despite their heroic efforts in difficult circumstances, the United Kingdom's balance of payments problem remains acute. That can be put down to the policies of the Government.

Mr. Needham: The balance of payments percentage figures are lower now than at any time since 1982.

Mrs. Browning: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is extreme concern in my constituency among manufacturing industries? The chairman of one such company came to see me last week to say that his company has two £500,000 orders waiting to be signed in Malaysia. Will my hon. Friend use his best offices to ensure that the damage caused by the editor of *The Sunday Times* is put right as soon as possible?

Mr. Needham: I agree with my hon. Friend. If I may, Madam Speaker, I should like to thank the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, who has written to me to

"express the concern of trade unions about the damaging consequences for jobs in British industry if the current restriction on the involvement of British companies in public work projects imposed by the Government of Malaysia is not lifted . . . We therefore support the government's efforts to restore good trading relations and we are confident that our trade union colleagues in Malaysia take a similar view."

I only wish that the editor of *The Sunday Times*, and the Murdoch press in general, would show as much responsibility as the general secretary of the TUC has shown.

Mr. Bell: We welcome the exchange that the Minister has had with the TUC. Does he accept that Her Majesty's Opposition have always given their full support to our export drive, and continue to give it full support today—and will continue to do so in the future? Anyone who seeks to maintain the contrary is guilty of base calumny.

As for the Government's current difficulties with Malaysia, it is our earnest wish to give the Government every support in achieving a successful outcome to the talks. It is desirable that the talks with Malaysia reach a fruitful conclusion before the signing of the general agreement on tariffs and trade on 15 April in Marrakesh. Although Malaysia may not be a signatory to that accord, it would be in its interests to reach an harmonious conclusion.

Mr. Needham: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's confirmation that the Opposition will do all that they can to help British exporters. I am not sure that that was always the case in the past.

As for the hon. Gentleman's comments on GATT, Sir Leon Brittan and the Commission will take a close interest in that matter. As the hon. Gentleman says, we must get this row out of the way as quickly as possible, and we are unlikely to do so if it is constantly exacerbated by the ludicrous comments of the editor of *The Sunday Times*.

Mrs. Gillan: I recognise that a beneficial change for exporters was the improvement in the Export Credits Guarantee Department regime announced in the Budget. Will my hon. Friend undertake to look at the bonding support to small and medium-sized businesses? As those businesses increasingly win overseas orders, they come up against their bonding limits and, in some cases, they are prevented from even tendering for overseas contracts because of the bonding support position.

Mr. Needham: I am perfectly happy to look at that matter on behalf of my hon. Friend. I should point out that, during the past two years, the premium rates have reduced by some 27 per cent. and the amount of cover made available to British industry has increased by some £2 billion. Today, I see that the ECGD has announced that it is supporting a major new order with GEC Alsthom in inner Mongolia.

Gas Appliance Installers

12. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further estimate he has made of the number of gas appliance installers who are failing to register with the Council for Registered Gas Installers.

Mr. Eggar: I have made no such estimate.

Mr. Loyden: What action does the Minister intend to take to reduce the number deaths—one a week—caused by carbon monoxide poisoning? Is it a part of the Government's deregulation policy that they allow thousands of cowboy outfits to install gas appliances?

Mr. Eggar: All businesses must register and, of course, we have no intention of imperilling safety.

Industrial Growth

13. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what forecasts have been made for industrial growth for 1994 in the United Kingdom and in Germany.

Mr. Heseltine: Industrial production rose by nearly 3 per cent. in the UK last year, but fell by 7 per cent. in Germany. Both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Commission are forecasting that the UK will be the fastest growing major EC economy in 1994 and 1995.

Mr. Fishburn: Would my right hon. Friend like to spell out some of the reasons behind the remarkable change in the industrial prospects of the two countries? Will he hazard a guess as to whether that change will be permanent?

Mr. Heseltine: The reasons are to be found in the fact that our exchange rate is competitive, our interest rates are low, our industrial relations are the best in 100 years, our inflation is low and our productivity has been rising significantly. That gives us a remarkable opportunity if we can contain the inflationary pressures, which the Government are determined to do.

Mr. Redmond: The President of the Board of Trade must be aware of the tremendous input of the people of South Yorkshire in those figures. Will he, therefore, ensure that the Rechar money to create that manufacturing base is made available to improve on those figures?

Mr. Heseltine: We shall do whatever we properly can to ensure that the Rechar money is distributed where it can do the most good. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that none of the excellent indicators to which I have referred could have been achieved without the dedication of the British work force. The fact that we now have the trade unions off the backs of working people means that we have achieved quite remarkable productivity gains.

Mr. Butcher: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the things that worry German industrialists is the way in which social and welfare costs in Germany are loaded on to employers' costs and the costs of employment? In this country, the same social and welfare programmes are funded by the taxpayer. Does that not represent the best possible deal for British wealth creators and the British social programme? Will my right hon. Friend use his role as the defender of the interests of the wealth-creating sector and of other Whitehall Departments to ensure that that deal is not broken, no matter what emanates from Brussels in the future?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend draws attention to an important aspect of our competitiveness. Underlying the Government's strength is the opt-out provision, negotiated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, which gives us a real opportunity to pioneer in Europe and to change attitudes towards the costs which increasingly mirror the anxieties of the Europeans.

Mr. Hardy: Does the right hon. Gentleman consider that we can maintain adequate industrial growth without a successful engineering steel industry? How can he justify the grossly inadequate response of Her Majesty's Government to the unfair practices in the EC steel-producing areas?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry secured clear assurances from the European Commission in December that there would be no revenue subsidies, that there would be close monitoring of any aid given to the industry and

that there would be a reduction in capacity. He will also welcome the fact that the privatised British Steel is now one of the most effective steel producers in the world.

Mr. Wells: How much does my right hon. Friend estimate that industrial production will be reduced by the damaging speeches of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), the leader of the Liberal Democrats, and of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) on the Pergau dam?

Mr. Heseltine: I have no doubt that the speeches of the leader of the Liberal Democrats and of the leader of the Labour party would be capable of reducing jobs in Britain, provided that one condition was fulfilled, and it is extremely unlikely that that would ever happen—that anyone took a blind bit of notice of either of them.

Steel

14. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of steel production covered by the treaty of Paris is manufactured in the United Kingdom.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): In 1993, 12.9 per cent. of crude steel production covered by the treaty of Paris was manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Minister realise that, notwithstanding the statement made about the courageous performance that he put up in Brussels in December, the other steel industries in Europe are far more subsidised than the industry in Britain and there remains a serious danger to British steel industry jobs? What can he say to steelworkers in my constituency working next door in Port Talbot about the safety of their jobs in those circumstances?

Mr. Sainsbury: I recognise that there is continuing concern about illegal subsidies paid to other European producers. I assure the House that we want the Commission to act as vigorously against those subsidies as it has against the alleged cartel.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend welcome the transformation in the British steel industry, which was losing £1 million a day in 1979 and is now the most efficient steel industry in western Europe?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to join my hon. Friend in congratulating all at British Steel—management and work force—on what they have achieved in productivity gains. We now want them to be able to take advantage of their productivity improvements and their competitiveness against other European steel producers.

Mr. Fatchett: In December last year, the Minister promised before his negotiations in Brussels that he would save British Steel capacity and jobs from unfair subsidised competition. Why has he failed to deliver that promise? Why have all his negotiations proved to be such an abject failure? Will he give a guarantee that there will be no further cuts in capacity in British Steel and no further job losses? Or are all his words to come to nothing?

Mr. Sainsbury: British Steel does not appear to agree with the hon. Gentleman's assessment. It is reported to have said:

> "Mr. Sainsbury has done well pushing our line over the last few months but it appears he has not found support around the table."

My natural modesty would normally not allow me to mention that, but perhaps, in the circumstances, I shall be forgiven.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that now that the steel industry has been made efficient in Britain as a result of privatisation, the best way in which the continental industries can reach the same level of efficiency is to be privatised and not subsidised?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend puts the point extremely effectively. Privatisation would lead to a much more efficient European steel industry.

Japanese Investment

15. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next plans to visit Japan to discuss investment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heseltine: I have no plans to visit Japan in the near future, although I had a most useful visit in January, during which I had the opportunity to discuss inward investment with several key Japanese industrialists.

Mr. Corbett: As the Secretary of State and his Government have given up encouraging British investment in British industry and rely increasingly on the Japanese, on his next visit would he like to discuss with Japanese industrialists who are thinking about investing here the shabby way in which British Aerospace treated its partner Honda when it sold Rover behind Honda's back? What does he think that that will do to encourage the confidence of Japanese investors?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that discussions took place with Honda about these matters as they were taking place with BMW. The fact is that the board of British Aerospace decided that the best interests of British Aerospace and the company that it looked after were served by a deal with BMW. It would do the hon. Gentleman a great deal more good if he would now concentrate on building on the success of the deal that is available rather than on the problems of one that is not.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is there not some irony in this new-found love of Japanese investment among Opposition Members? Did they not complain bitterly when Honda first became involved in Rover? Is not the lesson of the days when Red Robbo and his mates were cranking out Allegros and Marinas—that is, when they were not asleep or on strike—that the less say that politicians, particularly Labour politicians, have in who runs the car industry, the better?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to the disastrous investments that the Labour party made in the British motor industry, which were partly responsible for its collapse and, therefore, the fact that so much of it is now foreign owned. The United Kingdom has more than 41 per cent. of total Japanese investment in the European Community, and it must be in

the interests even of Opposition Members to understand that we should admire that, praise it and seek to build on it.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: Does the President of the Board of Trade realise the amount of damage that will be done not only to our prospects for future investment from Japan but directly to Rover if there is a complete breach between Honda and Rover? Is he prepared to play an active part in ensuring that such a breach does not happen?

Mr. Heseltine: I have no grounds for believing that either side is approaching the difficult negotiations that it has to undertake with anything other than a realisation that they must be successfully concluded. The hon. Gentleman must understand that, the moment I appeared, the consequence would be simple—both sides would ask me for taxpayers' money to support their own ambitions.

Mr. Lidington: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a major reason why this country receives the lion's share of Japanese investment in Europe is that non-wage labour costs are much lower in the United Kingdom than on the continent? Will he do all in his power to ensure that the differential is maintained?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is right. That is why the opt-out clause that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister negotiated is so important. Japanese investors in this country know full well that they have a Government who are sympathetic to their interests and who will fight their corner as British companies when they invest here, so they have continued to come. The surest way of choking off Japanese investment would be to have a Labour Government, with their determination to impose on Japanese potential investors costs that they would not wish to pay.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does the Minister recall hearing the Minister for Industry assuring the House in the statement on Rover in January that his Department would do all it could to help the relationship between Honda and Rover to continue? In view of his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) that, the moment he appears, taxpayers' money will be required, will he explain what his colleague meant when he said that the Department would do all it could and tell us whether he and his Ministers are doing anything at all to keep the relationship open?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will be fully aware that we have had conversations with both parties on a continuing basis, but there is absolutely no guarantee that my Department's offering in some way to facilitate the dialogue would be in the best interests of either of the parties negotiating.

Industrial Growth

16. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what forecasts have been made for industrial growth for 1994 in the United Kingdom and in other EC countries.

Mr. Heseltine: The United Kingdom and Ireland are estimated to be the only EC economies where industrial production rose last year. Both the Organisaton for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Commission are forecasting that the United Kingdom will be the fastest growing major EC economy in 1994 and 1995.

Mr. Streeter: Does my right hon. Friend agree that these excellent forecasts demonstrate that many British companies are thriving in the economic framework that the Government have put in place, particularly low interest rates, low inflation, low corporation tax and the important supply side performance of the past 15 years? Is not this the best way to promote industrial growth—for the Government to put in place the right framework and let industry get on with it?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We believe that the present framework is one of the most exciting to have been available to British industry in recent decades. We give a wide range of additional support to our companies in many different sectors and will continue to ensure to the best of our ability that the services that we provide are of the highest standard.

Mr. Barry Jones: Does the right hon. Gentleman expect more sales of the airbus to the United States? When will the general agreement on tariffs and trade on outstanding aerospace matters begin? Will he pledge that the Government will fight the corner for that great industry?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will understand that we will do all that we can properly do to support that industry. The negotiations that were left outstanding at the initial conclusion of the GATT round are scheduled to be completed as early as practicable. We shall continue to watch carefully to see what happens. I do not wish to make a forecast about the precise sales, which must be a matter for the companies involved.

Regional Offices

17. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many regional offices have been established, and where; and what further locations are planned.

Mr. Sainsbury: There will be 10 integrated regional offices and a number of sub-offices. I shall arrange for the locations to be published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Rathbone: The House will welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement. Can he also reassure the House on the methods of co-ordination and co-operation to be established between the offices, local training and enterprise councils, local chambers of commerce and industry and local authorities—all of which will be particularly important in the development plans of the Sussex prime port of Newhaven?

Mr. Sainsbury: I know the importance that my hon. Friend attaches to the port of Newhaven. The creation of the integrated regional offices will facilitate the sort of co-operation between Departments, training and enterprise councils, chambers of commerce and industry and local authorities to which he refers.

Following is the information:

There will be new integrated regional offices in 10 regions: London; South East, based in London and other locations in the region; South West, based in Bristol; Eastern, based in Cambridge and Bedford; East Midlands, based in Nottingham; West Midlands, based in Birmingham; Yorkshire and

Humberside, based in Leeds; North East, based in Newcastle; North West, based in Manchester; and Merseyside, based in Liverpool.

Japanese Investment

18. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many Japanese companies opened their first European manufacturing plant in the United Kingdom in each of the calendar years from 1987 to 1993.

Mr. Heseltine: From information available to my Department it is not possible to determine whether any particular investment during the period in question is the first by a Japanese company in Europe. However, the number of Japanese manufacturers making their first investments in the United Kingdom in each of the years from 1987 to 1993 is as follows: 1987, 23; 1988, 15; 1989, 29; 1990, 34; 1991, 23; 1992, 17; and 1993, nine.

Mr. Gunnell: I am sure that the Secretary of State will wish to congratulate Yorkshire and Humberside development association on the successful conference on Anglo-Japanese partnership last week. Will he acknowledge that many of the investments that the Japanese brought to this country required the co-operation at local level of Labour-controlled local authorities? Does he agree that Labour-controlled authorities have an excellent record in co-operating with development organisations to produce those settlements? Does he also agree that the shortfall in numbers shown by the two figures of 17 and nine that he gave for the past two years is the result of a complex number of factors? It certainly provides no evidence that the rejection of the social chapter by the Conservative party helped to secure Japanese inward investment.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that the figures show beyond any doubt what we all know—that the Japanese industrial economy has been going through one of the most difficult periods since the war. I would be the first to recognise that local authorities, whether Labour or Conservative, largely behave in a responsible way in trying to help the Government and all those involved in inward investment to secure satisfactory arrangements. I wish that the Labour party in the House of Commons would act with the responsibility of local authorities.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one reason why Japanese companies have invested in this country is our system of low regulation levels compared with those of many of our counterparts in the EC? Will he join me in congratulating my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on his stalwart action in stopping any changes to the blocking minority in the Council of Ministers?

Mr. Heseltine: I will certainly convey to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary the support of my hon. Friend, as well as others of my hon. Friends, for the negotiations that he is conducting.

Mr. Burden: Does the President accept that the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) will be greeted with astonishment and disgust by my constituents in Longbridge? Does he not recognise that unless the rift between Rover and Honda is repaired, the casualties will be many jobs in my constituency and elsewhere? Will he accept his responsibility to intervene and ensure that the rift is repaired and that the new partnership can be as successful as the old one?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman assumes that there is a role for the Government in what are essentially commercial arrangements. There is not a shred of evidence to show that either party wants the Government to intervene in this circumstance. If I thought that there was a danger of breakdown, that might change the circumstance, but there is no evidence of such a danger. Over the past three days, I have had personal dialogue with one of the principal players. Those people would have made very clear their views if it were necessary for me to take any positive steps at this stage. No purpose whatsoever is served when the hon. Gentleman or any of his hon. Friends raises scares of this sort, which are not reflected in the dialogue going on at boardroom level.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that south Wales has become the silicon valley of Europe, producing Japanese colour television sets and computers, and that the Staffordshire-Derbyshire corridor has become the Detroit of Europe, with its Toyota plant? Does he agree that if it were up to the Labour party's interventionist policies and support for the social chapter, there would be no Japanese investment in Britain at all?

Mr. Heseltine: I cannot but admire the neo-imperialism of my hon. Friend. We have achieved a triumph of inward investment in all parts of the country. The essence of the case is to keep Britain competitive so that the investment continues to come.

Companies (Political Donations)

19. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further assessment he has made of the operation of the Companies Act 1985 in relation to the use of associated companies to make political donations.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The responsibility for reporting political donations rests with the companies making them. Under section 234 and schedule 7 to the Companies Act 1985, parent companies are obliged to disclose in the directors' report political donations exceeding £200 in aggregate made by it and all its subsidiaries, including foreign ones. I have no plans for any further review.

Mr. Enright: Does that not show staggering complacency? Is the Minister aware that, arising from the contracts for the Pergau dam, which were let to firms contributing to Tory party funds, there is considerable suspicion here that the bribery was not in Malaysia but on the part of the United Kingdom Government?

Mr. Hamilton: Only those who are easily staggered will be staggered by my response, but we are not surprised at the hon. Gentleman's.

Mr. Hendry: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the staggering wisdom of his last reply. Will he confirm that during the 1980s British industry, under Conservative policies, grew faster than industry in any other country? Under Conservative policies, British industry is now coming out of recession faster than industry in any other country. Does that not show that investment in the Conservative party is a sound commercial decision and the

best investment that companies can ever make and that investment in any other party is the shortest route to bankruptcy yet devised by man?

Mr. Hamilton: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is staggering that the Labour party has still not learnt the lesson that improved competitiveness is the way to increase employment. As Labour Members are incapable of learning that lesson, they will never be in a position to form the Government of this country.

Mr. George Howarth: Is the Minister aware that, in response to parliamentary questions about 41 quangos that I tabled last year, we were told that 127 members of those bodies were connected with companies that donate to the Tory party? Is it not clear that what is going on is an auction for places on quangos— appointments in return for donations to the Conservative party?

Mr. Hamilton: That matter was comprehensively debated in the House recently, and the Labour party was comprehensively trounced.

Rover

20. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the average profit or loss per vehicle when the Rover car company was a nationalised industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: The British Leyland group did not produce figures for profitability per vehicle for its constituent businesses. From 1975 until privatisation, the taxpayer invested about £3.5 billion in British Leyland. At the end of that period, Rover had trading tax losses of £1.6 billion.

Mr. Evans: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Does he agree that the British car industry was bankrupt under the weight of unions, nationalisation and socialism? Does he also agree with me that during the past 15 years of Conservative Government this country has never had it so good? *[Interruption.]* Even the lot opposite have given up Lambeth and cloth caps for Chelsea and baseball caps.

Mr. Sainsbury: If we had not reversed the policies of the Labour party, instead of British car production being at the best level since 1972, it might have disappeared altogether.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On Rover, has the Minister seen the television programmes in which executives of Honda were interviewed, and said repeatedly that they were treated shabbily, and in one case treated dishonourably, by the British? Do Ministers have a view on that? Will they stand up and say what they believe has happened in that specific case?

Mr. Sainsbury: I fear that I may have rather less time to watch television than the hon. Gentleman and I did not see the television programme to which he referred. As my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade confirmed this afternoon, the Government welcome inward investment from Japan and, indeed, from all other countries.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of the claim by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—*[Interruption.]*—that there are a number of "exceptional circumstances" in which it is necessary "to mislead Parliament", and in view of his further claim, in the context of Ministers providing full and accurate information, that

"Much of Government activity is much more like playing poker than playing chess. You don't put all your cards up at one time",

will you tell us whether you have received a request from the right hon. Gentleman to make a statement to clarify that highly damaging doctrine? If not, will you say whether it is consistent with paragraph 27 of the guidance for Ministers, which says that Ministers are to provide

"as full information as possible about the policies, decisions and actions . . . and not to deceive or mislead Parliament and the public"?

If it is not consistent—*[Interruption.]*—will you say whether the Minister for open government can remain in the Government when he is seeking to justify such deceptions and half truths?

Several hon. Members rose—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am perfectly capable of dealing with this point of order.

Guidance to Ministers is a matter for Ministers themselves. I ask the hon. Gentleman to refer to what I said last evening, when I ruled on this question in response to a point of order from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). In case it is of assistance to the House, and I hope it is, I want to quote from page 181 of "Erskine May" on this matter:

"The opinion of the Speaker cannot be sought in the House about any matter arising or likely to arise in a committee."

If a Committee has any matter about which it feels that the House should be aware, it can make a report to the House, at which point any appropriate action can be considered.

In answer to another question that the hon. Gentleman put to me directly, no, I have not been informed that any Minister is seeking to make a statement today.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether you could advise me whether or not it is a matter of record that only two Members have been shown to have lied to the House of Commons, both of them Labour Ministers, Sir Stafford Cripps—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have dealt with that matter. The hon. Gentleman should not now abuse the situation.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Does it relate to the same matter? I have given a ruling. Does the hon. Gentleman have something different to raise?

Mr. Winnick: Yes.

Madam Speaker: In that case, I will hear it.

Mr. Winnick: I do not want to refer to the Committee, Madam Speaker, because, as you said, you were kind enough to deal with that matter last night. May I ask you —and my question has nothing to do with the Committee and is not necessarily confined to Ministers—whether you would deprecate any form of lying to the House at any time, whether by Ministers or by anyone else?

Madam Speaker: I repeat what "Erskine May" so wisely tells me—that the opinion of the Speaker cannot be sought on such matters in the House.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it a different one?

Mr. Bates: It is indeed. May I seek your guidance, Madam Speaker? Is it not a custom, outlined in "Erskine May", that when hon. Members make statements in the House about another hon. Member, they should give that hon. Member notice of their intention so that he can be in his place to respond?

Madam Speaker: It is customary to do so, and it is a convention of the House.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of the important statement made by the Minister for open government yesterday, have either you or—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have dealt with that matter.

Mr. Home Robertson: Have either you or Members of the House any way of knowing when Ministers are telling the truth?

Madam Speaker: I accept the word of all hon. Members in the House.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): On a totally different point of order, Madam Speaker. Yesterday *The Daily Telegraph* carried an article that said that, for the first time, a Minister had risen to discuss the question of the Malaysian dispute. The reason for that is that, although my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade had made a speech in the House the previous Tuesday, those in the Press Gallery go home so early that nobody picked it up. It was therefore not until my hon. Friend repeated those remarks on the radio that any notice at all was taken.

My point of order is this. Is there any possibility of your setting up a Speaker's commission to discuss the way in which the House is reported now that the press no longer stay to report ministerial speeches made after about 5 pm?

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the whole House will give me support when I say that I certainly do not give marks for accuracy in press reporting.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A problem could arise out of your statement on the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). At present, when a Minister is accused of lying to the House, the hon. Member responsible can be thrown out, either for a day or for five days. I suggest, Madam Speaker, that in future, if any of us accuses Ministers of lying, you will be placed in a predicament because you will not be able to throw people out.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has totally misunderstood my ruling, which concerns Committee proceedings. I am quite prepared to deal with the situation myself when it arises on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Would it be for the convenience of the House if the press could obtain a full *Hansard* report of what is said in Select Committees? Someone telephoned me this morning asking for my comments on what he thought had been said in a Select Committee, having heard reports of what was said that were completely contrary to what my video recorder showed had been said. That person had no way of checking an official report, because Select Committee reports appear some weeks after the words have been said. We could all be running around in circles talking about something that has not been correctly reported.

Madam Speaker: Committees do their utmost to be helpful and in every case issue transcripts of proceedings as soon as they have been corrected.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My point relates to the conduct of debate arising from yesterday's statement by the Minister responsible for Government information. The Home Secretary was interviewed this morning on BBC television and was given the opportunity to repudiate clearly his right hon. Friend's statement that it was acceptable in certain circumstances to mislead the House. We are shortly to hear a speech from the Home Secretary on the important question of the prevention of terrorism legislation. How are we to know whether he intends to tell us the truth during that speech?

Madam Speaker: That was a pretty convoluted point of order on a matter that has nothing to do with me.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that it is entirely within the rights of any hon. Member to make a personal statement to the House irrespective of whether the occurrence to which it relates takes place outside this House or in a Committee? If the Minister wanted to clarify the position about lying to the House of Commons, he could come here and make a personal statement instead of trying to wriggle out of the difficulty through the press.

Madam Speaker: Of course that is correct; but I would have to read the statement and approve it in the first instance.

Decorations for Gallantry (Display)

3.39 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to regulate the public display or exhibition of decorations for gallantry; and for connected purposes.

The Bill would give the Secretary of State for Defence the ultimate decision-making power over where the highest awards for gallantry are displayed to the public in cases of dispute. I bring this matter before the House because I have been contacted by one of my elderly constituents, Mr. William Whitham, who is now in his late 80s and is the son of the late Private Thomas Whitham VC, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous gallantry in the trenches in the first world war.

For nearly 40 years, my constituent has been trying to arrange for his late father's Victoria Cross medal to be displayed at the Coldstream Guards museum—the regiment to which his late father belonged—instead of at a museum in Burnley, the medal's current location. The Coldstream Guards museum already has on display all the other 12 Victoria Crosses won by members of that most gallant regiment, and my constituent and the surviving members of his family would dearly like his late father's medal to be displayed there as well.

The regiment has supported Mr. Whitham in his campaign, as have many people over the years, including my parliamentary predecessor Sir Peter Blaker, who also raised the matter in the House.

Mr. Whitham feels particularly strongly that it is not appropriate for the medal to be on display in Burnley because of the history of how it came to be in the hands of Burnley council, and how his late father was treated by that council. Immediately after my constituent's father had won the Victoria Cross, Private Whitham's home town of Burnley said that it was very proud of him; his portrait was painted; presentations were made; and various civic ceremonies were held during the last year of the war.

When the war ended, however, and Private Whitham returned to Burnley and to his young family, sadly he had no job to return to. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will recall that this was supposed to be the

"land fit for heroes to live in",

when the troops returned.

Former Private Whitham VC wrote to Burnley corporation, asking if he might be able to work for it in the humble capacity of a manual worker. The letter of rejection that he received—a copy of which I have read—only a year or so after being fêted as a local hero was, to say the least, curt and humiliatingly dismissive.

As we are all aware, jobs were hard to come by in the early 1920s and Private Whitham VC and his young family lived in harsh and reduced circumstances. My constituent, who, as I said, is well over 80, has never forgotten the sense that they all had that the town of Burnley had rejected his father.

Tommy Whitham VC was forced to leave his young family to seek work elsewhere. His Victoria Cross medal was pawned on two occasions to raise money for the family, and eventually, only six years after the war ended, Private Tommy Whitham VC died in penury.

Once my constituent reached adulthood, he sought to have the medal returned and, on one occasion, in 1948, he nearly succeeded. Burnley council passed a resolution saying that the medal could be returned to my constituent

if £50 were paid. Unfortunately, my constituent was travelling the country while employed as a civil servant by the Ministry of Works and he never received a message about the council decision. Within a week or two of the decision, there was a change of political control, I understand, in Burnley council and the Labour party was elected. The previous decision was immediately reversed at the next council meeting before my constituent was informed of the first decision.

Over many years since, all attempts to persuade Burnley council to release the medal have failed, even though for many years it appears that the medal and its ribbon were not at all well looked after. It is right to point out that only after my predecessor, Sir Peter Blaker, and the colonel-in-chief of the Coldstream Guards raised the matter in 1991 was the decision finally taken to put the medal on display. It is fair to say that Burnley council has offered in recent weeks, after I had taken up the case, to present a replica of the medal to my constituent, but he feels that that, too, is not what he seeks. He is strongly of the view that his late father's regiment should have the medal on display.

I feel strongly about this matter because, although my own service connections are with the Royal Navy, my late grandfather, who died only three years ago, served in the trenches in the first world war in what was then the Royal Horse Artillery and was commissioned from the ranks. Therefore, I know—second hand from him—what all soldiers who served in the trenches in the first world war went through, and the extraordinary bravery that must have been shown by my constituent's late father to win the Victoria Cross.

I believe that it is entirely appropriate for the Secretary of State for Defence to be given the power to decide in cases of dispute such as this where our most important decorations for gallantry should be displayed. There is a strong body of opinion on this matter and I have had tremendous support from my hon. Friends, many of whom have served in the distinguished Coldstream Guards regiment.

I very much hope that, when Burnley council is made aware of this debate, it will consider thinking again about the matter. I see that the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) is in the Chamber. I must say, in fairness to him, that I know that in his time as a member of Burnley council, and since becoming a Member of the House, he has also sought to take up this matter, but unfortunately it appears that we have not yet succeeded in persuading Burnley council to reverse its earlier decision.

This is an important matter. It relates most directly to one of my constituents, but it has great significance for a large number of people who remember the gallantry of all those who served in the trenches in world war one.

The most appropriate words with which I could close my remarks would be those that were used with a heavy sense of irony by the first world war poet, Wilfred Owen, whose poetry I studied when at school:

"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori."

3.47 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I wish to speak in opposition to the Bill of the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) quite simply because I believe that it would be wrong to allow the ten-minute Bill procedure to be allowed to give any impression that anything that is debated under it today had the approval of the House. I believe that the issue must be looked at. The hon. Gentleman has rightly said that I have raised the matter on number of occasions, both as a Member of Parliament and as a member of the local authority.

Unlike the hon. Gentleman, my military service was just two years in the Royal Marines. It would be totally wrong to approve a Bill that, in a dispute about where the medal should go, allows the final decision to be made by the Secretary of State for Defence, whatever Government and political party is in control at the time. It would in my view make it a political decision if the Government were to determine to whom medals belonged and to where they should go—*[Interruption.]* As always, the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman) is making sedentary comments.

It is contended that the medal should be displayed with the other 11 Victoria Crosses awarded to the Coldstream Guards. But there is a view strongly held in Burnley that Thomas Whitham, who with great heroism earned the VC in 1917 during the first world war, was a hero of Burnley. It is with great pride that his medal is shown in the Towneley art gallery and museum, which is owned by the local authority.

As a schoolboy, I went to the art gallery and museum and saw the display in which the medal has been on show from time to time; it is now on show more frequently. Notwithstanding the claims of the hon. Member for Blackpool, South, we children took great pride in the fact that the Victoria Cross had been won, with great courage, by someone who lived in Burnley. I accept that Burnley council treated Thomas Whitham appallingly in the 1920s, but I should point out that it was not Labour-controlled at the time: Labour did not take control until many years later.

Thomas Whitham was presented with the medal in 1917. He was also given a gold watch and chain, and his portrait was painted; it now hangs in Towneley hall. In 1921, owing to hardship, he pawned his VC, and the council purchased it in 1931. It is believed that the medal had been pawned on earlier occasions, that it was not held in pawn for the entire 10 years and that the council had previously redeemed it and returned it to Mr. Whitham. Ultimately, however, he had to pawn it in order to survive. That is a sad reflection of the way in which we have treated many people who fought in the first world war, in a land which—I agree—was not quite as fit for heroes as we would have wished.

The issue raised by the hon. Member for Blackpool, South was raised in 1948, but 10 years elapsed between the decision made then and Mr. Whitham's contacting the council again. It may have been felt that, if the issue had been so important to him, he would have pursued it earlier. It was considered again in 1980, 1988 and 1990, and I raised it recently with the chief executive of the council and the controlling group. It is clearly felt that the medal belongs in Burnley's art gallery and museum. The Coldstream Guards have been offered a replica, as has Mr. Whitham junior; the council is willing to pay for both.

The regiment understands and accepts the council's decision. That is clear from a letter from the regimental headquarters to the then chief executive of the council, dated 12 July 1991. The letter states that the regiment accepts that the medal can be made available to it on loan. Indeed, it has been made so available on a number of occasions, whenever the regiment has requested it. It has

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

also been shown throughout Lancashire in various travelling exhibitions, and presented as something for which a part of Lancashire should be proud.

The hon. Member for Blackpool, South is right to pursue, with diligence and concern, an issue that affects one of his constituents. I feel, however, that this is the wrong way to deal with it. I wish to make it clear that whatever happens now does not necessarily mean that the House approves of the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No.19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business), and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Nick Hawkins, Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes, Sir Archibald Hamilton, Sir Anthony Grant, Mr. Cyril D. Townsend, Mr. Matthew Banks, Mr. Michael Stephen, Mr. Andrew Robathan, Mr. Michael Mates, Mr. Michael Colvin and Sir Edward Heath.

DECORATIONS FOR GALLANTRY (DISPLAY)

Mr. Nick Hawkins accordingly presented a Bill to regulate the public display or exhibition of decorations for gallantry; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 17 June, and to be printed. [Bill 71.]

Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism

3.54 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th February, be approved.

It is 20 years ago this year that the first prevention of terrorism legislation was laid before the House. The Home Secretary of the day was the noble Lord, Lord Jenkins of Hillhead. Since then, it has been the hope of successive Home Secretaries that the day would come when the circumstances which made these exceptional powers necessary would cease to exist but, for most of the past 20 years, that has been very much a hope rather than an expectation.

This year's debate is held against a background of particular controversy. I deplore the fact that the meetings which took place last week between the Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and me became public knowledge. That should not have happened. However, I equally deplore the observations which have been made by the hon. Member for Sedgefield, who implied more than once that the Government are insisting on the retention of all the powers currently in the Act for party political reasons. That is nonsense. The powers are necessary in the fight against terrorism. The police think so; I think so; and for every year it was in government from 1974, the Labour party thought so, too. The hon. Gentleman should stop pretending that anyone who disagrees with him does so only for party political reasons.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): The Home Secretary will be aware that No. 10 has today let it be known that it is unable to locate the source of the leak to the *Sunday Express* but has said that the Home Office has no responsibility for it. For many of us, that is scarcely believable in view of the fact that not only did the original story cite a ministerial source offering a comment on the Home Secretary's views of the meeting but the Home Secretary himself is quoted in the article, thus by implication confirming the existence of the meeting. Will he give the House an unambiguous assurance that neither he nor his officials and neither of his two special advisers —Mr. David Cameron and Mr. Patrick Rock, who are regularly seen operating in the Press Gallery—had any responsibility for planting the story in the *Sunday Express*?

Mr. Howard: Yes, I certainly give that assurance to the hon. Gentleman and to the House. I hope that we can now cease to divert attention from the substantive issues that are of such great importance to our debate and instead concentrate on them.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Howard: I propose to continue with the central issues.

It is the Labour party that has to explain the change in its position. Why, if the Act was acceptable between 1974 and 1980, is it no longer acceptable today? While it is trying to answer that question, it must recognise the fact that, since those years, we have modified one of the powers to which it objects. The exclusion order which, in its original form in 1974, was unlimited in time was limited to

three years in 1984. We have also instituted annual reviews of the workings of the Act by someone wholly independent of Government who has full access to all the papers.

I would certainly welcome a common approach to these matters from all parties, but I do not have to remind the House that it was the Labour party which moved away from that bipartisan consensus on how to tackle the terrorism that threatens our society. Therefore the Labour party needs to change its position if that consensus is to be re-established. It simply will not do for the Labour party to say that it is in favour of anti-terrorist legislation in principle and then to criticise its two key provisions, which make such a crucial contribution to the fight against terrorism.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Howard: I shall give way in a moment.

The way in which to achieve a common approach is not for the Government to give up those key powers, but for the Opposition to recognise once again, as they did consistently between 1974 and 1980, that those powers are essential and ought to be supported. It is especially disappointing that they seem unable to do that. I hope that they prove me wrong by the end of the afternoon, in the light of the support that they have given, which I warmly welcome, to the joint declaration that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland signed on 15 December. That declaration was a courageous and imaginative attempt by the two Governments to demonstrate to the men of violence that there can be no possible justification for continuing their campaign of terror.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the Home Secretary accept—I hope that he does—that the loathing of terrorism is universal in the House, bearing in mind the crimes and atrocities committed in Northern Ireland and remembering Warrington and the two small boys, among others, who were put to death as a result of the activities of the IRA? Does not the Home Secretary also recognise that there are genuine criticisms of the PTA, such as those in the piece written by Simon Jenkins in *The Times* today? The points that he makes should be appreciated by the Home Secretary.

It is precisely the terrorists—the enemies of democracy and of Britain—who, to a large extent, want our civil liberties to be undermined because they recognise that, in so doing, that discredits the democratic system. Why does not the Home Secretary use every opportunity to establish a common approach, which can be put forward by the Government and the Opposition?

Mr. Howard: It is one thing to loathe terrorism; it is another thing to translate that loathing into practical action. Those of us on the Conservative Benches are prepared to take the action which those who have the day-to-day responsibility on the streets of the country think is essential if terrorism is to be fought. The Labour party also thought that when it was in government. Of course, I accept that there are weighty matters to be considered. They were considered in every one of those years when the leader of the Opposition went into the Lobby in favour of those powers. When the Conservative party was in opposition, it was prepared to support the Government, who were putting those powers on the statute book. It is a great shame that the Opposition do not take a similar point of view.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The Home Secretary will know of the two objections that we have made. The first is in respect of exclusion orders. In 1987, Lord Colville, the former Home Office Minister and adviser at that time, recommended in his full review of the PTA that that policy be discontinued. Secondly, the judicial intervention in relation to detention is in accordance with the European Court ruling and with many other matters. We are asking the Home Secretary to respond by having a full and independent review by a senior—[*Interruption.*]—by a senior and respected figure, which could be agreed on both sides of the House, to try to reach agreement on that matter. Why can he not respond to what is a manifestly reasonable request?

Mr. Howard: The legislation before us is just about the most reviewed legislation on the statute book. It is reviewed independently every year. We know the points at issue between the Opposition and the Government, which have just been identified by the hon. Gentleman. They are not shrouded in mystery. They are in the open. However, not once since it changed its position on those matters in 1981 has the Labour party come forward with a specific series of proposals as to how the objectives of fighting terrorism can be achieved in a different way from the way in which we propose, which it originally supported.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will deal with the following point when he next gets to his feet. It is worth remembering just why the Labour party changed its position on this vital issue.

In 1980 when the shadow Home Secretary, the then Merlyn Rees, voted in favour of renewal of the Act, he was followed into the Aye Lobby by barely a handful of members of his own party. On that occasion more of them voted against him than in his favour. The vast majority of the Labour party abstained, and refused to accept his lead. Since then, in order to placate its left wing, it is the Labour party that has consistently played party politics on the issue.

No loyalist needs to take up arms to safeguard Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom, because both Governments solemnly accept that a united Ireland can come about only with the agreement and freely given consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. No republican has any justification for the bomb or the bullet, because the British Government agree that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, north and south, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish.

Members on both sides of the House will, I know, share my profound disappointment that the hopes created by the joint declaration remain unfulfilled. Apologists for the IRA see fit to suggest that it has generously decided to make some reduction in the level of violence for the moment while it makes up its mind about the declaration.

That offers no comfort to the victims of terrorist outrages: the families of Guardsman Blinco of the 1st Battalion the Grenadier Guards, killed by a sniper at Crossmaglen on 30 December, and of Constable Beacom, the community constable who died after a rocket attack in Belfast on 17 February; the people of Londonderry, where a 450lb bomb aimed at an army patrol exploded four days after the declaration; the postal workers in London who had letter bombs explode in their sorting offices before

[Mr. Howard]

Christmas; the shopkeepers in London's west end who have had their premises damaged by incendiaries in the past three weeks. They do not want to hear weasel words from Gerry Adams or from anyone else. They want—we all want—a permanent end to the violence.

Between 15 December and yesterday there have been some 130 terrorist incidents in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including a number of attacks on Catholics by so-called loyalists. Seven lives have been lost and many more might have been lost but for the merest chance. Fifty-one people have been injured, some seriously, and considerable damage has been caused to property. Terrorists of every colour have never been more isolated and publicly reviled.

Those bare statistics and the human suffering that they represent show how essential it is that we do not for one moment drop our guard. While the present threat remains, the prevention of terrorism Act will continue to be an indispensable means of protecting the public against lawless and murderous criminals, and do so under the rule of law.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Howard: No, not at the moment.

I can hardly improve on the way in which the matter was put on Second Reading of the original Bill 20 years ago:

"I believe that we have a prime duty to defend the liberties of our constituents, but a Bill of Rights and a whole volume of liberties are of little value to someone who is 6 ft beneath the ground or someone whose body has been dismembered by a bomb."—[*Official Report*, 28 November 1974; Vol. 882, c. 699.]

Those words were not spoken by a Conservative Member in that debate. They were not even spoken by the Home Secretary. They were spoken by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). What the country wants to know is why he and his colleagues have abandoned the sensible view that they took of such matters 20 years ago.

We have brought the order before the House because we remain convinced that the job of the police and of the Security Service would be substantially more difficult, and the lives and property of people in Northern Ireland and in Great Britain at much greater risk, if the specific powers and offences created by the Act were not available. Indeed, our view is that in some respects they need strengthening. That is why new stop-and-search powers and new offence provisions appear in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which is now being considered in Committee.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that he has the backing of 95 per cent. or more of the population of this country for this measure, and that he has the backing of the vast majority of people in both communities in Northern Ireland too?

Mr. Howard: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. The people of this country appreciate the need for these measures.

The past 12 months have seen moments of particularly tragic despair. The tragedy at Warrington, with its unspeakable taking of two very young lives, touched the hearts of many people not only in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland but around the world. The explosion in Bishopsgate, which killed one person and injured 44 others, was the second major incident in a year to bring suffering and disruption to the City of London. The murderous attack on the Protestant community of the Shankill road and the appalling reprisal by so-called loyalists in the Greysteel massacre added grimly to the death toll.

Last year there were 730 terrorist incidents in Northern Ireland in which 84 people were killed and 826 injured, while in Great Britain there were 49 incidents, in which three people died and 124 were injured. The terrorists continued to hold the community to ransom by destroying jobs, livelihoods and homes.

Mr. Foulkes: I agree with every word that the Home Secretary has said. As he goes through the catalogue of deaths for this year, last year and the year before, does it never occur to him that in all that time this Act has been on the statute book and that it may not be working? Perhaps it is time to review it.

Mr. Howard: I should like to know what makes the hon. Gentleman think that his judgment about the effectiveness of these measures is to be preferred to that of the police. It is the police who have to deal with the terrorists day by day on our streets—*[Interruption.]*—not the hon. Gentleman, and not those on the Opposition Back Benches who are joining him in this cacophony. I prefer the judgment of the police to the judgment of the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Should we not also add the fact that without these powers, over the years, the slaughter and the injuries would have been infinitely worse?

Mr. Howard: I certainly agree. We must not overlook the high degree of success achieved by the police, the Army and other agencies. In Northern Ireland, 368 people were arrested and charged with serious terrorist offences. One hundred and ninety-six firearms and 60 rocket or mortar launchers were recovered, more than 6,500 kg of explosives were neutralised, and nearly 4,000 kg of unprimed explosives were found.

In Great Britain, 22 people were charged with serious terrorist offences following detention under the prevention of terrorism Act in 1993. Thirteen people have been convicted of such offences in the past year and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment—10 of them to 20 years or more. Counter-terrorist operations on the mainland also led to the recovery of a large quantity of terrorist equipment. More has been discovered in the past month. In Northern Ireland, a majority of the 368 people charged in 1993 with scheduled—terrorist-related—offences were detained under the Act's powers.

For these successes against the terrorist menace we have to thank the police, the Security Service and, in Northern Ireland, the armed forces for their unstinting efforts on behalf of the public. We owe them a great debt of gratitude for their work and achievements. We are fortunate to have been able to rely on their courage and professionalism. I also acknowledge with gratitude the valuable and important contribution of the police in the Irish Republic.

The powers available under the Act have continued to play a crucial part in these successes. Without them, the prevention of attacks and the investigation of crimes would have been far more difficult. I am indebted to Mr. John

Rowe QC, last year's chairman of the Bar Council, who has produced a report on the operation of the Act in 1993. The House will, I am sure, share my gratitude to him for the careful and thorough work contained in this, his first report.

Mr. Rowe's conclusion is that

"the Act should indeed be continued in force".

He is satisfied from having had full access to all the records, including the intelligence material on which so many decisions must be based, that the powers have been exercised with great care and attention.

The two provisions which stand at the heart of the Act are, of course, those relating to arrest and detention and those conferring the power to make exclusion orders. I shall deal with them in turn.

As Mr. Rowe's report reveals, the total number of detentions under the Act in the United Kingdom in 1993 was 8 per cent. down on the figure for 1992. Of these, 28 per cent. resulted in extensions beyond 48 hours on my authority or that of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. Of the 494 extensions in 1993, 455 extensions were granted in Northern Ireland and 39 in Great Britain.

Mr. Rowe notes that the police in Northern Ireland and Great Britain make a deliberate effort to relate the length of extension applied for in any case to the work outstanding in the investigation. My right hon. Friends and I thoroughly endorse that approach, ensuring as it does that each detention is kept to the minimum required.

The value of the period of extended detention is made clear by the statistics. In Great Britain, of the 39 people whose period of detention was extended beyond the initial 48 hours in 1993, 17 were charged with serious terrorist offences, including attempted murder and conspiracy to cause explosions. A further two were served with exclusion orders. In Northern Ireland, 25 per cent. of cases in which detention was extended resulted in charges.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): How many requests for extension of detention in the past two years in both Britain and the north of Ireland have been refused, either by the Home Secretary in Britain or by the Secretary of State in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Howard: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the answer to that question now, but I hope to be able to give the answer at the end of the debate.

The most contentious issue is who should consider extension applications. As the House is aware, the power of the Secretary of State to extend the detention of terrorist suspects up to a total of seven days has required the United Kingdom to derogate from article 5(3) of the European convention on human rights, following a ruling in the Brogan case that detention beyond four days without judicial authority was contrary to the convention.

Let me make clear that the Government would very much prefer it if that derogation were no longer necessary. But it is, and since the House last considered this matter, the European Court of Human Rights has, in the case of Brannigan and McBride, upheld the derogation. In its ruling it held:

"having regard to the nature of the terrorist threat in Northern Ireland, the limited scope of the derogation and the reasons advanced in support of it, as well as the existence of basic safeguards against abuse, the Court takes the view that the Government have not exceeded their margin of appreciation in considering that . . . the derogation was strictly required by the exigencies of the situation".

After the Brogan case, the Government looked closely to see whether there was a judicial solution. But, for the reasons given to the House fully on 14 November 1989, we had to conclude that the dangers outweighed the advantages. Those who had previously carried out major reviews of the legislation—Lords Shackleton, Jellicoe and Colville—had all come to the same conclusions.

Let me quote from the report by Lord Shackleton—a Labour peer appointed to review the legislation by a Labour Government. He said:

"On the question of who should authorise the extensions of detention, I see no alternative to the Secretary of State. It has been suggested that the courts could do this. But the information on which the police justify the need for an extension is usually sensitive and cannot be disclosed without the risk of endangering lives or impeding police inquiries. I doubt that these difficulties could be fully met even if the courts were to consider these matters in secrecy . . . I believe it is right that such a power be exercised by the Secretary of State, who can be called upon at short notice to account for his actions in Parliament."

Those who advocate transferring to the judiciary the power to authorise detention before charge need to ask themselves whether decisions based on intelligence material can really be considered appropriate for judicial consideration. The Government's view is that the course which the Opposition advocate would blur the clear division of roles between the Executive and the judiciary. We would be asking the judges to perform what is, in essence, an Executive function.

The intelligence material on which police applications are based cannot, by its very nature, be disclosed to the defence. Therefore, it would not be possible for the defence to prepare its case. Nor would it be possible for judges' decisions to state the reasons underlying them. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to construct a judicial appeal procedure.

I am absolutely sure that to attempt to involve the judiciary, but under such constraints that judges could not apply the procedures and principles under which they normally operate, is a far more unsatisfactory course than the limited derogation from the convention which the Government have made.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is not it a fact that in Europe, where a contrary view is taken, most of the judges are civil servants who are used to taking administrative decisions?

Mr. Howard: My hon. and learned Friend is right to make that distinction. There is a further distinction in that the decisions which they make are, for the most part, entirely different from the ones which are presently under consideration.

Therefore, so long as the need for the decisions continues, I believe that they will have to be left to the Secretary of State, who is accountable to Parliament for the exercise of his powers and whose decisions are scrutinised each year by an independent reviewer with extensive legal experience. It would be very convenient for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and me to shed those onerous responsibilities, but while the need remains we shall continue to discharge our duty.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): Is not there another point, about which those who are concerned about the proper rights of an individual should be worried and to which my

[Mr. Tom King]

hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) has just referred? If the decision passes to perhaps a judicial authority, would not that, under the European convention on human rights, give judges the power to extend far more the time during which people could be confined without charge? Am I right in saying that those who were arrested by the French authorities for the Eksund shipment were kept two years without being charged, whereas the limitation under our legislation is extremely strict and, as my right hon. and learned Friend has said, not normally more than five days?

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend speaks with great experience in these matters. I believe that he is right in what he says. His point demonstrates that, as is so often the case, the Opposition completely miss the substance of the point in the attitude which they take and strive instead for some illusory shadow which would profit no one.

I turn now to exclusion orders. At the end of 1993, 71 persons remained subject to an exclusion order made by the Home Secretary—a reduction of eight since 31 December 1992 and the lowest figure at the end of any year since 1975. The number of orders in force on the strength of decisions made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland remained constant at nine. Each order remains in force for three years, unless revoked before then. At the end of the three-year period the case is looked at afresh in the light of all the circumstances, including an up-to-date intelligence assessment. In some instances, fresh orders are made; in others, they are allowed to lapse without replacement.

Mr. Rowe states that he is satisfied that all the participants in the procedure for exclusion orders have acted carefully. I thoroughly endorse his comments about the three independent advisers, to whom representations against exclusion orders are referred. The role which they play is an important safeguard for the individual and I thank them for their work during the past year. In his report Mr. Rowe rightly acknowledges that opinion on the value of exclusion orders is not unanimous, but he also notes that there are strong arguments in favour of their retention, and it is my clear view that those arguments are decisive.

The restrictions on the movement of the 80 people currently excluded are wholly justified by the contribution that the restrictions make to preventing acts of terrorism. As the number of people excluded is small, there are those who argue that it would make little difference if the restriction on their movements were lifted. I do not accept that for a moment. The powers are used very sparingly in recognition of their exceptional nature. Do those who oppose them seriously suggest that restrictions on the movement of those who have been involved in terrorism have no effect?

The police are clear that, as a preventive measure, exclusion is a useful weapon in their armoury. It disrupts the movement of terrorists in both directions across the Irish sea and it reduces the pool of personnel on whom the terrorists can safely draw.

The police do not believe that the alternative measures that have been suggested—such as mounting surveillance operations on all those who would at present be excluded—are remotely realistic. When the police and the Security Service have their work cut out to prevent attacks and track down those responsible for preparing them, how can Opposition Members justify making that task more difficult? How can they justify the extra risks that would be imposed on our constituents?

Ten years ago this year Patrick Magee tried to blow up the Cabinet at the Conservative party conference. The following year he returned from Ireland with others who planned to mount an unprecedented series of attacks at seaside resorts in the south of England, including Folkestone in my constituency. Magee and his associates were arrested and detained for several days before being charged because of the powers available in the prevention of terrorism Act. My constituents know that those are powers for which Conservatives have consistently voted for the past 20 years. Had the Labour party been in power in 1985, those powers would not have been available for the protection of the people of Folkestone. They would not be available now for the protection of the people of Belfast, Warrington, Tyneside or Haringey.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Cheap points.

Mr. Howard: That is the truth of the matter, and for the hon. Gentleman, from a sedentary position, to describe those points as cheap is nothing short of disgraceful.

The powers were needed when the legislation was introduced by Lord Jenkins in 1974. From 1974 to 1980 they were supported by the Labour party. Since 1983 it has opposed them.

The chairman of the terrorism committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers has made it clear to me—perhaps Opposition Members will listen—that the "retention of the Act in its present form is an essential weapon in the armoury of counter terrorism."

No party that is prepared to deny that essential weapon to the brave police officers who have to confront the evil men at whom the powers are aimed is remotely fit to govern this country. Conservatives are committed to their maintenance for so long as the need for them continues. I commend the order to the House.

4.26 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I shall begin by giving a brief resumé of the history of the legislation. I shall then examine the changes that have, over time, been made to it. I shall then repeat the offer that has been made to the Government, which I believe will find much support in the House—to try to reach a consensus on the issue, take it out of the political divide and resolve it properly.

First, let us be clear what is not in dispute. It is not in dispute, and never has been, that we need anti-terrorist legislation. It is not in dispute that the powers of the prevention of terrorism Act in respect of detention on the grounds of involvement in terrorism should remain. We do not seek to review the powers of proscription and attachment of terrorist funds. We in the House share a total and complete abhorrence of terrorism and a desire to defeat it.

However, we say that the powers are exceptional, and we hope that the whole House can agree with that. We hope that the House can also agree that the powers breach the normal rules of law in our legal system, of which we are justifiably proud, and that we should countenance them only to the extent that they are genuinely necessary to defeat the threat of terrorism.

That is so for reasons of the rule of law, but also for practical reasons. The IRA, which is incapable of making

a decent democratic case in defence of its position, uses aspects of the legislation ruthlessly as a stick with which to pillory Britain abroad. Speeches made in the United States of America recently have been littered with references to the legislation.

It is plainly sensible and in everyone's interests, quite apart from being right as a matter of constitutional law, to go as far, but no further, than we need in abrogating the normal processes of law. That is the issue between us, and if the Home Secretary were prepared to analyse it in a decent and sensible way, as opposed to ranting at us for the purpose of making the political divide greater, he would do a service to everyone concerned with such matters.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire) *rose—*

Mr. Blair: I will give way in a moment.

This used to be recognised throughout the House. The great distinction between the speech that we have just heard and earlier speeches on the prevention of terrorism from the Government side, whether a Labour or a Conservative Government, is that, until very recently, they have always repeated the distaste felt by everyone for these measures. They have been justified, but there has been some semblance of the thought that these are serious steps that are being taken.

That is why they are called "temporary provisions." It is why we debate them every year. As Lord Whitelaw said in 1982, they make

" a considerable inroad into the civil liberties of which we are justly proud".—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1982; Vol. 20, c. 151.]

In 1978, because this was the only way of securing the renewal of the Act, Lord Shackleton was asked to conduct a full review. He did so, and among the other things that the Home Secretary did not quote from his report, he said this:

"The longer the exclusion power continues, the stronger will be the case against it, and I believe the Government should reconsider this issue."

So, far from it being strange for Opposition Members to raise them, exclusion orders used to be raised by those on the Government Benches when they were in opposition, and as a result changes were made to them. Changes were made that, in particular, after three years they must be reconsidered. There was a further report by Lord Jellicoe in 1983. Sir Cyril Phillips, himself a distinguished High Court judge, was critical of exclusion orders in 1985, and suggested ways in which they might be circumvented, and that was repeated in the last full review of the legislation in 1987 by Lord Colville.

I say that in part to show that, throughout this period, it is not merely that changes have been made—in respect not just of exclusion orders but in the treatment of suspects, the procedures for detention and dealing with terrorist funds—but also to emphasise that it was never the case that the legislation was written in stone. It was always there to be reviewed, analysed and reassessed because of its importance.

Mr. Fabricant: When the hon. Gentleman proceeds to try to water down this order, and when he has thought of the thousand people killed or injured last year and of the two young soldiers killed on Lichfield railway station, will he remember that it is the police today—not Lord Jellicoe in 1983, but the police today—who want the order passed as it stands? Does he look forward to the total defeat of terrorism, or does he merely look behind him at the disloyalty of his own Back Benchers?

Mr. Blair: That is an example of what we have been saying. There they go again: they cannot debate this in a reasonable way.

Mr. Howard: With respect, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) asked a perfectly reasonable question, based on the view of the police now. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said earlier that we should go as far as, but no further than, we need. The chairman of the terrorism committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers says:

"The retention of the Act in its present form is an essential weapon in the armoury of counter terrorism."

Why does the hon. Gentleman think that his judgment of what we need is to be preferred to that of the chairman of the terrorism committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers?

Mr. Blair: It is not my judgment that is to be preferred to his. What we are debating, as I shall show, are views expressed not just by the Labour party but over a very broad range.

As I said at the beginning, we are not opposed to the principle of legislation in this area, or to the main powers that are in the legislation. If the Home Secretary would listen to the points we make and consider them, and accept that we are trying to reach agreement, I think that he would find them reasonable.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Blair: I shall give way from right to left, and then I must get on.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that the views of the police, who are often in the front line in the fight against terrorism, are critical. What consultations has he had with police organisations on the subject of the renewal of this legislation, and what representations has he received from those organisations urging him to vote against it?

Mr. Blair: I shall deal in detail with some of the objections to the points that I am raising. What has to be determined is whether the points we make are reasonable. I remind the hon. Gentleman that, as I told the Home Secretary this morning, it is our case that there should be a full and independent review, agreed by the two sides of the House and conducted by a distinguished figure, to determine precisely whether these powers are necessary or whether there is another way of dealing with the situation.

The view of the police must be taken into account, but it is also important that there be a review of the extent to which what we seek could be achieved otherwise. That is what we are asking for, and it is hardly unreasonable.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Clearly, the hon. Gentleman is prepared to ignore, or fails to take fully into account, the views of the police. What about members of the Labour party? For example, Lord Mason, who held the office of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, has said that nothing gives the IRA more joy and encouragement than to see a divided House, and especially the image created by some within Parliament of seeming to be too protective of the terrorists and their political allies, rather than wishing their destruction. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. If we do not have a little quiet, I shall start picking off other people.

Mr. Heald: Is it not important that we take full account of the views of the police, who are fighting the terrorists, and of members of the Labour party who have the experience of office? The hon. Gentleman has not had that experience; those who have believe that the legislation is vital. Why is the hon. Gentleman so arrogant as to ignore their advice?

Mr. Blair: We are not ignoring their advice. That is precisely why, as I shall explain later, we have said that there should be a full review, in which these matters can be taken into account. If the hon. Gentleman is confident of his position, he should agree to that. Why does he not agree? Because, as a Conservative, he prefers to treat this matter as an issue of party divide rather than of party agreement.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): The hon. Gentleman confirms that he wishes to disregard the views of the police. Does he think that voting against this order will help or hinder terrorism? It is as simple as that.

Mr. Blair: Unfortunately, the hon. Gentleman has not listened to my reply. I am not saying that my view should be preferred to that of the police. That is precisely my reason for saying that the objections received from a very broad range of opinion should be properly tested. That is what Conservative members are disagreeing with. The Home Secretary mentioned Lord Merlyn-Rees. Earlier today, Lord Merlyn-Rees confirmed that he would support a full and independent review. That is the answer to many of the points that have been made.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): If the hon. Gentleman believes in abandoning exclusion orders, does not it follow naturally that he is opening up the floodgates to terrorists coming to the British mainland? Does not he accept the warning that was issued by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), in 1974? I refer to this very salutary comment:

"It would be most sad, however, if we were to worry now too much about the curtailment of liberty and later to have upon our consciences the deaths of our fellow citizens."—[*Official Report*, 28 Nov 1974; Vol. 882, c. 700.]

Mr. Blair *rose—*

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend's splendid speech, but I must ask whether it would not have saved a great deal of time if the Conservative office brief, from which Conservative members have been reading, had been placed in full in the Library?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been here a long time, and he knows very well that that is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Blair: Unfortunately, like so much else that the Conservative party does, the brief is incompetent and inaccurate.

The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 was never intended to be written in stone. On the contrary, because of its exceptional nature, it was to be kept under constant review for the very purpose of changing it when necessary and timely. That was especially so in respect of exclusion orders. We believe that it is now right to consider two aspects of change. I shall mention them in turn.

There are other issues. There is the question of the audio or video recording of suspects' interviews. Trials are apparently on foot on the mainland, but there is nothing as yet in Northern Ireland. Sir Louis Blom-Cooper was asked to report on the conduct of detention centres in Northern Ireland, and his report will be published next week. It is unfortunate that we do not have it today.

There are therefore other issues, but there are two main ones. They are not quibbles, as some people would say, and they do not destroy the 1989 Act, as the Home Secretary says. They are substantial and serious none the less.

The first issue is that of the means of extending detention. At present, under the normal law, if one is a child murderer, a rapist, an armed robber or involved in organised crime, one can be detained only on suspicion of a specific offence; one is detained for 36 hours but then must be brought before a court, and after some days must then be charged.

Under the 1989 Act, detention takes place if there is a reasonable suspicion that one has been involved in general acts of terrorism, not necessarily related to a specific act. One can be held for 48 hours and then the detention is extended for up to a further five days, making seven days in all. Those powers are self-evidently highly exceptional —all the more reason for them to be subject to proper judicial control if possible.

There is a need for the exceptional power to detain and the period of detention—I accept that. That is the exceptional nature of the power, because there can be occasions when the security services, for various reasons, have to obtain evidence or make forensic checks of one type or another. However, unless there is a good reason to the contrary, deprivation of liberty should take place through a court. That is what the European Court ruled under the European convention, and it may have ruled that the derogation was within the Government's possibility of power, but it did not resile from its earlier ruling.

One of the things that I find so extraordinary about the Home Secretary's attempt to present the proposal as destructive of the whole nature of the work of the security services is that when the matter was mentioned before, during the passage of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill in January 1989, the then Home Secretary, now the Foreign Secretary, said:

"Of course we would have preferred not to derogate, and the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West"—

now the noble Lord Archer—

"was right when he said that this is not a subject to be taken lightly as a matter of convenience. We continue to look for a judicial mechanism."—[*Official Report*, 30 January 1989; Vol. 146, c. 65.]

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Blair: I will give way in a moment.

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Blair: Would the right hon. and learned Gentleman forgive me? I will give way in a moment.

Lord Colville, when he wrote his report in 1991, also drew attention to those problems and the way in which they might be circumvented.

Mr. Howard: I can understand the hon. Gentleman's reluctance to give way. *[Interruption.]* On that specific point, following my right hon. Friend's suggestion in 1988 that we seek a way of involving the judiciary in that power, a review was carried out, and the result of that review was

announced to the House, as I said earlier, by the Foreign Secretary's successor as Home Secretary in November 1989. Therefore, we did carry out that review.

We have considered whether there might be a different way to achieve that objective, and we have come to the conclusion that there is not. We cannot be accused of not looking to see whether there are other ways of doing it.

Mr. Blair: My argument to the Home Secretary is that it was not that the present Foreign Secretary, when Home Secretary, was ruling that out on the grounds of security. He said that he would seek a judicial mechanism. He did not rule it out as inconsistent with the purposes of the 1989 Act.

I am sorry that the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), the Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, has left his place. I thought it extraordinary when he intervened earlier, because this is what he said in respect of the power of detention in December 1988:

"It would be more acceptable to many of us to require a judicial element—a judge, if there is no problem of availability, or a stipendiary magistrate . . . But what is needed is that the public should have confidence that injustice is not being done by the procedures. I think that a judicial element would meet that requirement."—[*Official Report*, 6 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 232.]

We can agree or disagree on whether that is necessary, but it is patently absurd to suggest that, by advocating a judicial element, one is destroying the security basis of the legislation.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton) *rose—*

Mr. Blair: I will give way in a moment.

Not merely did they all say that, but I discovered last night that the Government's Standing Commission on Human Rights in 1988 said the same: it said that there should be a judicial element. The idea that that is something beyond the ken of any reasonable person to propose is patently absurd. Every time that Conservative Members make that type of argument, they simply underline the degree to which they are prepared to be unreasonable in making their case.

Mr. Streeter *rose—*

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): No, no —don't give way to him.

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Blair: I will give way to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), because he was up first. Then I will have to get on.

Mr. Streeter: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He must accept that it is quite an amusing spectacle watching him try to defend the indefensible. [HON. MEMBERS: "Sit down."] If the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues vote against the measure tonight, what message does that send to terrorists?

Mr. Blair: I have sent the clearest possible message of what we believe. The only people trying to send a different message in respect of the Opposition are Conservative Members. That is the absurdity.

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Blair: I will give way to the Home Secretary, but then I must get on.

Mr. Howard: As these are important topics, I want to do the hon. Gentleman the credit of taking his argument seriously.

It is true that my predecessor, now the Foreign Secretary, said that he would seek a way to involve the judiciary in the decision-making process. So did my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). The nature of the investigation which was then carried out was to see whether we could find a way to involve the judiciary which would not undermine the exercise of the power and deprive it of its practical effect.

We came to the conclusion that there was no such way, as was announced by the noble Lord Waddington in November 1989. It is no good the hon. Gentleman ignoring that investigation and its outcome. We have considered it; there is no such way. The hon. Gentleman must face that.

Mr. Blair: That is incorrect. That was never the reason that was given.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): As someone who was in the House when the original legislation was passed just after the Birmingham pub bombings, the perpetrators of which have not yet been put in prison even though the legislation has been in place for 20 years, may I say to my hon. Friend that the British public who are watching the debate are entitled to expect grown-up politics to operate in the House today?

I remind my hon. Friend that I have never yet voted against the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, because I have always been conscious, even with its defects, of the connection with the Birmingham pub bombings and carnage that day. However, I will vote against the measure tonight, simply on the grounds of the Home Secretary's performance in the past few days, including his speech today, because it does not constitute serious grown-up politics, which the people of this country are entitled to expect.

Mr. Blair: I do not think that any hon. Member will underestimate the strength of feeling of my hon. Friend or his determination to combat terrorism.

It is said that what is involved is not a judicial process: the argument—the only argument there is, in fact—is that the nature of the process of deciding an extension of detention is not truly a judicial one and is incapable of being dealt with other than by executive act. Precisely that argument was rejected in the European Court, but let me deal with it myself.

What is the purpose of having an element of judicial control? It is not simply to provide a process of legal reasoning or logic; it is that that judicial element is independent of executive action. The liberty of the subject should be taken away not by the act of a politician but by a court of law. That is the basic point. The debate is not simply an abstract debate about the nature of the process of reasoning: it is a fundamental debate about the nature of liberty, and those who have the right to deprive people of liberty. That is why it would be so much better to have that judicial element, as was accepted some years ago, even by Conservative Members.

In respect of exclusion orders, I must say to the Home Secretary that he is a man who cannot make a case without exaggerating it out of existence. The idea that, by opposing

[Mr. Blair]

exclusion orders, one is making an outrageous attack on the entire nature of our fight against terrorism is patently absurd when considered against the historical background. First, nothing has been more contentious than exclusion orders, and nothing has ever been expressed to be more temporary—as was the case throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Exclusion orders have been strongly criticised by many. For example, Enoch Powell said in February 1987:

"The inherent objectionableness of a power to exclude from one part of the United Kingdom into another is undiminished, but the evidence for utility continues to diminish. I hope that we shall see the end of it, certainly no later than the new edition of this Act."—[*Official Report*, 10 February 1987; Vol. 110, c. 277.]

I discovered last night that the then Home Secretary, now Foreign Secretary, sent Sir Cyril Phillips a letter—a public letter, although it does not appear to have received much publicity—when Sir Cyril conducted his review of the Act. The then Home Secretary wrote:

"I entirely accept that the exclusion powers, especially those under sections 4 and 5 which permit the exclusion of a British citizen from part of the United Kingdom, very considerably infringe ordinary civil liberties. I think it very proper to remind Parliament that these powers are controversial and that it is possible to discontinue while still renewing other parts of the Act."

I fully understand that the Home Secretary came down in favour of retaining the powers. However, I put it to Conservative Members that it can hardly be said to be unreasonable to argue that the powers should be properly, fully and seriously reviewed independently to see whether they need to be maintained or not—indeed, the last full review, that of Lord Colville, suggested that they go. That is the answer to the point made a moment ago.

It is worth spending a moment considering why the orders have aroused such controversy. First, they represent a form of internal exile. That cannot be disputed. They allow complete freedom of movement within Northern Ireland to people excluded from the mainland, and complete freedom of movement on the mainland to those excluded from Northern Ireland, so they are, by their nature, odd. Conservative Members may wish to consider that they are in one sense essentially anti-unionist.

Secondly, they involve someone being deemed or dubbed a terrorist not by a court of law but by an executive order. The Home Secretary can make an exclusion order only if he is satisfied—not merely if he has reasonable grounds for suspecting—that someone is a terrorist. There is no trial. There are no representations. There is no ability to know the evidence. There is no effective appeal.

It is not that, as Mr. Rowe said, exclusion orders are simply an infringement of freedom of movement; it is that the person is then deemed to be a terrorist. He does not know the evidence and he cannot appeal against it. He then becomes a target for other terrorist activity. That is why the matter has now been referred to the European Court by our own Court of Appeal.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): We in Northern Ireland look askance on the leper colony aspect at times. But there was a judicial review—there was a trial in London. Can the hon. Gentleman tell us what London people would say about the case of a person who was acquitted by a court in London; who said that he was not a terrorist and disagreed with terrorism; who was excluded under the Act; and who was buried in County Tyrone as second in command of the Tyrone battalion of the Provos, shot in a gunfight with the Army?

Mr. Blair: As the hon. Gentleman knows, many of those of the Ulster Unionist persuasion have been against exclusion orders. That is not because people do not condemn terrorism—they do. It is because they think that we must see whether, in attempting to use the security services to weed out terrorism, we do so in a way that is fully compatible with the ordinary rule of law.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland) *rose—*

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley) *rose—*

Mr. Blair: I am sorry. I must get on.

I entirely accept that an argument can be advanced in favour of exclusion orders. I do not take the unreasonable position described by the Government: I do not say that no one can reasonably argue the case for them. What I say is that it is so clear that they are potentially open to abuse that it is right that they should be fully and independently reviewed—as happened seven years ago—to see whether they are still necessary.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: All right.

Mr. Maclennan: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. As he appealed earlier for cross-party support in this matter, he might have some interest in what I have to say.

I find his argument in favour of an independent review of some different kind from the report of Mr. John Rowe —an eminent former chairman of the Bar Council— extremely difficult to understand. We have before us a very thorough report, whose author has consulted all those closely involved in the day-to-day conduct of security matters and which does not stand on its own but is one of a series of annual reports.

The hon. Gentleman will acquit me of the charge of seeking to divide the House on this issue, because he knows that I have always favoured cross-party agreement where possible. It appears to me likely, however, that the lack of consensus on the issue is between those in his own party and not across the Floor of the House.

Mr. Blair: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is absolutely wrong. First, the previous report—undertaken by Lord Colville in 1987—which was a full and independent review, recommended that exclusion orders should go. The hon. Gentleman's point is therefore particularly foolish.

Secondly, Mr. Rowe's report examines not whether the powers are necessary but whether they have been properly operated within the definition in the legislation. The hon. Gentleman has not understood the point that I am making.

Mr. Mallon: Lest there be any doubt about it, I should point out that Mr. Rowe did not consult widely about this matter within Northern Ireland. He did not consult my party or, I understand, the Ulster Unionists, and many other organisations that should have been consulted were not. I therefore regard the report as deficient.

Mr. Blair: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is entirely right. I do not suppose that anyone would say that those from the Ulster Unionist side were not committed to

the fight against terrorism, but Ulster Unionists, too, see the purpose of reviewing the necessity for exclusion orders.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: No. I have been immensely generous in giving way.

It is because of those objections, and because we wanted to see whether there was not a different way—in accordance with the normal rule of law—of meeting the same objectives, that we attempted to secure serious discussions with the Government. We did so because we know that, when we strip away the political rhetoric, we share the same objectives of deterring and defeating terrorism—but also because we want to uphold our traditional rule of law and the principles that go with it. In attempting to balance those competing purposes, we should engage in discussions without rancour, or accusing each other of being soft on terrorism, and with a genuine desire to find agreement.

The Government say that they want such agreement. The Home Secretary said today that he wanted an all-party approach. They used to criticise us for seeking change in the way we did, and they asked us to do it differently. Indeed, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) first defined our objections to the Acts, the Government suggested how we should object. The then Home Office Minister, who is now the Secretary of State for Education, said:

"If he"—

that is, my right hon. Friend—

"were really interested in serious discussions with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and had a list of things he wanted to discuss . . . surely he should have gone to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, perhaps on Privy Councillor terms, to talk to him about the sort of changes he wanted."—[*Official Report*, 4 March 1991; Vol. 187, c. 66.]

That is what we have done. How was that action met by the new Home Office regime? It was met not only with a refusal to consider our proposals, but with an out-of-hand rejection. The story was then planted in the press before we had even received the courtesy of a reply. That is not seeking agreement in the interests of peace and security; it is playing politics with the issue.

Moreover, we have not even asked the Government to agree immediately to our objections. We do not expect them to go "Snap," but have merely asked them seriously to consider the proposals, as the former Secretary of State for Education asked us to do. One way to achieve that would be to undertake a full and independent review of the judicial process under a senior respected figure, on whom we could agree with the Government, the Ulster Unionists, the Social Democratic and Labour party and other interested parties.

We could examine that and other aspects of the prevention of terrorism Act, to point the way towards its improvement. It has been seven years since the last full review, and that was conducted by a Government adviser. It is almost decade since Sir Cyril Phillips, a High Court judge, considered the matter. It is high time to consider the process again. As I said earlier, Lord Merlyn-Rees, a distinguished former Labour Home Secretary supports such a review.

Much has changed in the past year. There has been a joint declaration and a new search for peace. We have joined the Government in those initiatives. We have attempted to rise above party differences—whatever they may be—to search for peace. We refrained from exploiting the issue when it was revealed that the Government had been in talks with the IRA, although they publicly denied that fact.

One other major change has occurred. The IRA's last remaining argument has been removed. It has lost its last vestige of respectability because, as the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said, it refuses even to support self-determination. It seeks unity by the bomb, not through the ballot box. We should shout that from the rooftops. By using that argument, there is a chance of uniting all democratic elements against the undemocratic terrorists to turn the tide, not only in security terms, but politically.

So much has changed and can be achieved; that is why it is important that we should try to bring the House together, and why I urge the Home Secretary even now to consider our requests in the spirit in which they were made, to unite the House, and to defeat the terrorism that we all detest.

5.3 pm

Mr. Kenneth Baker (Mole Valley): The one way to unite the House would be for Opposition Members to support the Government in the Lobby tonight.

The speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) had been trailed as embarking on a new initiative. I assume that his speech included the views that the Leader of the Opposition voiced to the Prime Minister in the talks that took place. Having listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield, I do not think that it marks a new beginning. It reminded me of speeches by his predecessors as shadow Home Secretaries, the right hon. Members for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), and for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). In 1990, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook made five similar proposals, questioning the need for the extension of detention and for the exclusion orders. The only new item in the speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield concerned the independent review. I am sceptical whether such a review would achieve anything.

There has been a bit of party banter, but I do not believe that any Opposition Member supports or condones terrorism. My experience as a Minister and Member of Parliament has assured me that that is the case. Opposition Members' protests against terrorism can be just as eloquent and strong as those from Conservative Members. It is not sufficient, however, only to condemn terrorism and its aims; one should be prepared to will the means to defeat terrorism. That is where one has to take difficult, executive decisions.

The history of the prevention of terrorism Acts has been well rehearsed by both Front-Bench spokesmen. It was put on the statute book by Roy Jenkins. Every Home Secretary, of any party, who has exercised the Act's powers has confirmed that they were necessary, as has each Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and there are many quotations to confirm that. As a Minister who had to exercise those powers, I have no doubt that they are necessary.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield reminded us that my noble Friend Lord Whitelaw said that the Act was an infringement of civil constitutional rights. The House has to examine the matter carefully when it decides about such rights, especially when it has to decide whether to curtail

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

them. It has to be satisfied that there is a reason for curtailment and that there is a reasonable process to ensure that the exercise of executive power is done fairly and properly.

The decisions that I had to make were not taken lightly. One reviews each case carefully because one knows that one's signature on a piece of paper will either extend the period of investigation of a suspect or exclude someone from one part of the United Kingdom. I took those decisions carefully as, I am sure, did my predecessors and successors.

Under the powers of exclusion, there is a procedure for review.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): When the right hon. Gentleman had to exercise those powers, how did he weigh in his mind the fact that the people whom he was excluding from the mainland of Great Britain were a danger and were involved in terrorism and that he was sending them back to a Province that had already borne the brunt of that terrorism? Did he not feel that there was a danger that he was concentrating all the killing and violence on those who had already borne the most pain?

Mr. Baker: I never felt that. The security and safety of the public in the whole country, not just on the mainland, is almost the prime consideration of any Home Secretary. Other Ministers have specific responsibilities for Northern Ireland.

The Opposition changed their view in 1983. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary sketched the history of that conversion, which was not sudden. After the Labour party lost office in 1979, it split on the first vote on the PTA. The noble Lord Merlyn-Rees voted for the extension of the Act. The Labour party abstained in the vote in the following two years. In 1983, it decided to vote against the Act.

Ever since, the shadow Home Secretary, the hon. Member for Sedgefield, and his two predecessors have been trying to get the Labour party off that awkward hook. It is impaled on it largely because of its left-wing and nationalist elements. The hon. Member for Sedgefield smiles, but he knows that what I am saying is true. He has advanced his arguments rather more elegantly than his predecessors, but his argument remains the same and the problem remains the same for the Labour party.

I now come to the exercise of the powers and the power of extension of investigation. Some 30 cases were brought to me. One must examines cases very carefully indeed. In several of those cases, the investigation led to a charge being laid. I believe that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said that, of the 39 extensions for which he has been responsible, charges were laid in 17 cases—nearly half. That statistic proves the validity of the operation.

I do not think that the hon. Member for Sedgefield denies the operation, or the need of it, but he says that it should be subject to judicial process. That is an easy thing to say, but ultimately it is an executive decision. The House has given that power to a member of the Executive, principally the Home Secretary, but on occasions the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I believe that it should remain an executive decision.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said in the arguments against that approach that it would be difficult to devise a judicial process that was justiciable. It would be impossible, for example, to reveal to the defence at that stage of the examination the security evidence that would lead the Home Secretary to make the decision for the extension. I do not believe that that is an appropriate solution. I believe that our derogation is correct.

I used the power of exclusion several times. I used it in the case to which the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) referred. The case involved someone who was accused of terrorism in this country. He went on trial and was found not guilty. On the same day, I excluded him. I was attacked for that. He was found not guilty by the British courts, but I excluded him because I believed that there was evidence that he was likely to engage in terrorist activities. He went back to Northern Ireland and was killed with three other terrorists engaged in an attack on the Coalisland police station. I believe, therefore, that these difficult decisions are sometimes necessary. That is why I hope that the House supports the order.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: No. I shall sit down shortly.

I understand the difficulty that hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench are in. I have not tried to depict the hon. Member for Sedgefield, or indeed the Labour party, as soft on terrorism. Terrorist activities are not lessened in our country. Look at the number of arrests that have been made in the past few months—I warmly congratulate the police and security forces on effecting those arrests—after the Downing street declaration. Cells in this country are still operating, planning to maim, kill and destroy. Terrorists do not have debates such as this. They do not debate whether there should be a stay of execution when the bullets are passed out and when they are told to kill their victims. They do not decide whether there should be an extension of interrogation when torturing somebody for more than 48 hours, or less than that.

I would not say that any Government must put themselves to the level of terrorists, but Governments must make difficult decisions. In this area, those decisions are the most difficult. Because of the way in which I saw the powers operated by my colleagues and by me, I believe that the decisions were conducted fairly and properly. I do not believe that injustice was done. Indeed, I believe that the security of the country was greater because of them.

5.13 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Before launching into what has obviously been the controversial point in the debate so far, I should restate the position of the Ulster Unionist party. We support the legislation. We believe that it is necessary, and that it is necessary this evening for the House to renew the legislation. The only issue that is before the House is whether the Act in its present form should be renewed. We support that. None the less, I wish to say a little on the two items that have been discussed so far.

To a certain extent, I agree with some of the views expressed by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). That is nothing new. If hon. Members look at our contribution to the debate last year, they will see that we have some concerns about the exclusion orders and the

way in which the seven-day detention power is authorised. We feel that there are matters that can be looked at. I have no doubt that the seven-day power is needed. I do not wish hon. Members to misunderstand that. I am not suggesting in any way that there should be a reduction in the power to detain people for that period.

It is interesting to look at the statistics. Looking at the United Kingdom as a whole, of the 495 extensions, nearly half have exceeded the four-day period—the period that the European Court fastened on in the Brogan case—thus showing that there is a need to go beyond that period. Some 66 detentions went the full seven days. It is interesting that, in Northern Ireland, full seven-day detentions were only 12 per cent. of the total detentions, but the figure was much higher in Great Britain. Of the 29 extensions in England and Wales, nine went the full seven days; of the 10 extensions in Scotland, four went the full seven days. That underlines the need to retain the power to extend detentions for up to seven days in some cases.

We then come to the problem presented by the decision of the European Court on Brogan. Brogan is the problem. I do not think that the Brannigan case gets us out of the difficulty. It has been the policy of the Government over the years, rightly so, to try to frame anti-terrorist legislation to avoid the need to derogate and to restrict derogations to situations where they are absolutely essential, and not derogate as a matter of course. Although the European Court upheld derogation of the Brannigan case, I do not think that we can be satisfied with that. If we can find a way to meet the problem, we should seriously look at it.

Article 5(3) of the European convention refers to people being

"brought promptly before a Judge or other officer authorised by law to exercise judicial power."

We should focus on that phrase.

I am disappointed that, so far in the debate this afternoon, hon. Members are assuming that the alternative to the present procedure is one involving, say, a High Court judge and court proceedings as they are commonly understood in this jurisdiction. That is not the way to proceed. I quite agree with people who say that one cannot involve the judges in the normal way and that one cannot have a hearing in which the intelligence material on which the police desire to detain a person is disclosed to the defendant and the defence adviser, but what is wrong is that people are thinking of conventional court proceedings.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) pointed in his brief intervention to the way out of that. He referred to the continent and France, where people are detained for much longer periods. Those detentions are entirely consistent with the European convention, because they are authorised by a judicial officer. They are not authorised as a result of normal court proceedings on the English common law model, with someone having his or her day in court and barristers and solicitors being briefed on either side; a French juge d'instruction operates on a dossier that contains material, some of which would be admissible in an English court and some of which would not. He considers the dossier and looks at the matters.

That is the sort of proceedings of which we should think. We should think in terms of creating a procedure whereby a judicial officer takes a decision on the basis of a file, which may contain intelligence material disclosed to him and to no one else. It is not the normal court proceedings. It may not strike hon. Members steeped in English common law tradition as court proceedings, but it would satisfy the European convention, because it would be a decision taken by a person who is independent of the judiciary and accustomed to analysing the material. That solution, which was hinted at by Lord Colville in earlier reports, should be considered. It is not that foreign to proceedings in at least one of the jurisdictions in the United Kingdom—Scotland, with its procurator fiscal—which bear so many similarities to the continental systems.

A problem arises because the European Court is staffed mainly by people who operate against the background of a civil law tradition; we are in difficulties with regard to that. There is no problem in adapting our procedures to fit in with my proposed solution.

Reference has been made to the statement by Lord Waddington, then Home Secretary, in 1989. I have examined that statement, and it seems to me that Lord Waddington was not willing to consider the radical new procedure that I have just outlined—that he, too, was thinking in terms of conventional court proceedings. In my view, such proceedings would be inappropriate in this context.

I hinted briefly at my proposed solution in a speech in our equivalent debate last year. I have spelt it out in a little more detail today, because I do not think that hon. Members have considered it sufficiently. I do not know whether the review conducted some years ago, to which the Home Secretary referred, considered such a procedure. Lord Waddington's 1989 statement does not hint at any consideration on his part. I shall be interested to hear whether any reference is made to it in the Home Secretary's winding-up speech.

There has also been some controversy about exclusion orders. I am happy to reiterate the stance that my hon. Friends and I have taken over the years. We consider exclusion orders to be objectionable in principle. I refer to exclusion orders that operate within the United Kingdom, banning people from one part of it and—as hon. Members have said—creating a form of internal exile. We do not object to orders that exclude people from the United Kingdom; we think those quite appropriate. Such action is possible under immigration law, and this legislation simply adds to and reinforces that power.

Exclusion within the United Kingdom—which, as I have said, we find inherently objectionable—is not new or unique, as some hon. Members seem to believe; it repeats legislation introduced in the 1930s. At the time of an IRA bomb campaign launched in 1938, the House responded by introducing legislation that provided for a form of exclusion order. In 1974, faced with another emergency, civil servants in the Home Office blew the dust off the 1939 files and whipped out the legislation again. Wartime controls on movement across the Irish sea were also fairly stringent, but those were slightly different circumstances.

I think that exclusion orders are the lazy way of proceeding: because a precedent was there, people reached for it. There is some merit in examining other possibilities. It occurs to me—although this thought may not be welcome to other hon. Members—that exclusion orders operate on exactly the same legal basis as the power to intern. In terms of the factors that must be considered and the nature of the decision involved, there is no difference between making an exclusion order and internment. It could be said that exclusion orders mean treating Northern

[Mr. David Trimble]

Ireland as one huge internment camp. Some of my hon. Friends are asking, "If we are to take a decision of that nature, why not go the whole hog?"

Another suggested procedure is more detailed surveillance. That is worth looking into, although I do not think that it would be possible without compulsory identity cards, to which some hon. Members would object. We do not share that objection and think that the option should be seriously considered. In any event, however, the European Union may compel the Government to act, and some interesting proposals have been made in that context.

I noted with interest the hon. Member for Sedgefield's observation that no major review had been conducted for seven years. I endorse what was said by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) about the current review, although I do not wish to go into the details. In the past, I have complimented Lord Colville on his reviews, which I have found very helpful but, as the hon. Member for Sedgefield pointed out, those reviews operate within the framework of reference provided by the existing legislation, to determine simply whether powers have been exercised within the terms of the Act. There has been no fundamental reconsideration of the legislation as a whole since 1987, and I see some merit in remedying that.

I would not want such a review to be conducted purely in terms of the prevention of terrorism Act; I think that it should examine anti-terrorism legislation generally. It should take up a point made repeatedly by my party—that there is considerable merit in consolidating the PTA and the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. It is surely anomalous to retain two separate systems, given that they interlock and cannot be considered in isolation.

For example, the arrest power in the PTA is the primary arrest power used in Northern Ireland to deal with terrorism. The vast majority of detention extensions are made in Northern Ireland with regard to Northern Ireland terrorism. I hope that it is in order for me to refer to amendments that have been moved in the current Committee stage of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. The Government have moved an amendment modifying both the PTA and the emergency provisions Act; they have moved new clauses that bring aspects of the latter into the former. That shows the extent to which the two codes overlap.

Never is a single, comprehensive code more necessary than when matters relating to terrorist financing are dealt with. I find it amazing—as did Lord Colville, who commented repeatedly on the fact—that we have two separate codes to deal with that. One relates only to Northern Ireland, the other to England and Wales—as if people thought that the terrorists had not learnt how to move money from London to Belfast, or from London or Belfast to the Isle of Man, the Channel islands or elsewhere. Of course they can do that, and we need more comprehensive legislation to deal with the position.

Page 18 of Mr. Rowe's report refers briefly to the channel tunnel, suggesting that it might enable terrorists to move in and out of the United Kingdom. Of course we should be concerned about that possibility, but we should also be concerned about the tunnel's being a potential target for terrorism. My right hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) mentioned that in a recent debate, referring to what I suppose could be called the Irish dimension. This, too, should be taken seriously.

The Home Secretary referred briefly to the Downing street declaration, describing it as imaginative. The word that comes to mind—particularly given our experience of the declaration—is "fantasy", rather than "imagination". At the time of the declaration, nearly three months ago, the comment was made—on behalf of both Governments—that if terrorists failed to accept the opportunity that the declaration gave them, there would have to be a governmental response and a security response. We have now been waiting nigh on three months; it is obvious that the terrorists will not accept the challenge of the Downing street declaration and abandon their campaign.

It is also obvious that the terrorists are engaged in stringing the Government along. I recall the Prime Minister visiting Belfast before Christmas, and saying very firmly that he would not be strung along by the terrorists. But he has been, and he still is. How much longer will Her Majesty's Government allow themselves to be suckered by the terrorists? How much longer will they allow themselves to be strung along? When will there be an appropriate response? When will the Government screw up their nerve to act? They must act; they cannot allow the present situation to continue.

Specific legislative measures are necessary. I am glad that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is present. He will recall that in May last year the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary took the unusual step of calling publicly for certain changes in the law. I was informed recently that the Secretary of State was still thinking about those matters. I respectfully suggest that he has had long enough to think and should now be able to make up his mind. He may wish to consider some of the measures requested by the Chief Constable as an appropriate response to the current position.

As well as changes in the law, however, we need a change of policy. We need a clear and effective security policy directed at terrorism. It is not a matter of giving the terrorists deadlines; it is simply a matter of acting. That action will have to be sustained by an appropriate political approach designed to disappoint the terrorists, not encourage them. I am sorry to say that far too many of the Government's action in the past year have, in fact, encouraged terrorism and been a disappointment to politics.

Finally, the Home Secretary referred to what is called "loyalist terrorism". It is something that we abhor and condemn. There has been an increase in loyalist terrorism in the past few years, which is something we regret and wish had not happened. I am not providing excuses or justifications for it, but it is important to note that, over the years, there has been inverse relationship between incidents of loyalist terrorism and the level of confidence in the Government.

I can think of nothing that the Government have done in the past year that has increased confidence in their intentions and policies, but I can think of many things that have reduced confidence. I do not regard the Downing street declaration as the biggest problem in this respect. The biggest problem, and what has caused most dismay among my constituents, was the revelation of what the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was pleased to call "contacts" between the Government and the Provisional

IRA—I believe that another word would be a more accurate description. Such contacts have significantly reduced the level of confidence.

I fear that, by their actions in the past few months, the Government have been sowing the wind. I hope that there will be no whirlwind. I appeal to all those who might be contemplating terrorist activities not to engage in them. I do not wish anything that I have said to be regarded as giving comfort to anyone involved, because my party condemns and abhors such terrorism. The Government have to think seriously about their responsibility in these matters. We wish to see terrorism defeated. We shall support the legislation tonight, but we see no good reason why consideration should not also be given to the details of the legislation and to ways in which they could perhaps be modified and improved to increase support for the legislation in the House.

5.31 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). I listened carefully to what he said and I agree with much of what he said. In a moment I shall briefly pick up on one or two of his observations.

Some repetitiveness inevitably characterises these debates. As has been said, this is the fifth time that we have debated the renewal order, and the ancestry of the debate goes back 20 years. More seasoned participants adopt a well entrenched position. I want to avoid repetitiveness as much as possible and develop primarily a matter that has today received little attention. However, in passing, I throw out a comment to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). I listened with great care to the thesis that he propounded and I assure him that I do not for one moment doubt the absolute sincerity of his opposition to terrorism. However, his argument fails to convince.

I share the conclusion offered by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who has just left his seat, that the hon. Member for Sedgefield gives the impression that he is concerned primarily about watching his back and maintaining party unity. He does not convince us that the review of the type that he seeks is justified because the issues with which he is concerned are mainly those of the Executive, not the judiciary.

As for the Rowe report, I shall pass briefly over the emotive and controversial issues of exclusion orders, detention and the extension of detention except that I shall pick up on a theme raised by the hon. Member for Upper Bann. I do not share his negative assessment of exclusion orders. I noted with interest that on page 7 of the report Mr. Rowe writes:

"The general view expressed to me . . . is that the exclusion order is a useful device in the prevention of terrorism."

I share that view because I believe that the value of exclusion orders lies largely in the fact that, when executed, they disrupt the command and communication structures of terrorist units. Without those command and communication structures being effective, the units cannot operate. In addition, the man or woman who is excluded becomes a marked person and it is then that much harder for a terrorist organisation to make use of him or her.

I wholeheartedly accept what the report has to say about detention orders and the extension of them. Page 14 of the report states:

"My conclusion is that the power of extension of detention is necessary, and it should continue".

I am reassured by the argument that he summarises. He finds compatibility between the Act and article 15 of the European convention on human rights which refers to the exceptional circumstances of a

"public emergency threatening the life of a nation".

Also in passing, I mention video/audio recording. Page 14 of the report states:

"The RUC officers who have experience of investigation of terrorist offences express the view that their efforts would be impaired by a recording of interviews as suspects would be less ready to co-operate and give information."

I share that opinion. I acknowledge that it is a controversial issue and it is one to which Mr. Rowe said that he would return later.

It is important to realise the potential dangers of audio/video recording. One danger is that the identity of the interrogating officer might become known to terrorist organisations. Secondly, if a detainee co-operates and his co-operation becomes known to terrorist organisations, his family might be threatened. Of course, any public availability of interviews with detainees could well reveal intelligence sources and damage further security operations. One must tread very carefully indeed before embarking on compulsory video/audio recording.

The issue that I wish to emphasise is one that has received very little attention today. It is the chapter—if one can call it that—on how to attack terrorist funds. I regretted the fact that Mr. Rowe's comments on the matter were not more detailed. My main concern is that perhaps not enough has been achieved by the powers contained in the Act. On page 19 of his report Mr. Rowe states:

"The first batch of sections, on contributions and forfeitures, have not as yet produced many prosecutions."

That puzzles me because I was not aware of any successful prosecutions. Unless I am misreading the appendix to the report, I can see no reference to statistics of that nature. It might be helpful next year if statistics and details of what is happening in terms of attacking terrorist funds were added to the report.

Mr. Rowe nevertheless concludes on page 19:

"They"—

the powers of the Act relevant for attacking terrorist funds—

"are not otiose; and they should be maintained as a significant part of the Act."

He identifies two reasons for that. The first is as follows:

"Voluntary disclosures under section 12 are a regular event; there were 300 in 1993 . . . and the disclosures led to useful information."

On the following page, Mr. Rowe says that the machinery of section 17 and schedule 7

"have uncovered racketeering schemes (which fund terrorism), and have disrupted the flow of money to terrorists."

Quality intelligence and the disruption of the flow of funds to terrorists are important achievements but they are not the primary purpose of the Act. The primary purpose of the powers is the confiscation of terrorist funds which, it seems, is not being achieved.

I am told that it is currently relatively easy to identify a commercial or financial enterprise in which terrorists may be involved. It is quite easy to identify that funds are going from such an enterprise to terrorists. The difficulty lies in producing the evidence which would convince a court that the funds that are being extracted from that operation are being used for terrorist purposes. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will take note that that issue should receive serious attention.

[Mr. Andrew Hunter]

I should have thought it advisable either to assume that a known terrorist is using at least a portion of what he or she draws from commercial activity to promote terrorism, or to reverse the onus of proof so that commercial activities of known terrorists are assumed to be used to finance terrorism, unless he or she can prove otherwise. That point is worthy of further consideration.

Finally, perhaps the point most worthy of mention is that the renewal order should receive our full support. I regard it as an essential weapon in the armoury of the fight against terrorism.

5.40 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The procedure which Parliament has in place for the annual review of this extraordinary legislation, which curbs normal liberties to which we adhere and regard as part of our civilisation, is necessary and important. It is important because it gives the House the opportunity to consider the justification for its continuance and to put forward any considerations that have arisen since it was last reviewed, which may lead to a change of view about its relevance and importance to the task to which it must contribute.

Since the past debate on the renewal of the PTA, the general picture of terrorism in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland must still give rise to deep concern. In Great Britain, there have been 49 terrorist incidents, three deaths and 124 persons injured. In Northern Ireland, there have been 730 incidents, 84 deaths and 826 people injured. In those circumstances, it must be said that terrorism remains a present threat, which we cannot in any way diminish.

The debate allows a further opportunity to pay tribute to all those in the armed services and in the security services who take enormous personal risks on behalf of us all and to whose judgment and advice we must pay especial attention.

Since we last considered the order, there have been two matters which merit consideration in the debate. The first is the Downing street declaration. It is with that and the Sinn Fein's response to it especially in mind, that I regard the initiative of the Labour party spokesman, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), as neither timely nor appropriate. His proposal that we should—

Mr. Mandelson: The hon. Gentleman is isolated and completely out of step.

Mr. Maclennan: If the hon. Member wishes to intervene, I would be happy to give way.

Mr. Mandelson: Absolutely not.

Mr. Maclennan: I heard him say, and perhaps the *Official Report* has recorded, that he said that I was out of step. My view, which is widely shared, is that the proposal that there should be an inquiry is untimely and would send precisely the wrong signals to Sinn Fein, which is plainly not taking steps to distance itself from its military wing, and which rejected as recently as at its conference of the past weekend, the opportunity to pick up the challenge to renounce terrorism, put to it by no one more honourable than the leader of the SDLP, the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume). When Sinn Fein is showing no willingness to do that, it seems inappropriate that the House should communicate any doubts about the necessity of continuing the battle against terrorism and of using those instrumentalities which the security forces in the country regard as appropriate for that task.

It is extremely unfortunate that we have not seen more progress towards the ending of terrorism in the past year, which may have made it appropriate to consider the effectiveness of especial aspects of the PTA. I am afraid that it is clear that those who are in charge of the security of our citizens have not in any way modified their view of the necessity of the Act in all its aspects.

That view is supported robustly and clearly by Mr. John Rowe in his report. It is playing with words to suggest that it is not any part of his job to consider the appropriateness or necessity of the measures contained in the Act. He quite explicitly states that the Act must be continued and makes no exception to his general view in the context of his consideration of its particular components.

Mr. Howard: On that point, does the hon. Gentleman accept that, in previous years, points have been put to Mr. Rowe's predecessors on the scope of powers and the need for them, as well as the way in which the powers work in a practical fashion, and that, in the parliamentary answer which I gave, observations were invited to be submitted to Mr. Rowe when I announced his appointment? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the proper course for the Labour party to have taken, had it been serious about its intention of having the points which were raised by the hon. Member for Sedgefield considered by an independent person in the context of an independent review, was to put them to Mr. Rowe?

Mr. Maclennan: That is a perfectly reasonable assumption. It was open to the Labour party to raise the points if it had thought it appropriate. It would have been open for it to ask Mr. Rowe to consider whether a wider inquiry, involving more people, would have assisted him in the discharge of his task. I see no evidence that the Labour party chose to do that.

Whereas in previous years I may have been more sympathetic to the Labour party's proposals—on previous occasions I have also spoken of the desirability of an all-party approach to such matters—its current proposal is completely untimely and remarkably inapposite. It is not only inapposite in respect of the general operation of the Act, but in respect of the especial provisions to which the hon. Member for Sedgefield drew attention.

With regard to the extension of detention, I was among those who argued most strongly in the House with the right hon. Gentleman who is now the Foreign Secretary that steps should be taken to seek to comply with the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the Brogan case. I talked at length with the right hon. Gentleman about the practicality of so doing. I am certain that it is right that the extension of detention, under the terms of the Act, amounts to an executive decision and is not a purely judicial matter.

In order to try to bring the matter within the European convention, because I see how the fact that we have had to seek to abrogate our obligations under the convention could lead to our being put in the international dock of world opinion, I was prepared to go to great lengths to discover whether there were practical alternatives.

However, with the greatest respect to the hon. Member for Upper Bann, to whose views on such matters I always listen with great attention, I am not greatly attracted by the

proposal that we should create a new executive role for judges—or at least, an executive role to be discharged in the name of a judge. It seems to me that either there is an executive procedure or there is a judicial procedure. The hybrid proposal made by the hon. Member for Upper Bann might satisfy certain civilian lawyers on the continent, but it would not alter one whit the reality of what happens.

The practical objections that have been raised are profound and important. Having heard the views of those charged with the ultimate responsibility, not least those of the Foreign Secretary, whom I believe gave the matter considerable attention, I believe that the Government have taken the correct course.

I hope that it will not be necessary for us to continue with the provisions much longer, but that must depend on the success of the war against terrorism. I feel fortified in holding that view by the Brannigan and McBride case, which the hon. Member for Upper Bann mentioned. That case makes it plain that the European Court of Human Rights has understood and accepted the case for derogation, and considers that our action is entirely in line with the European convention.

It is extremely unfortunate that—to use the words of the court—there is a

"public emergency threatening the life of the nation".

However, in the year of the Bishopsgate bomb in the heart of the City and many other appalling episodes, not least the Warrington killing, it is hard to quarrel with the view expressed by the court. So, with great regret, I see no option but to accept that the powers to extend detention for five days beyond the original 48 hours must be continued.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield rested part of his case for review on the exclusion orders, but I have discussed the practical effects with senior security officers in this country and I have been wholly persuaded by what they said about the practical necessity of retaining exclusion orders.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann spoke about detailed surveillance as a possible alternative to exclusion orders, but it appears to me that detailed surveillance is what exclusion orders may make possible, certainly in the Province. I doubt whether without exclusion orders detailed surveillance in Great Britain would be possible—whether it would be within the capacity of our security services to carry out effective surveillance of all the people currently subject to exclusion orders.

I hope that we shall be able to return to a consensual position on this matter as soon as may be. I hope that the Labour party will reconsider its position; it is only right that it should do so. The House and the country would be reassured if that party could accept that, notwithstanding the peculiarity and exceptional nature of the measures, it is necessary to give them our endorsement for another year—another year in which great political developments may alter the face of terrorism in our country.

5.54 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Listening to the debate, I feel that we should spare a thought for the families of the victims—the widows, the mothers and the children—who have had to listen to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) seemingly putting the terrorist before the civil liberties of their loved ones. *[Interruption.]* It is all very well for Opposition Members to say, "For God's sake," but all I can say to them is: think of those whose lives we are still trying to save and of those who have already lost their lives.

I do not believe that in, his heart of hearts, the hon. Member for Sedgefield really wants to stop terrorism. If he really meant what he says, he would pull out all the stops and close all the loopholes to prevent terrorists from crossing the country to carry out their evil deeds. He gave us a series of crocodile tears.

I shiver slightly to think that the Labour party really imagines that it could one day be a party of government. Could it really be so irresponsible as to defy the advice of the police and the security forces and open the floodgates to seriously active terrorists? That is the body of people we are really discussing. The fact that the Labour party is carrying out that policy to satisfy its own extreme elements is sickening and appalling.

As John Rowe pointed out in his independent report on the PTA, the whole point of the prevention of terrorism Act is to prevent an attack before it happens. I find it spurious that we should be faced with a smokescreen dismissing that respected report, as if we could string out events and find another report better tailored to the interests of the Opposition. Mr. Rowe emphasised how important it was to deter terrorists:

"to make it more difficult for them to put their plans into action".

He added that resulting intelligence had enabled the security forces to discover a bomb factory, and so to prevent bombing incidents.

The protection of law-abiding citizens should be put before arguments about the civil liberties of terrorists. What about the civil liberties of the victims? I have in my pocket something that I choose to keep with me all the time—a piece of shrapnel that I picked up in a Dungannon housing estate that had been blasted by an IRA mortar attack. What could be more significant and memorable than the sharpness of that nasty little item?

We need to remember the catalogue of incidents. I am grateful that the Home Secretary reminded us clearly of all the events in the past year. On the mainland of Great Britain alone three people have been killed and 124 injured. The police in Great Britain alone—this takes no account of incidents in Northern Ireland—engaged in anti-terrorist operations and recovered 2.5 tonnes of explosives and 400 weapons. We must think of the catalogue of disaster and tragedy that could have followed if the police had not been able to uncover those items and if they had been inhibited by the lack of a prevention of terrorism Act.

If the Labour party were serious about being tough on crime, it would stop whingeing and twisting to please its own side. Turning internal exile and exclusion orders for terrorists into injury to a person's liberty completely misses the point.

Mr. Rowe also said:

"There are strong arguments in favour of retaining the exclusion order. Terrorist activity continues with as much ferocity as ever."

As he points out, a significant part of the Provisional IRA campaign takes place in Great Britain, and acts of terrorism perpetrated in Great Britain are regarded by the IRA as highly important. An exclusion order made against a terrorist who has expertise and experience makes it more difficult for the PIRA to use that man or woman over here.

Arguments in favour of civil rights and the liberty of the citizen must be balanced by the threat of terrorism, which is as great as ever. There is a high risk of death or injury from these people, and it is our duty to save lives whenever we can.

[Lady Olga Maitland]

We should show our gratitude to the security forces —to the Army, the Metropolitan police, to special branch and to the national joint unit based in New Scotland Yard. We should be especially grateful to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which has to bear the brunt of this work. Indeed, I have seen the great dedication with which its members carry it out. I have seen the attention to detail given by the security forces: they check, check and check again. They maintain an enduring vigilance.

I have visited Castlereagh police station and discussed the work of the police officers who deal with terrorist suspects. I endorse the remarks in this respect of my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), who referred to page 14 of the report, on the subject of closed circuit television monitoring of interviews. It would be well nigh impossible to record those interrogations, because that would seriously inhibit terrorists who might otherwise provide vital information.

In the fight against terrorism we depend on intelligence; very largely, that intelligence comes from the people who are interviewed.

Mr. Mallon: I note the hon. Lady's point. Is she saying that it is legitimate to subject someone to interrogation as a means of obtaining intelligence about someone else?

Lady Olga Maitland: It is. We should follow up every line of interrogation in order to save lives. Not unusually, after some days of silence suspects suddenly decide to talk. What they say is often most revealing—it can save many lives—but that would never happen if the suspect felt that his colleagues might discover the fact that he had talked about their activities—if he believed that he and his family might be dead within days. As my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke said, the lives of interrogation officers would also be seriously put at risk.

The police need skill and patience to deal with difficult suspects, who sit in silence for days on end. They sing tunes, they deliberately perform degrading acts in front of the interviewing officers as a way of insulting them and the law, yet we expect the highest professionalism from the RUC as its members continue to perform their difficult tasks.

I have nothing but praise for the security forces, who do so much at such great personal risk to save so many lives. I deplore the attitude of anyone who chooses to vote against renewal of the prevention of terrorism Act. Doing that, I fear, could send the wrong message to Sinn Fein and the IRA, whose members might believe that they could string us along again and attempt all sorts of devious machinations. They would hope that by continuing in that vein they might be given succour by the Labour party if that dreadful day ever came to pass when it became the party of government. I believe that this debate will ensure that the public will vote again and again for a party with a responsible attitude to terrorism.

6.4 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I am one of those whose attitude, by definition, will be deplored by the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), because I am going to vote against renewal of the Act, just as I have always done.

I detected a remarkable contradiction in a point made by the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) and by two subsequent speakers. Enthusiastically they support this prevention of terrorism legislation, which has been on the statute book for 20 years; at the same time, they question the efficacy and wisdom of the joint declaration, which has been in existence for two and a half months. That is to ignore the central point about the joint declaration, which is that it was not written for Sinn Fein or the IRA, or for the loyalist paramilitary groupings. It was written for all the people on the island of Ireland. It embodies a set of principles that form a basis on which agreement can be sought. Hon. Members who question the declaration in this contradictory fashion clearly misunderstand its purpose.

I have listened to a number of these debates over the years. Today the old allegation has been repeated again —that those who oppose the legislation are at best misguided and at worst soft on terrorism. I find that objectionable, because that line of thought sees this type of emergency legislation not for what it is but as a litmus test for sound, anti-terrorist credentials. As the *Evening Standard* of 10 March observed, this legislation is used as a litmus test to establish who is soft on terrorism and who has sound anti-terrorist credentials.

I will take no lessons from anyone on the subject of terrorism and violence, or my opposition to them. I have lived in the midst of terrorism all my life, and I spent 25 years working in politics against those involved in violence —not from the cosiness of a television studio or a forum such as this House but on the streets and in the towns. I know what it is to have my name and face plastered on walls and to be described as an informer and a traitor—as someone worthy of execution. That is why I need no lectures about being strongly against terrorism. Nor do I need lectures on the rights of Members of this House to question any legislation.

I believe that this legislation must be questioned, first, because in three fundamental respects it deviates from normal law. It is therefore right and essential to criticise it. It has been effectively criticised by many speakers, not least the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) today. Such deviations from the norm must certainly be subjected to questioning.

The legislation should also be questioned on the ground that it involves a derogation from the European convention on human rights, in respect of the seven-day detention period—a provision supposed to be implemented only in time of war or other emergency. That in itself is reason enough to question the Act, and I intend to do just that.

I also question the Act because ours is the only country in Europe that allows for internal exile—a curious way for the Conservative and Unionist party to express its profound commitment to the Union. What does that tell us about attitudes to nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland, and about attitudes to unionism? The Conservatives' point of view seems to be, "We will have your votes, thank you, when we need them, but you can have the terrorists and all that that entails." It is an affront to all the people of the north of Ireland that this type of internal exile should be permitted. Irrespective of its merits or otherwise in legal terms, the sheer political implications to which it gives rise demand that we question it.

The third reason is that its application and implementation has created a context within which appalling miscarriages of justice can take place, and have taken place. We should not overlook the context created by

emergency legislation. Since the implementation of the prevention of terrorism Act 20 years ago, at least 15 cases brought under its terms have been deemed appalling miscarriages of justice—not by me, or by nationalist opinion, but by the highest courts in this land. That must give rise to disquiet within every hon. Member who values the highest standards and integrity of the judicial and legal process.

I believe that the Act does something else. There has been an abject failure to bring to justice those responsible for the miscarriages of justice, because the attitude of mind that we have heard from the Floor of the House today does not allow those responsible to face and be subject to justice themselves.

I will give examples. In the Birmingham case, the powers given to the police under the legislation in effect corrupted the people who were charged with upholding the law. Hon. Members should not take my word for it—that has been established beyond doubt in terms of the decisions made within their own organisation. The same applies in the Guildford case. The most appalling part of it all in terms of the miscarriages of justice is the consequent impossibility of charging and convicting those who did carry out those crimes.

The imperative within the legislation and its urgency means that, in effect, the people who carried out the Birmingham and Guildford bombings and the other murders in the Judith Ward case are walking scot free. That is not as a result of the legislation, but because of the context in which the legislation placed the police and the process of justice, and the determination to get results.

Mr. Howard: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument closely and with great interest. I am sure that he would not want to give a misleading impression. Will he accept that the powers which we are discussing were not used in either the Birmingham or the Guildford case?

Mr. Mallon: I accept that readily, but I am talking about the context which it creates where there is an imperative on the police to get results. That, and the pressure of public opinion, was responsible for a lot of the reprehensible action. We must guard against that in all types of emergency legislation.

Perhaps one of the most pertinent insights into the retention of this legislation in its present form was given by the then Home Secretary, Sir Leon Brittan, in 1983. He gave two reasons for the retention of the powers of detention. The powers acted

"first, as a deterrent to persons other than the people who have been detained".

The implication of that, and the enormity of that implication, is that detaining people and taking away their freedom without any judicial input for up to seven days should be a legitimate means of deterring other people from crime. The fact that that was said by the then Home Secretary seems to be an appalling statement for someone who was in charge of the implementation of the highest standards of law.

The second reason which Sir Leon Brittan gave, and which was reiterated by the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam, was that it

"enabled information to be obtained that was of direct value in the battle against terrorism, even though it did not lead to action against the people concerned."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1983; Vol. 47, c. 55-56.]

Is it right to detain innocent people for the purpose of obtaining information from them?

The enormity of that can be seen in the figures for the north of Ireland. In 1993, 1,641 people were detained, and 379 people were charged. That means that 1,262 people were not charged and were released in the terms of the law of this country that they were innocent until proven guilty. I wonder how many of those 1,262 people were being used as a trawl for information and how many were being questioned while detained on reasonable suspicion that they may have been involved in and concerned with terrorist activity. That is the corrosive effect that such legislation can have on those who are charged with implementing and upholding the law.

Exclusion orders are perhaps the most odious powers accorded to the Home Secretary through the Act. Great play has been made of the fact that the number of exclusion orders currently in force is the lowest at the end of any year since 1975. Let me say that 71 exclusion orders is 71 too many.

Leaving aside the dubious legal ethics of such orders, do the Government believe that by imposing an exclusion order they are solving the problem? At most, they are shifting the problem to Northern Ireland, where they seem content to let it fester. In any event, where is the redress of an innocent person who is condemned to exclusion on the say-so of the Home Secretary? Where is the fundamental right of a person to present his or her side of the story? The Home Secretary does not need a burden of proof, and he does not even have to state his reason for excluding someone. There is no possibility that a person excluded can realistically challenge his exclusion. If ever there was a patent need for a review of this legislation, that surely must be it.

I have one simple question for all hon. Members: by and large, who are the people who are subject to this legislation in Britain? Lorry drivers, ordinary people going on their holidays, young people who just happen to wear jeans and have long hair and people going about their business normally, as any person would or should. Such people make up the vast majority of those who are detained for short periods under this legislation. They have the stigma of detention on them when they return home, and we know what that can mean in Northern Ireland terms.

Let me refer to the extension of detention. The power to extend a person's detention under the Act is one which I think is manifestly exercised in a rather automatic way by the Home Secretary. It causes traumatic experiences for the detainee, who may not have had an opportunity to speak to anyone other than the police for 48 hours, not to mention a lawyer.

In 1993, not a single application for extension submitted by the police in Britain to the Home Secretary was refused. There were 29 in all, and that is more than double the number in 1992. That strongly suggests the need at minimum for a more rigorous examination of the applications for extension. The review of Mr. Rowe states that, when the Royal Ulster Constabulary apply to the Northern Ireland Office for an extension of detention, the usual explanation offered for the request is "reliable intelligence".

The fact that 77 per cent. of detentions in Northern Ireland do not lead to criminal charges must cast some doubt on the "reliable intelligence" which is offered by the RUC. Although the reviewer of the Act states that he could find no correlation between the length of time specified in the request for extension or detention and the time needed, he explains that by referring to the uncertainty of forensic

[Mr. Mallon]

evidence. However, elsewhere in the review is the assertion that the police have built up considerable expertise in that very area. Which are we to believe?

I suggest that applications to extend a person's detention—as with the reviews of exclusion orders—are akin to a cosmetic exercise which has been designed to paper over the gross abuses of personal freedom which are allowed by the Act.

I shall not go into detail on the right to a solicitor, but I remind the Home Secretary of one case. It is the case of a constituent of mine, a middle-aged man called Patrick Murphy, coming up to Christmas in 1992. He was an alcoholic. He did not remember where he was. He was charged on the say-so of a cab driver. He was identified and charged with bombings in London. If it had not been for the generosity of spirit of people in the Alcoholics Anonymous organisation, who went to the police after he had been charged and said that he was at a meeting that they held, his charge would have proceeded and he would have been in no position whatever to make a defence. That is another example of how this type of legislation can go so badly wrong.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): If I understood the hon. Gentleman correctly, he said that the procedures were a cosmetic exercise for covering up gross abuses of personal liberty. Will he accept from me that officials—I speak of the Northern Ireland jurisdiction—first subject applications to very careful scrutiny before they are referred to the Secretary of State or, in his absence, another Minister, and that it is certainly the practice to cut down on applications or even to refuse them completely? I do not have the statistics in my head, but I am well familiar with cases in which I have refused the full amount that has been requested. So to suggest, as the hon. Gentleman has done, that the procedure is a cosmetic exercise does great injustice to officials—I leave aside any concern for Ministers.

Mr. Mallon: I take the point that the Secretary of State makes. I could have put my point better. I should like to withdraw the word "cosmetic". I do that with the same grace as the Secretary of State has made the point to me. May I ask him to read into the record the number of times that he has refused requests for an extension on grounds which were sustainable by him? That is the point that I am trying to get at. I regret that I have used words in a way which would cast aspersions on both the Secretary of State and the officials involved. I adjust the wording accordingly. Nevertheless, I should like to see the figures.

The rate of charging worries me greatly. Yet another element of the Act which causes concern not only to people in Northern Ireland but to members of the legal profession is the very low rate of charging. That may seem strange coming from someone who argues from the point of view from which I argue. Of the 145 people detained in Britain in 1993, only 30, or less than a quarter, were subsequently charged. Let us remember that those 145 had been detained, so that the police had ample time and opportunity to question them at length.

When one considers that a total of 309 people were examined for more than one hour under the Act, one gets a truer picture of how low the charging rate is. Only 30 out of the combined total of 354 means that fewer than 10 per cent. of those whom the police wanted to question were subsequently charged. I am trying to see what is the problem. Are detentions being made on a basis for which there is no reasonable suspicion that would lead to charges?

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): Neither I nor, I am sure, anyone in the House doubts the hon. Gentleman's courage in facing terrorists and all their works. However, he gives the impression that his main concern is civil liberties. As one who has been on the receiving end of an IRA bomb and has been hospitalised as a result, as was my wife, I perceive the greatest threat to civil liberties to be terrorism itself. I feel that the hon. Gentleman is getting the balance wrong. I accuse him of no more than that. It is an important point that I wish he would take on board.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for making it. It is a valid point. However, the real bulwark against terrorism and the means of defeating terrorism is not legislation such as this but the attitude that we can foster within the entire community. Of course I am concerned about civil liberties. They are the very basis of our society and the basis of that within our society which the IRA, the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force seek to undermine. We should not facilitate them in that.

The position in Northern Ireland in 1993 was even more worrying in terms of charging. Out of a total of 1,641 people detained, 379 were charged. The significant point is that 445 people had their detention extended. I shall leave that question with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I know that he will want to respond to it.

I pose the question whether the legislation, as it exists, can be properly accommodated within a civilised society without doing irreparable damage to the process of law, to the police and to those who are charged with enforcing the law. There must surely be a question over that. Will damage be done to the process of justice? Its highest standards and integrity have in the past been eroded by gross miscarriages of justice. Will it do damage to the body politic? Will it erode the proper conviction that the law, the courts, the police and legislators are there to protect people's rights, not diminish them; to defend the innocent, not to make him or her a potential subject of detention for the purpose of intelligence gathering? Lastly, will it do damage to society as a whole and the highest standards of civil liberties which are part and parcel of any decent society?

6.25 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) expressed some indignation that his meetings with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary had been leaked. I do not condone the leaking of the details of that meeting, but I find it somewhat ironic and not a little amusing that the Labour party is now suffering some embarrassment as a result of those leaks. We have seen the Labour party only too happy to take advantage of other leaks and play party politics with them. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) is a pastmaster at using leaks from Government Departments to his party political advantage.

The history of the debate is clear enough. The Labour Government in 1974 introduced the prevention of terrorism Act. That followed some shocking atrocities, not

least the Birmingham and Guildford pub bombings. The Act was supported by the Conservative Opposition. In 1976, the Conservative party's support was required by the then Labour Government because 35 Labour Members of Parliament voted against the renewal of the PTA. That was a foretaste of things to come.

Until 1980 the Labour party supported the annual renewal. That was important because it is necessary to have a united, all-party response to terrorism. So what changed thereafter? Sadly, the threat posed by the terrorists did not recede. What changed was the political outlook of the Labour party. As we all know, it was hijacked by the left wing. Today, 14 years later, there is a sufficient number of left-wing Labour Members of Parliament who believe in Irish republicanism and who have enough power within the Labour party to stop the so-called modernisers, of whom the hon. Member for Sedgefield is a prime example, from swinging today's Labour party behind support for the renewal of PTA.

There is a clear message here for the electorate. While the left wing of the Labour party may be keeping its head down, it is clearly still a force to be reckoned with in the Labour party. Last year we had the shocking spectacle of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) travelling to the United States of America, of his own volition, to give evidence on behalf of a convicted terrorist and against the British Government, who sought that terrorist's extradition to the United Kingdom. That was disgraceful behaviour. It sent completely the wrong message to the terrorists and to many Irish Americans who, sadly, do not understand the position in Northern Ireland and believe that there is majority support there for the republican movement. The hon. Member for Brent, East contributed to that lack of understanding in America.

The truth is that the prevention of terrorism Act plays a most important role in the battle against terrorism. It is both vital and necessary, as the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) has said. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has already given us some figures of the number of people who were detained under the Act in Northern Ireland last year: 450 were detained for longer than 48 hours, of whom 114 were later charged with serious offences. In Great Britain 13 people were given long custodial sentences for serious terrorist offences, following detention under the Act.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield mentioned the concern expressed by the Ulster Unionists about exclusion orders. He also referred to the concern expressed by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) about the lack of a judicial element in the authorisation of detention orders. Despite their concerns, however, they vote for the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and a failure to do so would send the wrong message.

Labour's failure to vote for renewal of the Act sends the wrong message. I will not claim that Labour is soft on terrorism, but if its members vote against the Act, on what I must say, having listened to the hon. Member for Sedgefield, are not very convincing grounds, it will suggest to the terrorists a certain lack of determination, will and unity on the part of the whole political establishment in the fight against terrorism.

I hope that the hon. Member will throw off the shackles of his own republican-leaning left wing and vote with us when we come to renew the Act this time next year. In the meantime, however, I am only too happy to vote for the renewal of the Act this evening.

6.31 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): Because of the shortage of time, and not because I want to be discourteous to the hon. Members who have already spoken, I hope that they will forgive me if I do not directly refer to their contributions, apart from the speech of the hon. Lady the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) which I thought was pathetic and shoddy. But never mind, perhaps it is par for the course on this subject.

Very few people listening to the Home Secretary in the House today were present when the Labour Government introduced the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act in 1974 in response to the bombings in Birmingham and Guildford. In the aftermath of those terrible atrocities and in response to justifiable public outrage, we rushed this emergency legislation through the House—I think it took 36 hours non-stop. At the time, practically every member of the Labour party, myself included, believed that the Act was a necessary but temporary measure. I voted for it and continued to do so.

The prevention of terrorism Act, however, has now been in existence for 20 years and self-evidently can no longer be called temporary. Provisions that in 1974 were felt to be justified as emergency, short-term measures cannot be justified as permanent features of a parliamentary democracy. I speak, in particular, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield has done, of exclusion orders and of seven-day detention by executive order. Those powers threaten the very basis of a free and democratic society and this can only strengthen the paramilitaries.

We have opposed and continue to oppose the Act as presently constructed not only because of its corrosive effect on civil liberties but because it simply has not worked. After 20 years of the Act, Northern Ireland is internally the most politically violent unit in the European Union. The draconian powers that it contains have not prevented terrorism; if anything, they have created a vicious cycle of paramilitary violence and state repression which have become mutually reinforcing. That can only undermine the rule of law and the prospects for a political settlement in Northern Ireland.

It is for those reasons that the Labour party withdrew its support for the Act in 1983 and it is for those reasons that the Labour team thereafter has consistently articulated its objections to the use of seven-day detention without judicial review and the use of exclusion orders. It is a pity that it now becomes clear that the Government have rejected the offer by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield of bipartisanship on this important issue. The Government's decision to continue seven-day detention without judicial review means that Britain will have to derogate from its international obligations, which damages our reputation for integrity and the rule of law.

In the holding centres, detainees can be questioned without knowing what crime they are accused of and without the right to a solicitor for two days. To make matters worse, they are also denied the safeguard of audio-taping of interviews. When the Home Secretary replies to the debate, I should be grateful if he would inform the House if the taping experiment in England will cease at the end of 1994. If so, will he confirm that the experiment will be properly and independently evaluated? Now that the Royal Ulster Constabulary have had time to adjust to taping under the Police and Criminal Evidence

[Mr. Roger Stott]

Act 1984, there can be no excuse for further delay in the introduction of taping for suspects detained under emergency legislation.

Several hon. Members mentioned Sir Louis Blom-Cooper's report. It is a pity that it is not before us today.

I am conscious of the shortage of time, but there is one issue that I wish to draw to the attention of the Home Secretary. My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield and other hon. Members have spoken about the appalling consequences of exclusion orders. The House may recall that last year a young man by the name of John Matthews was returning from London to his home in Derry when he was arrested by security forces at Heathrow. John Matthews is a young graduate who could not find work in Northern Ireland; he came over to this country to live with his aunt and became a hospital porter. He was arrested under the prevention of terrorism Act and was held in police custody for seven days.

John Matthews was brought before a magistrate and charged with causing an explosion in the City of London that was likely to endanger life. He was accused of hijacking a taxi in north London and ordering the driver to take a bomb to Downing street. The taxi was abandoned in Holborn where it exploded without causing injury. John Matthews was then sent to Belmarsh prison as a category A remand prisoner and he remained there for 10 weeks.

I became involved in his case when members of Mr. Matthews' family came to see me. After a long and detailed discussion, they convinced me that their son had never been involved in IRA terrorism and was not a member of any terrorist organisation. I decided to go and see him in Belmarsh prison. I arrived with his uncle, to be informed by the prison authorities that he was about to be released and would shortly appear in the magistrates court.

On hearing this, his uncle and I went to the court, where we were joined by John Matthews's mother and father. When he was brought before the stipendiary magistrate —by coincidence, it was the same magistrate who had sent him to Belmarsh originally—the solicitor representing the Crown Prosecution Service announced that all charges were being withdrawn since, having reviewed the evidence available, it could not offer a realistic prospect of a conviction.

At that point the magistrate cross-examined the prosecuting solicitor, pointing out that, at the previous hearing, it had been indicated to him that the prosecution had identity and forensic evidence. It now appeared that there was no evidence whatever against John Matthews. The stipendiary magistrate then turned to John Matthews, in my hearing and in that of the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), and told John that he had received references of the utmost distinction about him and that he could leave the court without a stain on his character. Ten minutes later, he was rearrested and placed in a police cell and shortly afterwards the Home Secretary—the right hon. and learned Gentleman sitting across from me now—signed an exclusion order on him. It was made almost immediately after he had left the court a free man.

I have subsequently seen John Matthews in his home city of Derry. He is worried that the exclusion order placed on him and the subsequent comments by the Home Secretary could make him a target for loyalist paramilitaries. He has absolutely no chance of finding a job and his movements are restricted to Northern Ireland. John Matthews and his lawyers have not been, and will not be, told the reason why the Home Secretary signed the exclusion order.

John Matthews's case is the most disgraceful example of the effect of the power invested in the Home Secretary. If it was thought that evidence could be prejudicial on national security grounds, why was not evidence brought forward and submitted to a judge in camera? If the Home Secretary had evidence against John Matthews, why did not the security services and the Home Secretary produce it in a court of law, which was never done?

Individuals subjected to exclusion orders have not been found guilty of any specific offence in a court of law. They have not even had the opportunity to hear the charges against them. By the end of 1993, 71 people remained the subject of exclusion orders, none of whom had the right to be told why they faced internal exile. The only examples of similar powers in 20th century Europe were those exercised by those notable democrats, Joseph Stalin, Benito Mussolini and General Franco—*[Interruption.]* They were the only such examples in contemporary 20th century history that I could find of such powers being used to place people in internal exile.

I profoundly regret the fact that the Government, particularly the Home Secretary, appear unable to accept the offer made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield—especially as the Ulster Unionist party and my hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) of the Social Democratic and Labour party have said that both those parties would be willing to participate in a review. Even at this eleventh hour, I hope that the Home Secretary will reconsider. If he does not, for the reasons so eloquently given by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield, we shall not vote to renew the order tonight.

6.44 pm

Mr. Howard: I cannot remember a debate in the House in which there has been such a marked contrast between the tone and approach of the Opposition spokesman who opened the debate and that of the Opposition spokesman who wound up the debate.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) was at pains to suggest that all he wanted was a review. He seemed to be saying, "Let us have a review and consider whether there is a different way of achieving the objectives that have been sustained by the exclusion order and the extension of detention." The implication of what the hon. Gentleman was saying—he did not go so far as to say it —was, "If we can be persuaded that there is no other way of achieving those objectives, perhaps we might think again."

From the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) we heard —to use his own words—a sustained, angry denunciation of the powers contained in the Act in terms that made it absolutely clear that he would not be persuaded by a review. He does not want the powers at any price. That dichotomy lies at the heart of the Opposition's attitude to such matters—and has done so from the word go.

Mr. Blair: I shall repeat the offer to the Home Secretary so that there is no doubt about it. It is particularly important to try to unite the House tonight. We have asked for an independent full judicial review—we can discuss the circumstances of it—of those two aspects of the legislation. We wish the House to unite tonight. That has

been agreed by the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), on behalf of the Ulster Unionists and by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) on behalf of the SDLP. I make the Home Secretary that offer tonight with sincerity and ask him to respond in the same way.

Mr. Howard: I was merely describing the contrast in the approach taken by the hon. Member for Sedgefield and that taken by the hon. Member for Wigan. I shall discuss the review in a moment.

It has been a heated debate, touching on fundamental issues. The consequences of our decisions are serious and it is not surprising that passions should run deep. A case can be made for putting civil liberties first. That case was put by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh. My hon. Friends and I reject it for precisely the reasons given by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara)—I quoted the language that he used in my opening speech—in the debates in the House in 1974. One can make a case—as did the hon. Member for Upper Bann—for querying some of the powers and reconsidering them while voting to support the powers in the order because they are necessary in the fight against terrorism.

I do not believe that one can make the sort of arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Sedgefield in his opening speech and then lead one's party in the Lobby against the renewal of the order. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) said—he speaks with the benefit of great experience in such matters—we have difficult decisions before us. But government is about difficult decisions. If we were not prepared to face up to difficult decisions, we would face accusations of dereliction of duty—the accusation that I level against the Labour party this evening.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield repeated his request for an independent review. We have had an annual independent review, which is not confined to the way in which the Act works. It is open to the person conducting the review to consider representations on the extent of the powers. Some of Mr. Rowe's predecessors have received representations to that effect, considered them and included them in their report.

When I announced in a parliamentary answer in December the appointment of Mr. Rowe, I invited representations to be made to him. It was open to the hon. Member for Sedgefield and the Labour party that he represents to make representations to Mr. Rowe at that time in the context of the review that he was undertaking so that they could be given full and proper consideration. The hon. Gentleman should have suggested a review and offered his specific proposals then if he intended them to be taken seriously. The hon. Gentleman failed totally to take advantage of that opportunity. At the appropriate time, the Labour party made no approaches to Mr. Rowe, who was in charge of that review. That was what it should have done.

Mr. Blair: As has been said by other hon. Members, Mr. Rowe is not the person to conduct such a review. If the Home Secretary is interested in achieving agreement on the matter—I cannot see what possible objection there can be—he should agree to the appointment of a senior, respected figure to undertake a review of the specific powers. It would make sense to appoint a judge. Such a review is long overdue and we could then come to an agreement. I cannot for the life of me see what is wrong with such an arrangement.

Mr. Howard: We have had a review of which the hon. Gentleman could have taken advantage, but he conspicuously failed to do so. The suggestion of a review is yet another of the smokescreens for which the hon. Gentleman is becoming famous.

We know the points that are at issue between the parties. There is no mystery about them; they are crystal clear. We know that the Labour party objects to the exclusion order. I have sought to explain to the House today why, in practice, there is no alternative to the exclusion order if we are to achieve the benefits in the fight against terrorism about which the Association of Chief Police Officers has told us.

We also know the issues between us on the subject of the extension of the detention order. I say to the hon. Members for Sedgefield and for Upper Bann that I do not think that there is any mileage in the suggestion of a sort of halfway house between judicial consideration of the matters and allowing the decision-taking process to rest in the hands of the Minister. That option was considered in the Hurd-Waddington review, to which reference has been made, but it was found not to be satisfactory.

In addition, it is extremely unlikely that such a course would find favour with the European Court of Human Rights. The hon. Gentleman placed great emphasis on that aspect of the matter. The European Court of Human Rights would look not at the label attached to the person carrying out the function but at the nature of the function. As, because of its nature, the evidence cannot be made available to the defendant—the defendant cannot be shown the intelligence material that is being relied on—it follows inevitably that the function is not a judicial one and that the benefit, in terms of the European Court of Human Rights, to which the hon. Gentleman referred would not be available.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) asked about detention extension applications turned down by my right hon. Friends and myself. I confirm that it is unusual for applications to be refused, but there are examples of refusal. In the United Kingdom there have been just two such occasions in the past two years. There have been other occasions when a period of detention shorter than that sought by the police was authorised. But, like my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, I counsel the hon. Gentleman against coming to a wrong conclusion about the very great care with which both officials and my right hon. Friends and I consider these applications. After 20 years of exercising these powers, the police, in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland, are well aware of the clear case that they are expected to make out under one of the 14 separate criteria that were codified by Lord Colville in his 1987 report.

I have a sad announcement to make to the House before we conclude this debate. It appears that in the past hour five mortars were fired from the back of a vehicle towards Heathrow airport. The House will be relieved to learn that, from initial reports, it appears that there are no casualties or serious damage. I do not know whether that incident is supposed to send some signal to the House as we conclude our debate on these matters. If it is, there is only one conclusion that the House can responsibly reach. We know that the Association of Chief Police Officers unequivocally

[Mr. Howard]

considers this legislation in its present form to be essential in the fight against terrorism. Over the past few days and during the course of the debate we have had many appeals for unity across the House. There could be no more appropriate moment for displaying unity than in the aftermath of the attack that I have just announced.

I appeal to the Labour party to listen not to me but to the Association of Chief Police Officers and to go into the Aye Lobby in support of the order so that the police may continue to have available to them powers that they consider to be essential. This is the Labour party's opportunity to display unity and to show those who are responsible for the mortar attack that the House of Commons is united and is determined to face them down and to make available to the police the powers that they need to fight terrorism. It is not too late for the Opposition to respond to this appeal. Will they join us in the Aye Lobby in support of these powers? I commend the Order to the House.

Question put:—

The House proceeded to a Division:—

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I left my office in No. 7 Millbank immediately the bell went. I walked briskly all the way here but was unable to get through the door by a fraction of a second. I believe that we now do not have enough time for Members to reach the Chamber walking at a legitimate pace.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I hear the hon. Lady. I took the normal time. The hon. Lady will have read today's Order Paper and she will have recognised that a Division was expected three hours after the commencement of the proceedings. She is an assiduous Member. She would doubtless have worked out when the debate started and when it was going to finish, and I suggest that in future she prepares herself just a few minutes beforehand.

Mrs. Gorman *(seated and covered)*: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There can be nothing further to that point of order at this point of time.

Mrs. Gorman *(seated and covered)*: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I looked at the monitor in my room when the Division bell rang and it showed the time at 6.53 pm—

The House having divided: Ayes 328, Noes 242.

Division No. 157] **[6.50 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCrea, Rev William
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken

Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shaf'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie

Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'ld'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. John Cummings.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th February, be approved.

Departmental Select Committees

7.9 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That Standing Order No. 130 (Select Committees related to government departments) be amended, by leaving out lines 5 to 8, and, in the Table, after the entry relating to National Heritage, by inserting the words—

"9A Northern Ireland Affairs	Northern Ireland Office; administration and expenditure of the Crown Solicitor's Office (but excluding individual cases and advice given by the Crown Solicitor); and other matters within the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (but excluding the expenditure, administration and policy of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Northern Ireland and the drafting of legislation by the Office of the Legislative Counsel).	13 4"

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motion:

That Standing Order No. 99 (Northern Ireland Committee) be amended, in line 2 and in line 15, in each case after the word 'Ireland' by inserting the word 'Grand'.

Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Newton: The purpose of the first motion is to establish a Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee within the existing framework of departmentally related Select Committees, as I announced to the House on 16 December.

As the House knows, since 1980 our Select Committee system has been based on links between individual Committees and one—occasionally more than one—Government Department. As the departmental structure has changed, the Committee structure has changed to reflect it, most recently in 1992 with the setting up of new Select Committees on National Heritage and on Science and Technology.

That pattern follows the recommendations of the Procedure Committee in 1978. The Procedure Committee did not recommend a departmental Select Committee for the Northern Ireland Office, but only because of uncertainty about the future constitutional arrangements for the Province.

In the last Parliament, the Procedure Committee, then —as now, I am happy to say—under the distinguished chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P Emery), carried out a major inquiry into the working of the Select Committee system. The Procedure Committee found that it was

"anomalous from a practical point of view that no separate Select Committee exists to oversee the affairs of Northern Ireland".

In principle, it supported the setting up of a separate Committee, but accepted that the time for it was not ripe —for various reasons somewhat similar to those pertaining in 1978.

The Committee did, however, devote some thought to the size and composition that such a Select Committee might have when circumstances made it appropriate to bring it into being. It recognised that it would be reasonable if not essential for the Government to have a majority on

the Committee, and that the political parties based in Northern Ireland should have reasonable representation on it. For those reasons it saw that the Select Committee would need to be somewhat larger than the other departmentally related Committees, all of which at present have 11 members.

The Committee also recognised that the Committee of Selection's formula for determining the places available to minority parties would need to be amended to take account of the special factors involved.At the end of last year, in a further report, the Committee returned to those issues, and recommended to the House that the Committee should consist of either 13 or 15 Members and that all the Northern Ireland political parties represented in the House should be represented on the Committee.

For some time, then, the question has been not whether there should be a Northern Ireland Select Committee, but when.

I told the House before Christmas that, in response to the Procedure Committee's recommendation, the Government had come to the view that the time for a Northern Ireland Select Committee had now come. That judgment was made—I accept it was an act of judgment —taking account of all the relevant political considerations in Northern Ireland. I am sure that there will be a widespread welcome in the House for a move that puts parliamentary accountability in this respect on all fours with the arrangements in relation to other Government Departments.

Let me now say a few words about the details of our proposal.The first part of the motion paves the way for more effective scrutiny of Northern Ireland matters, along the lines that I have just sketched, by ending the present arrangements for the scrutiny of Northern Ireland matters whereby agriculture in Northern Ireland is looked at by the Agriculture Committee, housing in Northern Ireland by the Environment Committee, and so on.

The second part of the motion sets up a new Select Committee. Following the model of the Scottish Affairs and Welsh Affairs Committees, we propose that it should be called the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.

The new Committee ought to be able to look at the full range of the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. For that reason we have included in its remit not only the Northern Ireland Office, which deals with security and constitutional and political questions, but what are described as

"other matters within the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland".

Under the present administrative arrangements, that formula embraces the Northern Ireland Departments, such as the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Economic Development, as they are subject to the discretion and control of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. It is clearly desirable, however, to provide for the possibility of change if agreement should be reached on different political structures.

The form of words used in the amendment to the Standing Order would ensure that, once the Secretary of State ceased to be responsible for an area of policy, it would no longer fall within the terms of reference of the Select Committee. In other words, Westminster will oversee only those things for which Whitehall is responsible. Associated public bodies in Northern Ireland are also included in the terms of reference.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Can the Leader of the House confirm that the Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland will continue to be responsible to, and to give his evidence and reports to, the Public Accounts Committee, as he does twice a year under the present arrangements?

Mr. Newton: My understanding is that that is the case.

A number of matters will be excluded from the Select Committee's remit at the outset. One—and I note that this is the object of the Opposition's amendment—is the expenditure, administration and policy of the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland, which is excluded from the present arrangements for Select Committee scrutiny. It is important that that should be understood. The handling of individual cases by the Crown Solicitor's Office and advice given by the Crown Solicitor are excluded, and the drafting of legislation is also excluded.

I emphasise that, in each of those cases, the equivalent functions in respect of England and Scotland are excluded from the remits of the Home Affairs, Scottish Affairs and Treasury and Civil Service Committees respectively. Moreover, the wording that we have used in the motion replicates exactly the wording in the existing Standing Order No. 130(1) defining the remit of existing Select Committees.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I warmly welcome the announcement that the Leader of the House is making. Does he not accept, however, that the circumstances in Northern Ireland are very different from those prevailing in Scotland and Wales, especially in relation to the way in which legislation is dealt with—with so many orders and short debates in the House? The power to create legislation and frame Bills would be a very useful power for the Committee to have.

Will the Leader of the House undertake that, after six months or a year, he will at least look at the question again, and also at individual cases, such as that raised by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) in an Adjournment debate a couple of weeks ago?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman raised two very different questions. The second was whether a Select Committee could look at individual cases. I would not want to excite expectations of that, because that would raise major issues throughout the field. No doubt my right hon. and learned Friends the Law Officers would want to look at its implications in the United Kingdom as a whole —in my judgment, quite rightly too.

The earlier part of the hon. Gentleman's question could at least be presented as more innocuous, enabling me to respond in what I hope is my characteristically reasonable fashion. That suggestion, too, would have quite wide implications. But I hope that I have shown by my general demeanour in the House over quite a long period that if people come forward with a reasonable proposition and can make a reasonable case for it, I will look at it in a reasonable way.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I took up the matter of the exemption of the prosecuting authorities with the Journal Office, and the Journal Office informed me that that part of the Standing Order was added on 18 July 1991, at the same time that the remit of the Home Affairs and Scottish Affairs Committees was

[Mr.]

broadened to include the expenditure and administration of the prosecuting authorities in Britain and Scotland. Would the right hon. Gentleman care to rephrase what he said about the role of the Scottish Affairs and Home Affairs Committees in that regard?

Mr. Newton: It is certainly the case that the relevant part of the Standing Order was added at that time. The hon. Gentleman should understand, however, that the Opposition amendment would create a discrepancy between the remit of the Home Affairs Committee and that of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. The Home Affairs Committee does not look at individual cases or at legal advice—I accept that the hon. Gentleman's amendment allows for that—but neither does it look at the policy of the Law Officers' Departments.

The Opposition's amendment, while it excludes individual cases and legal advice, would allow the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee to look at the policy of the DPP's office. I do not seek to pre-empt the hon. Gentleman's argument, but I have to tell him that the exclusion of those legal matters from Select Committee scrutiny was carefully considered—it was carefully considered at the time and the decision was accepted by the House—and that the House would be ill advised to permit Select Committee scrutiny of matters in Northern Ireland that are not subject to such scrutiny in respect of Great Britain.

Mr. McNamara: Is the expenditure and administration of the Director of Public Prosecutions within the cognisance of the Select Committees on Home Affairs and on Scottish Affairs?

Mr. Newton: I think that that is correct. The hon. Gentleman can argue that there is some discrepancy, but his amendment would produce a significant discrepancy, as I outlined, which leads me to advise the House not to accept it.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The recent exchanges have clarified the matter. I accept the right hon. Gentleman's argument on policy, but it is clear that his proposal will create an anomaly. The Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs will not be able to consider the administration and expenditure of the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, whereas the Select Committee on Home Affairs can consider equivalent matters with regard to the Crown Prosecution Service, which discharges similar functions. There is a discrepancy, and I am sure that the Leader of the House would agree that that is undesirable.

Operations should be on a common basis. Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore reconsider expenditure and administration and put the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs on the same basis as the Select Committee on Home Affairs?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I might revert to the words—without repeating them excessively—that I used to answer the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) when I described what I hoped was my reasonable approach. I would not rule out any further consideration of the suggestion of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), but I cannot give an undertaking on the matter. We need to consider it with great care. I cannot advise the House to accept the amendment, which attempts to deal with the problem, because it raises a significant point of principle about examining the policy of the Director of Public Prosecutions. It goes beyond what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) intended, although I shall not attempt to speak for him, and it clearly goes beyond what the hon. Member for Upper Bann intended.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Leader of the House agree that, although the amendment may or may not be important to hon. Members—depending on where they sit—both sides of the House support the establishment of the Select Committee? That is much more important to voters outside the House than the differences that appear on the Order Paper. The issue may involve problems of principle, but they are gnat's play compared with the principle of establishing the Committee.

Mr. Newton: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, especially since the administration and expenditure of the office in Northern Ireland is very small. When a similar point was raised in the 1991 debates, to which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) referred, my predecessor advanced the argument that it made little difference in practice because of the minor scale of the expenditure. The point has been legitimately raised again, and I hope that I have responded in the best way that I can.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) is right to say that the matter of overwhelming importance is whether we can set up a proper departmental Select Committee for Northern Ireland. The point of detail, while not insignificant, is small compared with the main issue.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): If the Select Committee is set up, it will have to move about and go to Northern Ireland, among other places. Has my right hon. Friend considered the composition of the Committee in the light of the problems caused to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry because of the lack of co-operation between Opposition and Government? Its members have been unable to travel and they have published a unanimous report, mentioned on the Order Paper, condemning the lack of co-operation. He will have to consider carefully whether the Select Committee will be affected.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is a distinguished member of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. As he knows, I am cognisant of the difficulties of that Committee, although I have not intervened in the matter. I have frequently expressed the hope that the Opposition will return to the normal usual channels dealings and pairing, but I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not allow myself to be drawn by that line of that argument, which he was right to raise.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the leader of the House aware that all Labour Members on the Procedure Committee voted against setting up the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee? Although my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) is entitled to his view, it is not shared by the majority of Labour Members, as will be shown later tonight. One of the main reasons why we are opposed is that we believe that no such Committee should be set up until general agreement is reached among

Northern Ireland Members. Bearing in mind what has taken place in the past few months, I believe that the proposal is most unfortunate. It is a sop to the Unionist party.

Mr. Newton: Not for the first time for all I know, the views of the hon. Gentleman are different from those of the majority of members of the Procedure Committee, whose Chairman is present and may wish to speak in the debate. It is also clear that the hon. Gentleman's views are not shared by a number of his hon. Friends. My view is with Birkenhead rather than with Walsall on this occasion and, probably, on many future occasions. [*Interruption.*] I shall not go further and risk being accused of pursuing a policy of divide and rule. The position speaks for itself.

While the other departmental Select Committees will cease to have primary responsibility for Northern Ireland issues, they will still be able to make their specialist knowledge available. The Standing Order already allows Committees to communicate evidence and other documents to one another and to meet concurrently to take evidence and for other purposes. Indeed the hon. Member for Birkenhead knows that because he is member of the Select Committee on Social Security, which held joint meetings with the Health Select Committee to discuss community care, when I was a Minister in the relevant field.

The Select Committee on Agriculture, might be carrying out an inquiry into a subject with a distinctive Northern Ireland angle. In such a case, that Committee and the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee could pool their expertise by sharing their written evidence and holding a joint meeting to take oral evidence or discuss the issues involved. In that way, the specialist knowledge of other departmental Committees could be called on for the benefit of Northern Ireland, if it were to the mutual benefit of those Committees. That benefit is not lost by the establishment of the proposed new Committee.

Mr. Field: There are important differences between the administration of certain services on the mainland and in Northern Ireland. Because of the link between health and social services in Northern Ireland, the Select Committees on Social Security and on Health may profitably consider a link-up. Is the Leader of the House saying that the other Committees would not be welcome in Northern Ireland when they are pursuing evidence that is relevant to their wider inquiry?

Mr. Newton: No, I did not say that. I do not think that I even implied it. Perhaps through the Select Committee on Liaison or in other ways, Select Committees of the House normally tell each other what they are doing and find out whether there are ways in which they can fruitfully co-operate. There is no bar of the sort that the hon. Gentleman suggested.

On the size of the Committee, the Procedure Committee's first thoughts were for 16 members, but in its later report it recommended 13 or 15. The Government propose that the Committee should have a maximum of 13 members because, the larger the Committee, the more unwieldy it is likely to become. For example, it would be more difficult for all members to take part in evidence sessions. For those practical reasons, we thought that it was probably sensible to choose the smaller of the two figures suggested by the Procedure Committee.

How the available places should be allocated will not be an easy matter, but it is a matter for the Committee of Selection under Standing Orders. The Government strongly support the Procedure Committee's recommendation that each of the Northern Ireland parties should have a place on the Committee and that, in accordance with normal practice, the Government should expect to be able to command a majority on it.

I now turn briefly to the third motion on the Order Paper which is really a piece of housekeeping or tidying up. If the House agrees to the setting up of a Select Committee called the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs, there is an obvious danger of confusion with the existing Standing Committee called the Northern Ireland Committee, under Standing Order No. 99. That Committee exists to debate matters relating exclusively to Northern Ireland that are referred to it from time to time by the House. As its closest parliamentary relatives are the Scottish Grand Committee and the Welsh Grand Committee, we propose to rename it —perhaps unimaginatively but sensibly—the Northern Ireland Grand Committee. That change should make the different character of the two Committees abundantly clear without in any way changing the powers, composition or function of the existing Committee.

I hope that I have said enough to outline the proposals to the House sufficient to provide a basis for the debate. I commend the proposals to the House.

7.30 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I beg to move, as an amendment to the motion, to leave out

'expenditure administration and policy of'

and insert

'handling of individual cases by and legal advice given within Government by'.

As the last chairman of the only departmental Select Committee that existed before the creation of the present system—the Select Committee on Overseas Aid—I am instinctively sympathetic to the Select Committee system. Select Committees plays a vital role in improving the accountability of the Government to Parliament. Indeed, as current cases and inquiries show, there is a clear case for Select Committees' powers of departmental oversight to be strengthened.

It is important, however, not to confuse concern for the proper scrutiny of Government with the decision to create a Northern Ireland Select Committee, for that is not the reason why the present proposal is before the House. It is not simply a procedural parliamentary matter. It has wide-ranging political ramifications relating to the Government's Irish policy.

The issues relating to the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee are different from those relating to the establishment of any other Committee of the House. Northern Ireland cannot be treated as though it is the same as any other region of the United Kingdom.

Northern Ireland is the only part of the United Kingdom where the population have a legally enshrined right to unite with another nation state if a majority so wish. That right reflects the divided allegiances that exist in Northern Ireland, with the nationalist community aspiring to a united Ireland, and the Unionist community aspiring to maintain —indeed, strengthen—the bonds that link Britain and Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland is the only part of the United Kingdom where the legitimacy of the state is questioned. It is the

[Mr. Kevin McNamara]

only region of the United Kingdom where armed troops are deployed on the streets in support of the civil power, as they have been during the past 20 years.

Moreover, Northern Ireland is the only part of the United Kingdom where the establishment of a Select Committee is an essential ingredient of one party's policy to seek steps towards greater integration of Britain with Northern Ireland. It is opposed by another party for just that reason. It has symbolic importance for both communities in Northern Ireland, which far outweighs its parliamentary significance.

In a briefing paper which I believe the Unionist party gave to the press and to others about the matter it says:

"The symbolic effects will be more immediate. This will be the first positively unionist move by the British Government since our Parliamentary representation was increased in 1979."

It continues:

"The Northern Ireland Select Committee will probably want to sit regularly in Belfast. When we see a group of familiar parliamentarians again in Stormont with their doings reported in the local media".

That is its significance for one particular party. For that reason, in the past, the Government, the Opposition and the Select Committee on Procedure have recognised that the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee cannot be isolated from the political situation in Northern Ireland.

The original decision not to recommend the creation of a Northern Ireland Select Committee was made by the Procedure Committee in 1978, its reason being:

"The uncertainty about the future form of Government . . . for Northern Ireland."

That uncertainty has not altered.

In its report in 1990 on the working of the Select Committee system, the Select Committee on Procedure concluded that there should be no Northern Ireland Select Committee while the inter-party talks on the future of Northern Ireland were in progress. The Committee accepted that the decision to create a Northern Ireland Select Committee

"is a matter whose implications go beyond the rights and responsibilities of the House to regulate its own affairs."

It is therefore not a purely organisational or procedural matter.

In its last report, the Procedure Committee could

"see nothing to add or subtract from their previous views",

and left it to the Government to decide when an opportune time occurred to establish a Northern Ireland Select Committee.

In the past, the Government have opposed the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee. In 1990, the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—the right hon. Member for the City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke)—in a submission to the Procedure Committee, asserted that the decision to establish a Northern Ireland Select Committee would need to

"command the support from elected representatives of both sides of the community in Northern Ireland."

The Government until recently held to that approach. For example, as late as June 1992, the Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons, when asked about a Northern Ireland Select Committee, stated:

"the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland believes that this is one of a series of complex issues that are best left open for consideration in the broad context of the current political talks."

—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1992; Vol. 210, c. 395.]

It has now been taken out of the broad context of the current political talks.

On 11 November 1992, in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey), the Secretary of State again reiterated the Government's position that a Northern Ireland Select Committee would need

"the support of the broad community in Northern Ireland."—[*Official Report*, 11 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 892.]

It does not have the support of the broad community in Northern Ireland.

On 15 February 1993, the Secretary of State, in response to a parliamentary question, again cited the need to examine

"the extent of support from elected representatives from both sides of the community in Northern Ireland."—[*Official Report*, 15 February 1993; Vol. 219, c. 35.]

It has no support from elected representatives from one of the communities in Northern Ireland.

On 22 July 1993, the Secretary of State was still concerned about the

"extent of support from elected representatives on both sides of the community in Northern Ireland."—[*Official Report*, 22 July 1993; Vol. 229, c. 323.]

But by now, things were changing, and the matter was under review. The Government ceased to be concerned about support from both sides of the community. That means that the views and concerns of one section of the community in Northern Ireland—the minority community—no longer seem to have any relevance.

Unfortunately, the reasons for that change are all too obvious. Faced with the prospect of a defeat over Maastricht, the Government struck a squalid deal—or, as they prefer to call it, "an understanding"—with the Ulster Unionist party. The Government have put party interests ahead of the interests of all the people of the British Isles.

The primary reason why the Government have conceded a Northern Ireland Select Committee is not a high-minded concern for parliamentary democracy and the proper scrutiny of a Government department, but the need to maintain the "understanding" that was reached with the UUP before the summer recess.

Indeed, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) was reported in a recent article in *The Scotsman* as claiming that part of his price for supporting the Prime Minister had been the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee. The Prime Minister has not sought to challenge or deny that claim—I gave him the opportunity.

The Government have allowed that squalid deal to override the principles agreed in March 1991 for the three-strand talks process, whereby any measures that effected the institutional arrangements governing Northern Ireland would be discussed in strand one talks and under the principle

"nothing is agreed until everything is agreed."

The Labour party maintains its support for the three-strand talks process and regrets the Government's decision to undermine the framework agreed in 1991 by unilaterally starting to unravel the arrangements governing strand one of the talks. The decision to establish a Northern Ireland Select Committee without the agreement of the representatives of both communities in Northern Ireland serves only to demonstrate that the Government are still prepared to allow short-term party interests to take precedence over the peace process.

The problem is this. The Government have two agendas: first, to secure and maintain their majority in the House by keeping their own right wing and the Ulster Unionists happy; secondly, to keep the peace process alive, as laid down in the Downing street declaration. Was it, I wonder, because the Northern Ireland Select Committee was being dangled before the Unionists that the Secretary of State could convince the Tanaiste that the Unionists would shortly return to the three-ring circus? The Government may consider their two agendas compatible, but I do not believe they are.

This unfortunate decision will hinder the peace initiative launched by the British and Irish Governments with the publication of the Downing street declaration. It calls into question the Government's claim that their primary interest is to see

"peace, stability and reconciliation by agreement",

as the declaration puts it. There is no agreement about the establishment of the Northern Ireland Select Committee.

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Does my hon. Friend agree that thousands of people in Northern Ireland—indeed, the vast majority—will, if they are listening to this debate, be interested in one thing alone? They want us to ensure that legislation that affects their lives—legislation that the House passes every day—is properly scrutinised, as is legislation affecting other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. McNamara: Indeed: that is why legislative Committees are set up after the Second Reading of Bills. This Committee will have no power to investigate or alter legislation. My hon. Friend ought to know what the Committee is about.

Not only have the Government introduced their motion without the agreement of representatives of both sides of the community; they also intend to gerrymander the composition of the Committee. They propose that the Labour party should have only two seats out of 13.

In 1990, the Procedure Committee recommended that, if a Northern Ireland Select Committee was established, it should have 16 members, including three from the Labour party. That was unacceptable in 1990, when Labour had 227 Members of Parliament; proposing that Labour should have only two seats now, when we have 270 Members of Parliament, is an abuse of power and of parliamentary majorities—especially when we are to have parity with a party that has 30 times fewer seats.

Equally unacceptable is the proposed division of seats among the Northern Ireland parties represented in the House—

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): How many votes has Labour in Northern Ireland?

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman's party has no votes in Northern Ireland, but it is to have a majority on the Committee. *[Interruption.]* Well, it certainly has no seats in Northern Ireland.

The SDLP will have just one seat on the Committee, while the Unionist parties will be given four. The minority now makes up 43 per cent. of the population in Northern Ireland; yet its representatives are to be appointed to just 20 per cent. of the seats allotted to Northern Ireland parties. With a total population split of 43 per cent. to 57 per cent., there can be no excuse for such gross misrepresentation.

The Ulster Unionist party, with 34 per cent. of the Northern Ireland vote, will be given half the Northern Ireland seats on the Committee; the Ulster Popular Unionist party will be given one fifth of those seats, on the basis of one seventeenth of the number of Northern Ireland seats and a vote of less than 50 per cent. in one constituency. That cannot be right.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Do I take it that the hon. Gentleman is confessing that Labour will never form a majority in the House, and therefore take the Government majority of seats? Will he also tell us when he will come to his amendment?

Mr. McNamara: I will come to my amendment in my own time.

As for the hon. Gentleman's first question, I assure him that there will be a Labour Government. In a letter to the Secretary of State, we told him that—although we felt that our representation on the Committee would be disproportionate—we would concede, for the sake of argument, that there should be four Northern Ireland seats. We then said, "On the balance of what is left, you may have five seats and we will have four."

We thought that a reasonable offer, and I hope that we will follow similar principles when we form the Government. That is of particular concern to us because, having reached an understanding with the Government, the hon. Gentleman and his party will be able to maintain their majority on the Committee.

Mr. Frank Field: So far, my hon. Friend has produced a powerful case against the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee. I am puzzled: if this is such a principled stand, why has the amendment been tabled? Why do we not simply oppose the establishment of the Committee?

Mr. McNamara: For two reasons. First, despite our principled objection, we are unlikely to succeed in the voting—although, as my hon. Friend has pointed out, we have such a powerful case that we are certainly winning the argument. Secondly, and more important—*[Interruption.]* I will deal with my hon. Friend's second point shortly.

The Government have also attempted severely to restrict the terms of reference for a Northern Ireland Select Committee: that is why the Labour party has tabled an amendment. The Government motion would exclude the office of Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland from the Committee's scrutiny. If we are to have a Northern Ireland Select Committee, it is vital for it to be able to investigate all matters of concern to the peoples of Northern Ireland.

Our amendment would allow the Committee to investigate the thrust of the policy of the Director of Public Prosecutions—his order of priorities, his attitudes to policy issues such as killings by the security forces, and his decisions not to prosecute in areas where the community has real fears.

Such problems have been raised in a variety of cases, affecting both communities, and we debated them only recently in an Adjournment debate. The failure to prosecute, and lack of knowledge of the policy behind that failure, can have an adverse impact on public perceptions of the role of the security forces, and can therefore affect both the administration of justice and the upholding of the rule of law.

We have not asked for any individual cases to be examined, or to be put to the Committee; nor does our amendment suggest that we should look into the various

[Mr. McNamara]

matters referred to by the Leader of the House. We believe, however, that the Government should, for the first time, be brought to book in regard to matters involving policy, in an area of such sensitivity as this.

It is significant that powers of administration, expenditure and organisation—powers possessed by the Scottish and Home Affairs Select Committees—are being denied to the Irish Committee, if the House decides to proceed with it. It will not run pari passu with the English Select Committees; it will still be treated as a special case.

I hope that, if the matter proceeds, the House will accept the amendment. Even if it is carried, however, Labour will vote against the motion, because of its symbolism as a triumphalist integrationist measure. It does not have the support of both communities in Northern Ireland—something that the Government previously considered crucial. Instead of ensuring equality, it entrenches divisions that already exist, and hardens Unionist intransigence rather than encouraging compromise.

If the Secretary of State considers that this measure, the increased use of the newly named Northern Ireland Grand Committee and the partial change in legislative matters put before the House, will persuade the Unionists to sit down with Dublin, I believe that he is mistaken. They will want more and more—"As long as you pay the danegeld, you'll never get rid of the Dane".

The Government must recognise that there can be no purely internal solution to the problems of Northern Ireland. An integrationist solution will not work, because it fails to deal with the divided allegiances which exist there. The Government should not be jeopardising the peace process for the sake of a short-term political expedient, but working with the Irish Government and the parties in Northern Ireland to agree a just and lasting settlement that respects the rights and aspirations of both communities. They should not be favouring one community at the expense of the other.

For those reasons, we are opposed to the establishment of a Select Committee.

7.49 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I am sorry that the official Opposition are making this a party political debate. The weakness of their argument is evident when they have to drag in Maastricht, because this is a House of Commons matter about government.

I congratulate the Government and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on at last grasping the nettle and establishing a Select Committee on Northern Ireland which, as I shall try to explain, is something that has been recommended since the Select Committee on Procedure's report on Select Committees in 1978-79. Previous Secretaries of State have prevaricated, which has culminated in no action being taken, so my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State deserves great credit. I shall be brief, because I know that many other hon. Members wish to speak.

So that there can be no misunderstanding, I shall make it clear how the current situation with regard to a Select Committee on Northern Ireland has arisen. The Procedure Committee's report in 1977-78 said:

"the development of the system has been piecemeal and has resulted in a decidedly patchy coverage of the activities of government departments and agencies, and of the major areas of public policy and administration."

It went on to say that although some Departments were subject to detailed scrutiny,

"other major departments have received scant or at least insufficient attention."

It said that that was especially so in one case—Northern Ireland. The report continued:

"The House should no longer rest content with an incomplete and unsystematic scrutiny of the activities of the Executive merely as a result of historical accident or sporadic pressure and it is . . . desirable for the different branches of the public service to be subject to an even and regular incidence of select committee investigation into their activities and to have a clear understanding of the division of responsibilities between the committees which conduct it."

The paragraph concluded that it was essential to have a means of scrutinising the activities of the public service on a continuing basis.

It will be noted that the report excluded reference to responsibility for Northern Ireland affairs because of

"uncertainty about the future form of government for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. We recognise that the appointment of separate committees for these areas may need to be further considered in the light of future constitutional developments."

That was way back in 1977-78.

In 1989-90, the Select Committee on Procedure examined the scrutiny of Northern Ireland affairs and found that it was

"fragmented among many different Committees."

It said that the scrutiny of Northern Ireland corresponded to the functions exercised by Departments shadowed by specific Select Committees. In other words, housing in Northern Ireland falls within the terms of reference of the Select Committee on the Environment, even though responsibility is exercised by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Could anything be more foolish?

On the same basis, the Committee found that the Northern Ireland prison system and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the structure of secondary education and the health service in Northern Ireland could be examined by the Select Committees on Home Affairs, on Education, on Science and Arts and on Social Services. That is nonsense because a separate Secretary of State is responsible for each subject.

The Procedure Committee's report in 1989-90 said:

"All the same, it can hardly be said, on the basis of the evidence we have received, that Northern Ireland matters are receiving the attention from the departmentally-related Select Committees which they deserve".

The Committee's second report concluded that a

"lacuna in the system of scrutiny has been the lack of a separate Committee to monitor the policy, expenditure and administration of the Northern Ireland Office . . . Like Wales and Scotland, Northern Ireland has its own Secretary of State with authority over a wide range of matters . . . In that respect, therefore, the powers of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland are more extensive than those exercised by his counterpart in Wales . . . It is therefore anomalous from a practical point of view that no separate Select Committee exists to oversee the affairs of Northern Ireland . . . It will be clear that we see a case for bringing the Northern Ireland Office formally within the system of scrutiny by Select Committees."

It also stated that it did

"not believe that the uncertainties over the future administration of the Province can be allowed to preclude indefinitely the establishment of proper arrangements for the scrutiny by the House of the Northern Ireland Department".

I have quoted from paragraphs 272 to 278 of the Select Committee's report—which, incidentally, was supported by all the Labour Members on it. No one voted against it.

Mr. Winnick: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we concluded that we should not recommend a Select Committee on Northern Ireland at that stage because of the advice given to us by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. We thought that that advice, given on political grounds, was all important and we made that clear in our report. We were advised that there should be a consensus of opinion in Northern Ireland before any such Committee was established. The Government have changed their mind for the reasons outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara).

Sir Peter Emery: The hon. Gentleman's comments go very much further than the report. Although it may be tedious, I read again from the Select Committee's report, which said that the Committee did

"not believe that the uncertainties over the future administration of the Province can be allowed to preclude indefinitely the establishment of proper arrangements for the scrutiny by the House of the Northern Ireland Department".

The Select Committee's 1993-94 report concluded:

"The Committee see nothing to add or subtract from their previous views."

The Committee believed that the House and the Government would decide when it was appropriate to set up a Committee. *[Interruption.]* It is the House that will decide. I think that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North understands that.

Mr. McNamara: It is the Government who will table the motion.

Sir Peter Emery: That is brilliant; I never realised that. That is the most outstanding piece of procedural information that I have heard in the House for many a moon. *[Interruption.]* That will not get the hon. Gentleman very far.

From a procedural point of view, it is absolutely right that every Department of state should be scrutinised by a Select Committee.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): The right hon. Gentleman is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure. Clearly, the procedure that he is outlining is factually correct, but even he must realise that, although he is concerned mainly with procedure and the need for all Government Departments to be closely scrutinised, the Government's decision to table the motion was not influenced only by procedure—it was deeply political.

Sir Peter Emery: Of course I accept—

Mr. Marshall: The right hon. Gentleman should not trivialise the issue.

Sir Peter Emery: If the hon. Gentleman asks a question in the proper manner, I shall answer it. He should not put words into my mouth. There is of course a political factor in the consideration of Northern Ireland; no one denies that. It seems that the vast majority of Members of Parliament elected in Northern Ireland wish to have a Northern Ireland Select Committee.

If we are considering democracy, we do not need to consider the percentages that were cited from the Opposition Front Bench, but we should consider the Members who have been elected by the people. The people have a right to those who represent them being able to work in a Select Committee.

After all, we are granting powers to a Committee so that it can monitor, investigate, examine witnesses and act as a public and parliamentary watchdog for the work of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, his Department and the Ministers under him. I have confidence in him, as I have confidence in all my Ministers, but I still believe that they need watching and that they need to have a House of Commons Committee on their backs. That is right and proper. I am sorry that the Labour party does not seem to agree.

The appointment of the Committee should not be interpreted as a political factor, as the Opposition have made out. The political difficulties in Ulster—

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Peter Emery: I am sorry—of course.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: While I am touched by my right hon. Friend's confidence in me as one of his Ministers, may I say that it is not only the majority of Members of Parliament who support the Select Committee. Does he accept that it is my appreciation of the feelings of people throughout Northern Ireland that they want to see more parliamentary control and scrutiny over legislation in Northern Ireland as a mitigation of the effects of direct rule, however benificent that may be? They do not share the only substantive reason for opposing the Committee that we have heard—that the Unionists want it.

Sir Peter Emery: I am delighted to be supported by the Secretary of State. He has added grace and charm to my few remarks as well as great factual substantiation. As well as the public being represented by their Members of Parliament, it is the width of public opinion in Northern Ireland, to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred, which is important.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Peter Emery: Yes, for the last time.

Mr. Canavan: I do not recall the right hon. Gentleman supporting the establishment of a Scottish Select Committee in the previous Parliament, when there was no such creature, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the people of Scotland wanted the establishment of such a Committee, as did the overwhelming majority of Members of Parliament who represented Scottish constituencies. The Government denied that during the entire Parliament, for political reasons.

Sir Peter Emery: Whatever the hon. Gentleman may want to say against the Government, he cannot say it against me, because I, with the Select Committee on Procedure, recommended that there should be a Select Committee for Northern Ireland. As I was tutored by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), the Government tabled the motion, not the Procedure Committee.

Therefore, may we consider the specific reasons why, on a political basis, the Committee will be useful in dealing with the difficulties in Ulster? I hope and believe that the new Select Committee will be able to ensure that the people in Northern Ireland can have confidence in what goes on in Westminster and in the dedication of Northern

[Sir Peter Emery]

Ireland Ministers to look after the problems of Northern Ireland. They will know that the Members of Parliament whom they elect will have the power to ensure that the interests of Northern Ireland will be not only considered on the Floor of the House, but will be under close scrutiny and that Ministers will be cross-examined by their own elected representatives.

It will be good for Northern Ireland on political grounds to know that it will have an extra power through Northern Irish Ministers and Members of Parliament. I welcome the motion, and I believe that it is long overdue.

8.4 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I trust that the Leader of the House will not mind my paying tribute to the Select Committee on Procedure and especially its chairman, the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), for the consistent and fair-minded approach to the desirability of extending the trend of comparatively new Select Committees, which was put in place in 1979 by Lord St. John of Fawsley, the then Leader of the House.

During the consultations leading up to that decision, which was not unanimously received in the House even in those days, I put in a bid for a Northern Ireland Committee. I was only partially successful and my pleas were heeded to some extent. The Government, who, we must remember, had a safe majority after the 1979 election, said on 25 June:

"we have thought it right to provide that they should be within the scope of the new Select Committees at Westminster."—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1979; Vol. 969, c. 40.]

—as a temporary step.

That led to the beneficial visits of the existing Select Committees to Northern Ireland, which have given a great deal of encouragement and reassurance to all sections of the community. The visits illustrated in a flesh and blood fashion that their rights and privileges as citizens of the United Kingdom were not being overlooked in any way.

In the intervening 15 years, Northern Ireland has benefited greatly from the scrutiny of those specialised Committees and, if I heard the Leader of the House correctly towards the end of his speech, that valuable overview will continue with the same civilised degree of co-operation which exists, for example, between the Scottish Select Committee and the specialist subject Committees, which undertake, by invitation perhaps, by consultation, by agreement or perhaps through the Liaison Committee, the scrutiny of special matters in Scotland.

We are grateful to the Leader of the House for taking so much care to ensure that the terms of reference of the new Northern Ireland Select Committee and its relationship to those other Committees were set out so clearly in his speech. Will he confirm that the title of the Committee —I thought that he may have left out a word—will be the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee?

Mr. Newton *indicated assent.*

Mr. Molyneaux: I thank the Minister.

I pay tribute once more to the right hon. Member for Honiton and his Select Committee, which initiated in 1990 the process that has resulted in this motion. They have given careful consideration to all the submissions made five long years ago and they have updated their thinking at frequent intervals since the Committee made that decision in principle; we want them to know that their efforts are greatly appreciated.

While debating motion No. 3, I pay sincere tribute to two former Members who have been elevated to another place—Lord Wilson and Lord Glenamara—who decided following the destruction of Stormont that Northern Ireland should have a measure of accountability as a temporary measure before they could progress. That resulted in the establishment of the Northern Ireland Committee. Lord Glenamara, then Ted Short, will be remembered by all Opposition parties with great gratitude for the scheme that he introduced to provide financial support to the Opposition parties which is enjoyed today and which has been recently increased. I pay tribute where tribute is due.

Another consultant, if I may refer to him in that way, in that process of consultation with Lord Wilson and Lord Glenamara, was my colleague Enoch Powell. During those consultations with the then Labour Government, I cannot ever recall a suggestion of a sordid deal being done, although the Wilson Government had a single-figure majority and eventually no majority at all.

It may be that, almost 20 years ago, Lord Wilson was aware of the consistent position of my party, which is that, provided that Her Majesty's Government of the day govern in the best interests of the United Kingdom in general and of Northern Ireland in particular, we see no reason why we should terminate the life of Parliament prematurely. That remains the position, and I hope that it will in some way reassure the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and perhaps lower his blood pressure.

I always found that Lord Wilson, unlike some of his successors, had the ability to perceive objects not yet visible to the naked eye, and sometimes not even over the horizon. With its grand new title, the Committee's authority will be enhanced and its influence will be increased. I trust that, through consultation, we can find ways of making fuller use of that body, now the Northern Ireland Grand Committee.

For example, we need a clearer understanding of the number of sittings per Session, because that seems to fluctuate from year to year. We also need, not this evening but on another occasion, a clear definition of the procedure for adjourning a debate in Committee and returning to the same subject another day. We have had experience of being ruled out of order when we have suggested, as a result of unanimous agreement in the Committee, that we have not quite finished our deliberations. At about 12.55 we would decide among ourselves to adjourn and come back another time, only to find that some obscure rule made that impossible, although that used to be possible in the early days of the Committee's activities, under the original guidelines of 20 years ago.

On behalf of my colleagues, I have great pleasure in welcoming and supporting motions Nos. 2 and 3.

8.10 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): I am grateful to be called, and I shall endeavour to be brief and to keep my remarks succinct. I must say straight away that I have sought to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because although I have no objection in principle to the measures

and will support them, I have certain reservations. Having expressed some of those outside the House, I now wish to express them inside.

There are political ramifications here. I wholeheartedly agree with what my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and others said about the parliamentary context. But we are dealing with something that goes beyond Parliament. We are engaged in what may be one of the most historic endeavours ever to try to secure peace in the island of Ireland.

Northern Ireland is a special case that goes beyond purely parliamentary matters. A major effort for peace is being made and in comparison the measures before us, worthy as they are, represent a small endeavour. Nothing should be done to impede progress in any way on the joint declaration that has been worked for so hard by my right hon. and hon. Friends in Government.

This is a question of timing; it was, it is now and it remains so. The measures before us will be perceived by certain elements vital to peace to be an integrationist move, and they will see it as the wrong time to make such a move. I do not want to trivialise the matter, but as far as the nationalist community is concerned, in this whole great endeavour it takes two—indeed, more than two—to tango. The process cannot go on with one side alone.

The nationalist community—the 43 per cent. that we have heard about—is a vital part of the peace process and anything that we as a House do concerning Northern Ireland should have the nationalists' support. Certainly this measure should have both their support and that of their leadership before it is put into practice.

Of course Sinn Fein/IRA prevaricates. The Downing street declaration and the peace process are far from over. My definite view is that those people could still come in, and we must work with that process. The rhetoric of some of us has not helped in the early stages, in the vital context of getting them, or at least some of them, to come in. I hazard a guess that this measure will not help either.

The Government of Ireland—this is the last section of the pattern with which I shall deal—are also a vital component part of any settlement and of any peace on the island. By supporting what we are doing together through the joint declaration, they deprive Sinn Fein/IRA of any claim to political legitimacy and make it into what could be called a historical reject. While they are with us that will be the status of Sinn Fein/IRA. So if the Irish Government opt out in any way or diminish their efforts to implement the joint declaration the peace process would sustain a blow that it would not be able to survive.

I ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—clearly, my remarks have little to do with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House—for a simple assurance that he has considered the matter in the greater context, that it is purely a parliamentary process, that it will not be perceived as an integrationist move, and that it will in no way hinder the all-important peace process, which should be our overwhelming priority.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): There are some bad reasons for the introduction of the Select Committee and the hon. Gentleman has spelt out the problems, in terms of alienating the nationalist community and of the Government's simply using the idea to overcome their problems. However, there are some good democratic reasons, too, which will benefit the whole of Northern Ireland and everyone involved. Should not the House concentrate on the positive aspects of the proposals, pushing them forward and ensuring that they form the agenda, rather than concentrating on some of the underlying poor reasons? Perhaps the bad reasons are motivating people in various ways, but should we not turn that into a positive agenda?

Mr. Temple-Morris: I am glad that that remark came from the hon. Gentleman. I accept it, in the context that any judgment on the issue must be a matter of balance. We come down on one side or the other. We have not yet heard all the arguments from Northern Ireland Members, and it is a question of balance. I have come down, and have made my position fairly clear by expressing a serious reservation.

8.16 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I do not wish to detain the House too long. I share most of the misgivings expressed by the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), and I wish that he would have the courage to follow them and vote with the Opposition parties. Much of what he said expresses a fear shared not only by Opposition Members but by many people throughout Great Britain and the island of Ireland.

I must say at the outset that I am a fervent supporter of the Select Committee procedure. We certainly need parliamentarians overseeing Departments. That has been one of the most important constitutional changes over the past 14 years. Because of that background and that feeling, I wholeheartedly support the establishment of a Select Committee for Northern Ireland. If only I could be convinced that it was a purely procedural matter, I should follow the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). I heard what he said and I am sure that he is convinced that the matter is purely procedural. However, to me and to many other people the decision to establish the Select Committee seems not simply a procedural matter but a deeply political matter.

None of us would disagree that the present governance of Northern Ireland is totally inadequate. But as parliamentarians, most of us, except our colleagues from the Province itself, have accepted that position because we believe that the only possible solution would involve political institutions in the Province acceptable to both sections of the community there, and also a clearer definition of the triangular relationship between Belfast, London and Dublin. It is for those reasons that we have hitherto been prepared to accept the democratic deficit in the Province.

I am alarmed by the fact that the Government appear this evening to be undermining that approach. What the Secretary of State said about 20 minutes ago served only to fuel my fears that this action will be interpreted as a first step towards a purely internal settlement. After this evening's decision has been made, the Government will, without a shadow of doubt, come under increasing pressure to change the Order in Council method of dealing with Northern Ireland business—the very point that the right hon. and learned Gentleman made himself.

The Secretary of State will also come under increasing pressure to reorganise local government in the Province. After tonight's decision the Government will find it increasingly difficult to resist the proposals for change. Moreover, the Government's decision represents a total about-face. Before, they have always said that they will not

[Mr. Jim Marshall]

support the establishment of a Select Committee for Northern Ireland until there is agreement between the elected representatives from both communities in the Province. They have also said that they will not support the establishment of a Select Committee until there is an outcome, successful or not, of the three-strand process. Neither of those conditions appears to have been met.

Reluctantly, I have come to the conclusion that tonight's decision is a cheap political fix—the victory of political expediency over political principle. It represents the payment of a debt owed by the Government to the Official Unionists. I do not blame the latter for exacting that price from the Government for having supported them in the Lobby over Maastricht last year. This motion has everything to do with the survival of the Government and nothing to do with the best interests or future well-being of Northern Ireland. I consider that a disgrace; the people of Northern Ireland deserve a great deal better.

8.21 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): If there were any integrity on the part of the Government in their dealings with both communities in Northern Ireland, this motion would not be before us tonight. If the Government genuinely believed that both communities should be dealt with equally, the motion would not be before us. By their action tonight the Government have forfeited the right to be regarded as even-handed—as honest brokers—in Northern Ireland affairs.

More than that, the Government have jeopardised the integrity of the inter-party talks, based delicately as they were on the six-party agreement of 26 March 1991. The Government have shattered that process. They have betrayed the trust given to them by the nationalist people of Northern Ireland and they have broken faith with the Irish Government, their partner in the cause of peace in Ireland.

The British Government have tried to dupe the Irish Government and others with their claim that this is merely a procedural matter with no repercussions beyond the confines of this House. It is no such thing: it never was. This is a political act; Unionist votes were bought at a crucial time last year—first, for the vote to kick miners out of their jobs, even though their sons were defending us from terrorism in Northern Ireland; and, secondly, to save the Government's bacon over Maastricht. This is a political decision; it has nothing to do with procedure.

Since 1978, the Procedure Committee has time and again said that it is up to the Government whether the process should go ahead. Time and again, that Committee has commented on the political aspects of the problem. I do not have time to quote all the Committee's recommendations over the years, but the most recent one, which appeared on 1 December 1993, stated:

"'It should be remembered that the only reason given by the Procedure Committee in 1978 for its decision not to recommend the creation of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs was the continuing uncertainty over the future consultational arrangements for the Province' . . . However, the Committee accepted the advice of the then Secretary of State in 1990 that appointment of such a Committee at that time 'whilst attractive in principle, could cause difficulties for the initiative launched by the Secretary of State.'

The Committee see nothing to add or subtract from their previous views. The appointment of the Committee must rest with the decision of the Government to propose to the House its appointment and its terms of reference."

As I say, this has nothing to do with procedure and everything to do with Government politics.

I ask whichever Minister replies to the debate the following question: does this mean that the premise on which previous recommendations were made to the Select Committee by the Secretary of State no longer applies?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am entirely satisfied that the setting up of the Select Committee, if the House approves it, will have no adverse effect on the talks process, to which I attach great importance, as I know the hon. Gentleman does, too.

Mr. McGrady: I thank the Secretary of State for that information, but he and I both know that the principles of the 26 March 1991 agreement among the six parties to the talks, especially those pertaining to the three strands of the relationship between this Government and the Government of the Republic, clearly meant that nothing was to be agreed until all was agreed. As a party to that agreement the SDLP has never agreed with this proposed procedure.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I cannot allow that to pass—

Mr. McGrady: I have not given way to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. As the only representative of the nationalist community to speak in this debate, I have only a few minutes left in which to make the case against the motion.

We know, even from its timing, that this was a political decision. Within 24 hours of the Downing street declaration of 15 December, the Leader of the House had announced that a Select Committee would be set up. How could any sensible person conclude that that was not a sop to the Unionists to get them to acquiesce in the Downing street declaration?

I must move on quickly to the question of numbers. There can be no justification for the lack of equitable representation for the communities of Northern Ireland in this proposal. The recommendation was that those communities must be allowed to participate in the scrutiny of the business of this House, but that is not borne out by what has happened.

In public statements and letters throughout 1993—15 February and 22 July, to name but two such occasions—the Secretary of State reiterated the extent of the support from the elected representatives of both sides of the community that would be needed for such a move. These statements alternated with demands that procedures such as this must have widespread support. This procedure does not command widespread support among the representatives of Northern Ireland—a fact that will be illustrated when we divide on the motion tonight. Also, the motion has been put to the House on false premises.

I could go on to deal with the lack of consultation, even with my party, on the proposals before us, but I do not have the time to do that. I ask the House to reject the proposal and to support instead the inter-party talks in Northern Ireland and the peace process, against which the proposal will impact. There is no doubt about that.

The establishment of the Northern Ireland Select Committee is ill conceived, and it will have political ramifications. It would also be incorrect to proceed with such a Committee when the British and Irish Governments

are currently working towards a peace settlement, and at a time when there is hope that inter-party talks will be re-established.

This sop given to the Unionist parties did not bear fruit. We understand that the Democratic Unionist party withdrew from the inter-party talks. The Ulster Unionist party withdrew from the talks, or at least agreed the basis on which they were to take part. Only my party, the Alliance party, and the British and Irish Governments have been willing to sit around the table. The Unionists did not get the prize for the price of their sell-out of the nationalist people of Northern Ireland.

Obviously, I have not been able to develop the arguments that I wished to develop tonight. It is a disgrace that such an important matter has been given so little time. I certainly recommend that, for the sake of the inter-party talks, community relations and peace in Ireland, the House throws out the proposal tonight.

8.32 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): This has been an interesting debate, but the official Opposition—and the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), who made a passionate and understandable speech on behalf of the Social Democratic and Labour party—may be in danger of throwing the baby out with the bath water. Admittedly, the bath water might be quite murky in some of its aspects.

I agree with the interesting speech made by the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris); I have doubts also. Certainly my party is in favour of setting up the Committee. Nothing is needed more in terms of Northern Ireland politics than the kind of working relationship which can often be achieved across party divides in a Select Committee context.

We have been at the forefront of the campaign during the past 10 years. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) has a distinguished record of arguing for the setting up of such a Committee as is being created this evening. It has been a long time coming, and it is not before time that we are having the motion.

The Leader of the House must understand that the fears and concerns mentioned by the hon. Member for Leominster are real. There are perceptions that the Government were in fact pandering to the Unionists, and that the motion and the Select Committee are rewards for services rendered during the Maastricht debate. The Leader of the House and the Government must do more; they must do everything they can to clear up that question, otherwise it may sour and prejudice the important work of the Select Committee in the future.

Has the Secretary of State received any representations from the Government of the Republic of Ireland? That question must be openly addressed to get it out of the road to allow the work of the Committee to start without the relationship being soured.

I wish to ask one or two questions about the membership of the Committee. The Leader of the House can no doubt confirm that shortly there will need to be another debate on the issue. I hope that it will be before Easter. The Committee of Selection will nominate members for the Committee, and those names will be in the form of a debatable motion. Indeed, the names would be amendable in terms of the constitution of that Committee as suggested by the Committee of Selection. Hon. Members will get a chance to look line by line and name by name at the constitution of the Committee. I certainly reserve the right at that time to make observations about the way in which the Committee is set up.

I do not think that a case has been made by the Government for a Government built-in majority. I would like to bid for a minority party and my party to be considered for a place on the Committee. I was surprised, and a bit disappointed, that consideration of the possibility of setting up a joint Committee with the noble Lords in another place had not been actively canvassed. There is a lot of talent there—Lords Fitt, Blease and Brookeborough have distinguished records, and they could make a contribution to the work of the Committee.

The question which has been addressed in terms of the need for a formal review after six months is a good one, and the circumstances to which I adverted earlier rather require that to be undertaken. The hon. Member for Leominster made a good point about the need for progress to be made on the objective of devolution, and further executive power sharing. Indeed, the work of the British-Irish Joint Parliamentary Committee is important and ought not to be prejudiced in any way by the decisions that we are taking this evening.

I think that the amendment should be supported. Northern Ireland has special circumstances, and Orders in Council are restrictive methods of legislation. I think that the work of the Department of Public Prosecutions certainly should be scrutinised. The Leader of the House must deal more adequately with allegations of political deals, but, that said, there should be no doubt that what is good enough for other departmental Committees and other state Select Committees should be good enough for Northern Ireland.

8.35 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): On behalf of my colleagues, I welcome the setting up of a Select Committee for Northern Ireland affairs.

I have had the honour of representing my constituency in this House since 1983, yet I do not believe that many hon. Members are aware of the lack of accountability and democracy in Northern Ireland. We need proper scrutiny on behalf of our constituents, and this debate certainly gives us an opportunity for that. I thank the Procedure Committee for making the recommendation, and I am delighted that it is before the House. I can assure the House that, if my party has a representative on the Select Committee, it will play a vital part in the scrutiny.

It is rather rich of the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) to comment on the lack of cross-community support. He talks about the need for cross-community support for the Select Committee, and yet there was no need for cross-community support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement or for the London-Dublin deal.

The measure effectively restrains the Executive, and hands power to the representatives of the people of Northern Ireland. It is disgraceful that hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies want to take from us that right of scrutiny of the Executive. Bearing in mind that all other Departments are brought to account, it is only right that the Executive in Northern Ireland—the

[Rev. William McCrea]

Secretary of State, Ministers and the Northern Ireland Office—should be brought to account for some of the actions which they have forced upon people.

Hon. Members have talked a lot about the peace initiative. Many people in Northern Ireland believe that talk of a peace initiative is rather bogus. We were promised "Peace by Christmas" and "Peace within a week" by the right hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party, on the basis of the Adams-Hume talks. I think that that was rather disgusting. They know that that is a bogus peace which will take us down a cul de sac. It will take us out of the United Kingdom—our rightful place—and towards a united Ireland. That has been the aim and object of all the terrorism that the United Kingdom has endured over the years.

My party has held a torch, as have other parties, for the Select Committee. I am delighted that we will have the right to scrutinise Ministers and the Department. Direct rule is remote and Ministers must be brought to book. If that is so for Ministers, it should certainly be so for the civil service in Northern Ireland. The civil servants have been ruling the Province for a number of years, and they are rather uncomfortable at the thought that they are to be scrutinised and held to account for some of the deals which they have done behind the backs of the people of Northern Ireland. Therefore, I certainly welcome the fact that we will have an opportunity to see the civil servants answer to the elected representatives of the people of the Province.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [4 March].*

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South) (*seated and covered*): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With reference to the point of order raised earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), may I say that I left my office at 7 Millbank, walked here and voted. The doors are not yet closed. In view of that fact, I wonder whether you are aware of the lack of difficulty in voting from 7 Millbank.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): My immediate predecessor dealt adequately with that point of order.

The House having divided: Ayes 240, Noes 298.

Division No. 158] **[8.38 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce

Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter

Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 324, Noes 221.

Division No. 159] **[8.52 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl'f)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCrea, Rev William
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony

Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgld)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Ballast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That Standing Order No. 130 (Select Committees related to government departments) be amended, by leaving out lines 5 to 8, and, in the Table, after the entry relating to National Heritage, by inserting the words—

[Ordered.]

"9A Northern Ireland Affairs	Northern Ireland Office; administration and expenditure of the Crown Solicitor's Office (but excluding individual cases and advice given by the Crown Solicitor); and other matters within the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (but excluding the expenditure, administration and policy of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Northern Ireland and the drafting of legislation by the Office of the Legislative Counsel).	13 4"

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Question on the other motion requiring to be decided at that hour.*

NORTHERN IRELAND GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That Standing Order No. 99 (Northern Ireland Committee) be amended, in line 2 and in line 15, in each case after the word 'Ireland' by inserting the word 'Grand'.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

PETITION

Religious Education in Schools

9.4 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): I have the honour to present a petition to the honourable Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled in the name of Mrs. Jane Cooper and hundreds of my constituents and a total of more than 4,000 people throughout the north-east of England.

The humble petition of the residents of the north-east of England sheweth that the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority has produced proposals that advocate as the norm the teaching of three non-Christian faiths by the age of 11, which, in view of young children's limited capacity to understand even Christianity, is educationally unsound, will result in confusion in young children's minds and will inevitably trivialise all faiths.

The petitioners are concerned that primary school children should be given a thorough grounding in the Christian faith. Only 3 per cent. of the population adhere to a non-Christian faith. To teach non-Christian faiths to children under the age of 11 only confuses them. The place for such teaching is the secondary school. The petitioners welcome the recent advice from the Secretary of State that Christianity should predominate at every stage of religious education. They therefore call on him to instruct the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority to bring forward proposals to ensure that the new model syllabuses for religious education concentrate on the basics of Christianity for infant and junior school children.

The petition concludes:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for Education to direct the said authority to bring forward sensible proposals requiring the concentration on Christian traditions in the primary school so that young people come to understand something of the faith and values which have shaped our nation's culture, laws and institutions and created the proper tolerance and protection for the 3 per cent. of the population who adhere to a non-Christian faith. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Psychiatric Killings (Doncaster)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

9.6 pm

Sir Harold Walker (Doncaster, Central): I welcome this opportunity to raise certain tragic events that occurred in my constituency—events that caused widespread concern and deep grief; events to which the Secretary of State's response has been wholly inadequate.

On 30 March 1991 Carol Barratt was in the Frenchgate shopping centre in Doncaster, where she threatened a young lady with a knife. She was arrested, and later, following an assessment by a police surgeon, an approved social worker and the duty psychiatrist, was admitted to the psychiatric unit at the Doncaster royal infirmary under a section of the Mental Health Act 1983.

During her admission she appealed against her detention to the Mental Health Review Tribunal, but her appeal was turned down. Despite this, on 14 April the responsible medical officer—a Dr. Silvester—discharged her from her section of the Mental Health Act and she walked out of the hospital. Two days later—on 16 April—Carol Barratt went to the Frenchgate shopping centre and stabbed to death little Emma Brodie, an 11-year-old schoolgirl whose parents kept a nearby public house. The parents have not recovered from the shock and grief, and probably never will.

That such an appalling tragedy in such circumstances could occur was greeted first with total disbelief and then with furied anger in my constituency. The report of the fact-finding committee that was subsequently set up by the Trent regional health authority said that the responsible medical officer's decision to terminate her section

"constituted a serious error of clinical judgment".

That severe indictment was expressed in even stronger terms by other people, particularly when it was learnt that Carol Barratt had also attacked a visitor during her detention prior to the killing.

The fact finding committee's report also contains the extraordinary statement:

"although her responsible medical officer realised her dangerousness he nevertheless decided to discharge her from Section. In doing so he expressed the hope that the police would then get involved which could allow for more long-term detention of Carol to be arranged".

In other words, he thought, "Let her out; she is bound to do something bad and then we can have her back inside again." It is incredible, but that, as it turned out, is exactly what happened—with such terrible consequences for poor little Emma Brodie.

It is more incredible that the responsible medical officer could not take the trouble to attend the mental health tribunal, which, on 11 April, said of Carol Barratt:

"She needs supervision and should not be released from the Section."

Just how serious an error of clinical judgment occurred in the case can be fully measured only when viewed in the context of the report of the fact finding committee. The committee did a good job within its terms of reference and I pay tribute to its members for their much-valued work, but they suffered a serious handicap. The committee was set up by the Trent regional health authority.

Understandably, following the tragedy the little girl's father, Mr. Brodie, sought redress at law. For all I know, he may still be pursuing legal action—an action in which the

same Trent regional health authority would certainly be joined, as the employer of the psychiatrist at the time that he made the fateful decision. An inquiry mounted by an organisation that needed to protect itself could not command the confidence of the public or anyone else—least of all anyone who might need the services of the psychiatry unit of the Doncaster royal infirmary.

I do not question the professional competence or the probity of those people who conducted the inquiry on behalf of the regional health authority, but their conclusions would have commanded greater support and confidence if they had been seen to be totally independent instead of appearing to act on behalf of an organisation with a vested interest in the outcome.

I pressed for an independent inquiry. For some other people that was not sufficient; they wanted a public inquiry. Those people who wanted a public inquiry, oddly enough, included the very Dr. Silvester who was responsible for the serious error of clinical judgment. I press for an independent inquiry. I do not want nurses grilled in public, but I think that we need to get at the facts of the matter. So far, I have pressed in vain.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and other hon. Members will recall the tragic Beverley Allitt case. How was the inquiry into that case conducted? The Secretary of State for Health set up what she described properly as an "independent" inquiry headed by a distinguished Queen's Counsel, Mr. Cecil Clothier. If she could do that in the Beverley Allitt case, why could not she do that in the Carol Barratt case?

The Secretary of State said that she had intervened because of the "unprecedented scale and magnitude" of the Allitt case, but the House knows that one does not multiply grief. It is not magnified by numbers; it is total to the individual or the family that has suffered.

I call again tonight for a thorough, wide-ranging, independent inquiry into the circumstances that led to the death of Emma Brodie.

Perhaps hon. Members are wondering what disciplinary action was taken against the psychiatrist who committed that serious error of clinical judgment. He was sent for a course of training, which is now completed, and he is now back in a senior post with the Doncaster Health Care trust. I should add, before I pass on to other matters, that the fact finding committee paid a deserved tribute to the staff of the unit by referring to

"a dedicated and enthusiastic staff giving good enlightened care to their patients".

I now turn to a rather different, but no less sad, case—the tragic death of Mr. Peter Savage. Mr. Savage was a patient in a general medical ward at the Doncaster royal infirmary. On 10 June 1993 he was fatally stabbed by another patient.

Once more, I pressed for an independent inquiry, but what we got was an internal inquiry led by Mr. Philip Gill, the retired former coroner of West Yorkshire. Again, I raise no question concerning Mr. Gill's probity or professional competence; but, as he himself pointed out in the introduction to his subsequent report, he was required not to investigate the circumstances leading to Mr. Savage's death. Instead, he was given the following terms of reference:

"To review the admission, investigation and treatment of confused patients in acute health care settings in order to ensure the safety of services locally."

I have no complaint about the way in which Mr. Gill conducted his inquiry—nor do I question his subsequent recommendations. But it was not the right inquiry. Why cannot there be an independent inquiry into the circumstances of Mr. Peter Savage's death? Again, I emphasise "independent", because Mr. Gill's inquiry was commissioned by the Doncaster royal infirmary and Montagu hospital national health service trust, the body responsible for the management of the unit in which Mr. Savage was killed.

Perhaps the Minister will say that the police investigation looked into the circumstances of the death. But the police were mainly or only concerned with factors that were relevant to a successful prosecution of the mentally disturbed man who did the killing. Questions that might touch upon the responsibilities of the hospital authorities in this matter would almost certainly have been outside their inquiries.

By way of contrast with the manner in which these matters have been dealt with in Doncaster, may I finally refer to the "Report of the Inquiry into the Care and Treatment of Christopher Clunis"? I have no intention of getting involved in the substance of that case, except to draw attention to the strong parallels with the killing of Emma Brodie, of which, in outline, it was almost a carbon copy. Christopher Clunis was a man with a history of mental disorder and psychiatric treatment who, without any apparent reason, stabbed to death a member of the public, Jonathan Zito, on 17 December 1992.

Although the subsequent inquiry was set up by the North East Thames and South East Thames regional health authorities, the report published late last month—just a couple of weeks ago—reflects a significantly more open and thorough approach than that of Trent region to which I referred earlier. Take the terms of reference for a start: there is no nonsense here about not inquiring into the circumstances that led to the person's death.

The inquiry, headed by Mrs. Jean Ritchie QC, was required first, to investigate all the circumstances surrounding the admission, treatment, discharge and continuing care of Christopher Clunis between May 1992 and December 1992; secondly, to identify any deficiencies in the quality and delivery of that care, as well as inter-agency collaboration and individual responsibilities; and, thirdly, to make recommendations for the future delivery of care including admission, treatment, discharge and continuing care to people in similar circumstances so that, as far as possible, harm to patients and the public is avoided.Why did we not have similar broad-ranging, far-reaching terms of reference for the cases in my constituency—and we certainly did not?

Mrs. Ritchie's committee of inquiry received evidence, written and oral, from a variety of experts, professional bodies and organisations and other interested parties. It received evidence from 143 witnesses. Those involved went out in pursuit of evidence—among other things, visiting Rampton hospital. They heard evidence from members of the public. All the witnesses are listed in the report, which runs to nearly 150 pages.

The Ritchie inquiry did an outstanding job of work and produced an excellent report. It deserves the thanks not only of the authorities that commissioned it but of all who care about mental disorders, not least those who suffer from them. I hope that its many recommendations are implemented and that its valuable lessons are learnt. I deeply regret that similar inquiries were not set up in those analogous Doncaster tragedies that I have described. If they had been, Mrs. Ritchie's task would have been lighter

[Sir Harold Walker]

or perhaps even unnecessary. My constituents in Doncaster want to know why there have been thorough in-depth inquiries into cases in some parts of the country, but not in others—at least not in Doncaster.

The Allitt case received proper scrutiny on the initiative of the Secretary of State. There was a thoroughly professional inquiry in the Clunis case but in scuth Yorkshire, different and lesser standards seem to apply. It is not good enough and the Secretary of State should take steps to enable my constituents to feel that they will receive that to which they are entitled: equity of treatment and parity of care.

9.20 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker) for allowing me a few minutes to speak in his Adjournment debate. I shall try to be as brief as possible because I am keen, as is my right hon. Friend, to hear the Minister's response.

Like my right hon. Friend, I pay tribute to the nursing staff in the Doncaster health care services. Under no circumstances should any blame for what has occurred be placed on nursing staff. Put purely and simply, the blame lies with bad management at health authority and regional health authority levels.

There has been a catalogue of disasters in Doncaster. The case involving the brain-damaged babies, the Silvester case and the Peter Savage case have been outlined very well by my right hon. Friend. As he pointed out, there has not been a public inquiry nor even an independent inquiry. Why should Doncaster be any different? Rightly, there was an independent inquiry into the Clunis case and its findings have been widely welcomed.

There has been a whitewash in each of the Doncaster cases. Internal inquiries were not open to public scrutiny. There was merely an audit of procedures to examine the brain-damaged babies case. Something different needs to be done. While the audit was welcome, it did not tackle the supposed problems that affected those babies.

Trent regional health authority set up another internal inquiry to examine the Silvester case. To add insult to injury, the doctor involved still works in Doncaster. Another internal inquiry was set up in the Peter Savage case. It amounted to an audit of procedures. In no way, shape or form did that inquiry even try to deal with what happened in the Peter Savage case or what went wrong —the inquiry was merely an audit of procedures.

Like my right hon. Friend, I believe that that is not good enough. Both Trent regional health authority and Doncaster health authority have failed miserably in their duties to the Doncaster public.

I have corresponded with the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), on the matter, raised it in parliamentary questions and even met the Minister to discuss it. I told him that the issue would not go away until it had been properly dealt with.

There has been and will continue to be local media coverage of and attention to the problem. I understand that the BBC is putting together a documentary film on the issue. A letter was sent to one of the shops in the Doncaster Frenchgate centre, where young Emma Brodie was tragically stabbed. It gives details of the filming at the Frenchgate centre on Sunday 6 March 1994—last Sunday —and continues:

"The filming is for Crime Limited a BBC 1 programme . . . in our forthcoming series".

That is a short quote from a very long letter.

When will the Minister understand that the people of Doncaster demand public scrutiny of all the cases that I mentioned? Even Dr. Silvester has said that he would welcome a public inquiry. I quote from an article in the *Yorkshire Post* on 23 June 1993:

"He insisted lay members of the panel were not qualified to hear the case and said he would welcome a public inquiry to set the record straight."

Will the Minister now agree to a public inquiry, or even the independent inquiry that my right hon. Friend asked for, so that justice can be seen to be done in the Doncaster health care services?

9.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): May I first say what a pleasure it is to respond to a debate initiated by the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker). It is the first time that I have had the pleasure of doing so. He is, of course, a well-respected Member of the House. I congratulate him on securing the time to debate the issue of the mental health services in Doncaster and the tragic cases to which he referred. I acknowledge the contribution made by the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes).

All hon. Members will join in conveying our deep sympathy to the families and friends of Emma Brodie and Peter Savage, whose lives have been shattered by these tragedies. I am aware of the personal links that the right hon. Gentleman has with one of those families. The death of a loved one is always traumatic and difficult to come to terms with, but especially so under sudden and violent circumstances.

The proposal this evening is that there should be an inquiry into psychiatric killings in Doncaster. The right hon. Gentleman asked for an independent inquiry and specifically ruled out a public inquiry. The hon. Member for Doncaster, North preferred to ask for a public inquiry, although he said that he would accept an independent inquiry. Nevertheless, an inquiry has been asked for. The right hon. Gentleman cited the murders of Emma Brodie in 1991 and Peter Savage in 1993 as evidence for that.

In point of fact, I have to say that both tragic murders have been the subject not only of lengthy police investigation and judicial trials but of independent investigations set up by Trent regional health authority and the Doncaster royal infirmary and Montagu Hospital NHS trust respectively. In addition, the health advisory service has been investigating mental health services in Doncaster. That may be partly the answer to the right hon. Gentleman. Its report is due shortly.

In the case of Emma Brodie, Trent RHA established an independent committee of inquiry in April 1991 to look at the admission, care, treatment and discharge of her assailant, Carol Ann Barratt. The committee was chaired by Cyril Unwin, a former trade union member of Trent RHA and a justice of the peace, assisted by Dr. Dennis Morgan, consult psychiatrist at Queen Elizabeth hospital, King's Lynn, and Brian Smith, a Mental Health Act commissioner.

In its report, the committee made a number of recommendations. It recommended, for example, that the consultant psychiatrist—to whom the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend referred—who authorised Carol Barratt's release should undergo a substantial period of supervised retraining outside the district. As a result, he was moved to Leicestershire district health authority in June 1992. The period of retraining ended, as the right hon. Gentleman said, at the beginning of January 1993.

But the RHA did not let the matter rest there. At its authority meeting in January 1993, Trent RHA considered the report of the doctor's supervising consultant during his retraining period and authorised his return to work only under certain conditions, including continuing supervision and training.

In the case of Peter Savage, Doncaster royal infirmary trust asked Dr. Philip Gill, the former coroner from west Yorkshire, who retired in August 1993, to conduct an independent inquiry into the admission, investigation and treatment of confused patients in acute health care settings to ensure the safety of the services locally.

The scope of the inquiry was announced on 6 October 1993 after extensive consultation with the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and my Department so that neither the defence nor prosecution were put in jeopardy. I am sure that that will be well understood. The inquiry's terms of reference were communicated to Members of Parliament representing Doncaster constituencies, to Mr. Savage's family, to the press and to the Department of Health; again, no objections were raised at the time.

The inquiry's report makes a total of 11 recommendations involving three categories—training, liaison psychiatry and guidelines. The recommendations that could be implemented immediately have already been acted on; others are subject to detailed consultation with clinicians at a national level, to ensure that the trust implements a policy that accords with best clinical practice.

Although Mr. Gill's inquiry did not report on the specific event of Mr. Savage's death, it did consider procedures for patients admitted with symptoms similar to those displayed by Mr. Savage's killer, Keith Emmerson.

Sir Harold Walker: The Minister said that, at the time when the Gill inquiry's terms of reference were announced, no objections were voiced. That was because we assumed at the time that, within those terms of reference, Mr. Gill would have an opportunity to do what he subsequently said that he was required not to do.

When the terms of reference were published, they contained no statement that Mr. Gill would not be required to look into the circumstances of Mr. Savage's death; and I for one had assumed that his terms of reference would allow him to do just that. It now seems that we were wrong. Perhaps Mr. Gill, or I, did not understand what the terms of reference meant, but the fact remains that the circumstances of Mr. Savage's death have not been inquired into. Why can they not be inquired into?

Mr. Bowis: I think that the right hon. Gentleman is acknowledging that the terms of reference were brought to his attention, to the family's attention and so on. As he said, he did not understand that that excluded looking into the specific details.

In fact, I think it fair to say that it did not. In the course of his inquiry, Mr. Gill interviewed all the main witnesses to the event, and the people responsible for Mr. Emmerson's care. As I am sure the right hon. Gentleman knows, he also interviewed Mrs. Savage, in the presence of her legal adviser.

It is important to understand that Mr. Emmerson had never shown any signs of psychiatric disorders before and had never been in touch with any psychiatric service in Doncaster. He was admitted to hospital via the accident and emergency department, where he had presented himself, showing signs of confusion which at that stage could have been the result of a medical condition such as epilepsy: that is why he was placed on a medical ward, so that the exact nature of his condition could be established.

I understand that a number of valuable lessons have been learnt as a result of Mr. Gill's inquiry. For example, staff from the accident and emergency department, the transit ward and the medical ward have now been trained to assess patients with possible psychiatric conditions. More staff will undertake such training over the coming months. There are now better links between the psychiatric unit and the acute hospital and nurse practitioners in the psychiatric unit can be called on by the accident and emergency department for advice and help.

I thank the right hon. Gentleman, and the hon. Member for Doncaster, North, for their comments about the nursing staff in the hospitals. I am sure that all concerned will note those comments with gratitude.

As with the case of Emma Brodie, this case was investigated fully by the police before the trial of Keith Emmerson. An independent investigation has already reported, and I cannot see that anything would be gained from a further inquiry that has not already been obtained by the reports that we, and the health authority, have already received.

I understand that the chief executive of the Doncaster Royal Infirmary trust, Mr. David Nicholson, has recently been in touch with Mrs. Savage to answer her detailed and specific questions about the time leading up to and immediately after her husband's death. She has also been made aware of the action taken by the trust to minimise the possibility of such a tragedy's ever happening again. I believe that Mr. Nicholson has offered Mrs. Savage a chance to meet him and the staff involved in the care of her husband if she needs any further information or explanation.

The right hon. Gentleman, and other hon. Members from Doncaster and the surrounding constituencies, may recall that the Secretary of State for Health told the House in July 1993 that the Health Advisory Service would review mental health services in Doncaster. The right hon. Gentleman may take some comfort from that. The work is now complete and the results will be published shortly.

Carol Ann Barratt made her fatal attack on Emma Brodie shortly after her release from hospital. That was in 1991 and, since then, we have introduced the care programme approach which is intended to cover all patients being considered for discharge from mental illness hospitals and all new patients accepted by specialist psychiatric services. The needs of each patient for continuing health and social care and accommodation should be systematically assessed and effective systems should be put in place to ensure that agreed health and, where necessary, social care services, are provided to those patients who can be treated in the community. Explicit, individually tailored care programmes are drawn up and a

[Mr. Bowis]

key worker is identified to keep in close touch with the patient and ensure that the agreed package of health and social care is being delivered.

The best safeguards for patients and the public are still professional judgment, co-operation between services and a proper understanding of the powers that are available under the Mental Health Act 1983 and the limits that it imposes. That is why, in the case of Emma Brodie, it was right for the regional health authority to specify certain conditions under which this particular professional is able to practise.

I am sure the right hon. Member will join me in welcoming the action of Trent regional health authority and Doncaster district health authority in asking the Health Advisory Service to conduct the review of mental health service provision in the Doncaster area. It clearly demonstrates a commitment to securing the safety of the public and the best possible service for the mentally ill. I understand that the team will be making recommendations to local health authorities about future psychiatric provision.

I join the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Doncaster, North in expressing gratitude to all those who work in the medical and nursing professions and in voluntary organisations who do so much for mentally ill people. I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to the right hon. Member. I share his determination to ensure that high-quality treatment and care is available to mentally ill people, on a national level and locally in Doncaster, and that we learn from the experiences of past tragedies for the benefit of the patients and the local community. I believe that that is the best answer for the families of Emma Brodie and Peter Savage.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes to Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 10 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

FEDERATION OF STREET TRADERS UNION (LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACT 1990) (AMENDMENT) BILL (*By Order*)

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON BILL (*By Order*)

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 17 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drug-related Crime

1. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department is taking to reduce drug-related crime.

4. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to reduce drug-related crime.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): The Government are committed to tackling every aspect of the problem of drug misuse, including that of drug-related crime. Key elements in the overall strategy include increasing the effectiveness of enforcement, developing prevention publicity and education, and improving the treatment and rehabilitation of drug misusers.

Mr. Prentice: Is the Minister concerned about the easy availability of drugs in prison, as evidenced by Judge Stephen Tumim's report on the privatised Wolds prison? Has the Minister seen the extraordinary report in *The Times* today which shows that prisoners are receiving dole payments and other benefits in prison which could conceivably be used to finance their drug habits? Is not it a national scandal that Ministers have known about it for six years but have done precisely nothing? Is it not another example of the Minister being all mouth and no action?

Mr. Maclean: If the hon. Gentleman paid attention to what was happening in the House, he would know that we have tabled a amendment, dealing with drug testing of prisoners, to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill which is currently in Committee. It is the Government's policy that prisoners shall not have access to drugs. I hope that the Opposition will support the measure as fully as the hon. Gentleman says that he will.

Mr. Byers: Following the drug-related shooting of two police officers in Brixton last night and the murder in Gateshead of Northumbria police officer Bill Forth, does the Minister agree that the greatest social menace facing our country is the expanding drug misuse among young people? Will the Government now adopt a comprehensive strategy to tackle the escalating problem and, in particular, stop the reduction in the number of drug education officers, and employ more customs officers?

Mr. Maclean: Of course we agree that it is one of the greatest social evils facing us. That is why we have such a comprehensive strategy; that is why we have the Home Office drugs prevention initiative; that is why we have the safer cities programme; that is why we have the toughest penalties in Europe for dealing with drug traffickers and why we have the powers to take their ill-gotten gains from them; that is why we have effective customs action and why drug education is included in the national curriculum. It is all there; it is about time that the Labour party stopped telling us that we should have a strategy and supported the strategy that the Government have.

Mr. Shersby: Will my hon. Friend join me in extending to the Metropolitan police the congratulations of the whole House on the way in which they are tackling drug-related crime in the metropolis? Will he ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to extend the deepest sympathies of all hon. Members to the two officers who were seriously injured in the shooting last night? What equipment was available to those officers and others on the streets of Brixton and elsewhere to protect them from the shootings and stabbings which they encounter daily while doing their duty on our behalf?

Mr. Maclean: The whole House will wish to pay tribute to PCs Simon Carroll and James Seymour, the two officers shot last night while on duty. They are two officers in a long line of thousands of police officers across the country who, every day of the week, make themselves vulnerable in carrying out their duty, for which we are all grateful. I understand that their injuries are not life threatening—one will undergo an operation this afternoon. I shall gladly pass on the comments of the whole House to those officers.

The protective equipment available to officers is a matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. I shall of course draw his attention to my hon. Friend's remarks.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Does my hon. Friend agree that if we were to give way to the calls for the decriminalisation of cannabis, the only effect would be to get more children into the habit of taking that level of drug and that it would not be long before traffickers suggested that they get more of a kick by taking heroin or cocaine? Would not the result be an increased demand for hard drugs, which could lead only to more crimes being committed? Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to say no yet again to all calls to decriminalise drugs?

Mr. Maclean: Absolutely. As I said, the Government have the most draconian penalties in Europe to deal with those who traffic in the more serious drugs—crack, heroin and cocaine. We should be sending out a cloudy message if we were to suggest that not only cannabis but category B and C drugs—we have recently uprated the penalties for

them; they had not been uprated since 1977—did not matter or that taking drugs did not count. Taking any drug is harmful, those included.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is the Minister aware that the biggest link between drug taking and the use of another drug is the use of alcohol? Is he saying that he is going to ban alcohol?

Mr. Maclean: I shall treat that remark with the contempt that it deserves.

Basildon

2. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his visit to Basildon last year.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): I visited Basildon on Saturday 20 November last year, when I visited Basildon police station and also attended a large and extremely enthusiastic meeting of my hon. Friend's constituents.

Mr. Amess: Following the highly successful visit of my right hon. and learned Friend to Basildon, will he tell the House what progress has been made on the 27 points contained in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill? Will he join me in congratulating Basildon police, whom he has met, on their increased detection rate and on their efforts to unite the community in the fight against crime? Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that, following the launch of my road show and meet the people campaign, the six yobs whom I accosted on Saturday after complaints from local residents, would be taken to a centre of detention—

Madam Speaker: Order. We are not in the middle of debate. I want a question for the Minister so that he can give a direct answer.

Mr. Amess: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that such adolescents who are out of control should be taken to secure centres if their parents are not prepared to accept the responsibility for their behaviour?

Mr. Howard: I agree with my hon. Friend. Secure training units are essential if we are to bring persistent young offenders under control. I congratulate Basildon police on the substantial increase in their detection rate. Progress on the implementation of my 27-point programme is excellent.

Mr. Mackinlay: What measures does the Home Secretary intend to take to lift the low morale of police officers in Basildon and throughout the county of Essex which has been conveyed to him by their Police Federation?

Mr. Howard: I have to disagree with the hon. Gentleman on the basis of my encounter with the police in Basildon, to which I referred in answer to my hon. Friend. When I met the police in Basildon, morale was excellent and they were looking forward to continuing the excellent progress that they have made in increasing their detection rate.

Mr. Blair: Does the Home Secretary agree that in Basildon, as elsewhere, the battle against crime simply cannot be won unless we fight drugs and drug abuse? Will he undertake now, as a matter of urgency, to wake up to the seriousness of that situation and combine measures—*[Interruption.]* Drugs and drug-related crime is a serious issue. Will he wake up to the seriousness of that issue and combine measures that drive the drug dealers off our streets with measures that educate and teach our young people of the dangers of drug abuse?

Mr. Howard: Yes, of course I shall do that. Of course, drug misuse is a very serious matter. Of course, it plays an important part in crime. Of course, we must take it seriously. However, when we consider what the hon. Gentleman says, we find, as so often, that his words are long, but his action is extremely short. He made a long speech on drugs recently in which, at the end, we found a piffling three paragraphs on Labour strategy, most of which relates to things that we are already doing.

Life Sentences

3. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received that for particular categories of murder a life sentence should mean life.

Mr. Maclean: I have received a number of representations to that effect. Under the present arrangements, those convicted of the worst sorts of murder will normally serve a minimum of 20 years in prison. Some will serve longer and some may never be released. A life sentence is a sentence for life, because those released are released on licence and can be recalled to prison at any time.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my hon. Friend agree that although the public overwhelmingly want the restoration of capital punishment, it is now abundantly clear that Parliament will always deny them that? If Parliament is not to be brought into disrepute, must not we come up with something that matches the gravity of those aspirations? Will my right hon. and hon. Friends at least consider the proposition that, for those who commit the most serious forms of murder, that of police officers and prison officers, life sentences should really mean life until death?

Mr. Maclean: We have those powers already, and for some people that is exactly what life will mean. The option is not limited to those who kill police and prison officers. No one who receives a mandatory life sentence should expect that to mean eight, 10 or 12 years. The sentence served could be very long indeed. For the most heinous killers, it will be a minimum of 20 years and some will probably never be released.

Mr. Trimble: The Minister referred to his policy that the murderers of policemen and prison officers should serve at least 20 years in prison. Why does not that policy apply throughout the United Kingdom?

Mr. Maclean: That is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I think that the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) would object if Home Office Ministers sought to impose policies on Northern Ireland without the consideration of the members of the Government responsible for policy there.

Mr. Sweeney: Does my hon. Friend accept that the fact that people serving life sentences for murder emerge from

custody after 12 years, and that people serving sentences for offences such as burglary also come out long before they have served the nominal sentence imposed, brings the law into disrepute and makes people more likely to offend?

Mr. Maclean: I am sorry to disagree with my hon. Friend. Of course, there are systems of parole whereby some people may be released before they have served their full sentence, but it is wrong for my hon. Friend to suggest that in all cases of murder the offender will serve about 12 years. The advantage of the mandatory life sentence for murder, with discretionary release at the end, is that it can cover a great many gradations of murder. Some people will serve shorter sentences, but I repeat that some people who are sentenced for murder may never be released.

Police And Magistrates' Courts Bill [*Lords*]

6. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received on his proposals set out in the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill [*Lords*].

Mr. Howard: I have received about 250 representations from organisations, members of the public and hon. Members since the Bill was published on 17 December.

Mr. Ainger: As the Home Secretary is aware that Dyfed-Powys police and Gwent police are the most successful forces in terms of clear-up rate, will he do another U-turn, or another climbdown, on the provisions in the Bill for ending or amalgamating police forces, especially as such action would be against the wishes of local people and of the local police authority?

Mr. Howard: I do not need to change the Bill to agree with the hon. Gentleman's proposal. The Bill merely changes the procedures for amalgamations and I have made it clear that I have no hidden agenda of compulsory amalgamations. I congratulate the police of Dyfed-Powys on their excellent results, including most impressive crime clear-up rates and the award of a chartermark.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if he had the power to appoint an accountant to the South Wales police authority, the authority might have been able to discover somewhat earlier that it had made a £3 million mistake in its adding up?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend's point is extremely persuasive and it is a matter for great regret that the South Wales police authority has been responsible for such large mistakes. Of course, there is a place, and there will be a place on the new police authorities, for local and independent members who do not happen to be councillors or magistrates. I hope that they will make an effective contribution to the working of those authorities.

Mr. Michael: If the Home Secretary has no hidden agenda for merging police forces—unlike his predecessor, who offered a threat to 39 of our 43 police forces—will he withdraw the power that he seeks in the Bill to merge police forces without being restrained by the wishes of local people?

Mr. Howard: The procedures, for which provision is made in the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill, make proper provision for giving full weight to the views and wishes of local people. What they change are the extremely cumbersome procedures that have been in place until now, which are long, expensive and unnecessary.

Police Bail

7. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his plans to give the police a new power of arrest for breach of police bail.

Mr. Howard: A provision to create such a power is contained in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill as part of our package of measures to cut down the abuse of bail. It has been widely welcomed by the police.

Mr. Richards: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in Clwyd, North-West there is wide support for the fight against crime? Has he received any support for his proposals to crack down on bail bandits from the Labour party, especially the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair)?

Mr. Howard: No, I am sorry to say that a number of amendments were tabled in Standing Committee that would make it much more difficult for the courts to refuse bail. Each year, some 50,000 offences are committed by people while on bail. The proposals that we have included in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill are designed to deal with that mischief.

Mr. Bennett: If the Home Secretary is so keen to increase the number of people in prison as a result of such actions, where will he find the space for them? Is he aware that, following the Strangeways incident, during the whole of Operation Container in Greater Manchester, the police were reluctant to arrest people for breaches of bail because they did not have anywhere to put them? If the Home Secretary is to carry out the proposals—the police cells in Manchester are overcrowded now—what steps will he take to find somewhere to put people when they are arrested?

Mr. Howard: I am delighted to tell the hon. Gentleman that we are progressively increasing prison capacity in the north-west. The new Manchester prison is already open and taking an increasing number of prisoners all the time. We have plans to ensure that further increases are made to the prison estate in the north-west.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree with a lady in my county whose daughter was murdered by a suspect who was out on bail for a string of serious sexual offences? She wrote to me saying that she wanted the provisions in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to be implemented as soon as possible. If they had been implemented, her daughter would be alive today. Are not the amendments tabled by Labour Members to weaken the provisions—which are wanted by the public and would be effective on those criminals—further evidence that they are soft on law and order?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who reminds the House that behind the charges and countercharges that are exchanged across the Chamber lie real human tragedies with which we are trying to deal as effectively as we can in the proposals that we put before Parliament. It is a matter of deep regret that we do not get the support of the Labour party for those proposals.

Crime, London

8. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to reduce crime in London.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): Metropolitan police strength has increased by 22 per cent. since the Government took office and successful local partnerships have been formed throughout the capital in a co-ordinated effort to tackle crime.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Has the Minister seen the recent studies carried out by the Association of London Authorities which show that more than 50 per cent. of Londoners indicated fear of crime as their major concern and more than two thirds of Londoners expect the situation to get worse? Does he agree that his tough words have not been matched by action? What will he do to restore the morale and confidence of the Metropolitan police, who are unable to respond to the needs of their communities?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman knows that in the Plumstead division, which covers his constituency, burglary was down 11 per cent. last year. He will know that in the year to June 1993, recorded crime was down fractionally for the Metropolitan police district. He will know that 15,000 fewer houses were burgled last year. He will be aware of the wide variety of crime prevention measures throughout the Metropolitan police district. For example, in Southall, Ealing, Wandsworth, Westminster, Hounslow, Croydon, Brent and Sutton crime prevention is at work, and most effectively.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend confirm that many crimes in London are committed by boys and girls under the age of 16 who commit a multitude of crimes and historically have not been put in secure units? Does he agree that the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill will address that problem?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why persistent juvenile offenders will be given secure training orders by means of the Bill's provisions.

Ms Ruddock: The Minister will be aware that 40 per cent. of racial incidents recorded by the police occur in the Metropolitan police area and that few of those responsible for those crimes can be arrested, and even fewer convicted, under the present law. Will the hon. Gentleman join the Opposition in recognising that the law needs to be strengthened in relation to racial incidents? Will he give a clear commitment this afternoon that he and the Home Secretary will support the Bill on racial hatred and violence which is being brought to the House tomorrow by the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth)?

Mr. Wardle: The House will know that my right hon. and learned Friend will consider the Select Committee proposals, for which he is waiting. The House will also be aware that the Government support police efforts to tackle racial crime. We are encouraging reporting and the increase in the number of reported incidents may well be a result of that encouragement. There has been fresh training and multi-agency guidance on that most important problem.

Police Accountability

9. **Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to make the police more accountable to the local community.

Mr. Howard: The Police and Magistrates' Court Bill will establish strong independent local police authorities and a clear framework for setting priorities and measuring performance. Local people will be better informed about what their local force is trying to achieve and how well it is doing.

Mr. Howarth: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we have enjoyed immense benefit from our tradition of policing by consent? That consent has been in important measure established and expressed through locally controlled watch committees, historically and by police authorities in more recent times. Will he therefore continue to seek the fullest measure of local accountability for police forces, consistent with efficiency and with appropriate operational independence?

Mr. Howard: Yes, I can certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. One of the new responsibilities of local police authorities will be that of preparing a strategy for a local partnership between the police and the public. Unless we can strengthen such partnerships, we shall never make real progress in the fight against crime. I agree with my hon. Friend that policing by consent is an essential element in that partnership.

Mr. Maginnis: Has the Secretary of State received any reports on the effect that the anti-terrorist cordons in London have had on the level of ordinary crime in the area? What lessons are to be learnt from that and has the community been informed of the benefits?

Mr. Howard: I understand that crime has been reduced in the area in which the measures are in force and the City of London Corporation is assiduous in bringing the results to the attention of those who live and work in the City. The future of the scheme is under review and certain procedures must be satisfied. I think that that is the answer that the hon. Gentleman wanted.

Sir Anthony Grant: Would not it be a good idea to make local authorities more accountable to the police? In Cambridgeshire, for example, the Lib-Lab coalition regime has flatly refused to apply to the police the £1.2 million that has been made available to it for that purpose.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. As usual, there is a complete contrast between the words from those on the Opposition Front Bench and the deeds of Labour local authorities which, up and down the country, refuse to give the police money that the Government have made available for policing purposes.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Home Secretary accept my congratulations on scrapping, in the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill currently in the House of Lords, almost all the proposals made in the White Paper that would have eroded the local accountability of police? If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is prepared to look so objectively at Home Office matters in future, he will command more support than he has done up to date.

Mr. Howard: I do not wish to sound in the slightest churlish in reply to the hon. Gentleman's congratulations, but they seem to have been offered under a misapprehension. The changes that have been made to the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill are changes of detail. The principles are intact and they will deliver us the objectives that we have always sought to achieve.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take account of the concern of many police forces that they are unable to deal with noisy neighbours who cause great anxiety to people by disturbing them with parties all night, noisy radios and televisions, and the rest of it? Will he seek powers to enable the police to deal with that disturbing and annoying problem?

Mr. Howard: A range of powers are available at present. They are mostly local authority and civil law powers. They are not used as effectively as they should be. I should be happy to have a word with my hon. Friend about the matter.

Mr. Allen: Now that the Home Secretary has been forced to back down on some of the more ridiculous and wasteful proposals on police accountability, does he accept that, rather than pressing ahead with the rest of his package, it would be far better to put the money available into boosting the pathetic 76p per family per year that the Conservatives spend on crime prevention? The police and local communities do not want well-established relationships tampered with. They want to know when the Conservatives will get serious about crime prevention.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman's figures are absurd. Apart from the £200 million a year that we spend across Whitehall on crime prevention, the police spend a substantial part of their £6 billion-a-year budget on crime prevention. We take crime prevention extremely seriously. Contrary to the point made by the hon. Gentleman, the Bill that is at present in the other place will make a substantial contribution to crime prevention.

Crime, London

10. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from the London SW1 postal district about the relationship between law enforcement and rising crime.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Records of representations are not kept by postal district.

Ms Eagle: Does the Minister agree with the gracious Queen of Belize, who is normally resident in SW1, who recently said that increasing levels of crime—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have to remind the hon. Lady that we do not invoke the name of the Queen in debate. Can she rephrase her—*[Interruption.]* The Queen of Belize is also a member of a royal family.

Ms Eagle: Does the Minister agree with the comments made by a well-known resident of SW1 that increased crime prevention will not solve rising crime levels unless it is accompanied by a look at the root causes of the disease?

Mr. Wardle: I am sure that the hon. Lady will be pleased to know that recorded crime in London SW1 has dropped by 8 per cent. in the past two years. As for the reasons for crime, the hon. Lady will also be pleased to hear that sub-groups of the National Board for Crime Prevention are examining precisely those matters. One in particular that will command increasing attention is the problem of repeat victimisation.

Mr. Heald: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the crime issues in SW1 is terrorism? Would he care to pay tribute to the police who have protected us in SW1 in recent years? Has he received any message from the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to the effect that he is now prepared to fight for the measures that the police want to fight terrorism—the emergency powers legislation that we passed last night, particularly in the light of the Heathrow bombing incident?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The pattern of voting in the House yesterday will undoubtedly command wide attention. As for the terrorist action, the terrorists achieved nothing yesterday and they will achieve nothing other than futile suffering.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister tell the people of SW1 whether tomorrow the Government will support or oppose the Bill being sponsored by his hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth)?

Mr. Wardle: As I said in response to an earlier question, the Government will consider the response of the Select Committee in due course.

Offenders (Bail)

11. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his plans to deal with those people who offend while on bail.

12. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to deal with those people who commit crimes while on bail.

Mr. Howard: We are introducing in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill a series of measures designed to tackle the problem of offending on bail and to improve the bail system more generally.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply. Does he agree that most people in the country are fed up with reading about people who offend and commit other crime while out on bail, and they want the Government to take tough action, so they will be grateful for what my right hon. and learned Friend proposes? However, what would be the consequences if the courts were required to consider the defendant's health before recommending putting the defendant in custody? The Labour party believes that that would be a good thing. Many Conservative Members are fearful that fewer people in custody means more trouble for people on the streets of our country.

Mr. Howard: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The amendment to which he refers is but one of a number tabled by the Labour party which would restrict the powers of the court to refuse bail. It is a remarkable fact that, of those people arrested in the course of the remarkably successful Operation Bumblebee, which has done so much to reduce burglary in London, no fewer than 40 per cent.

were on bail. That simply cannot be allowed to continue. That is why we are taking new powers in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the most important steps that we have taken is in the Criminal Justice Act 1993, which made offending on bail an aggravating factor when passing sentence? Does he further agree with the cab driver who brought me back to the House this afternoon, who said that, as a result of the Labour party's inability to support the Government on law and order measures, the least convincing Member of the House, in his view, was the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair)?

Mr. Howard: Out of the mouths of cab drivers comes wisdom of a very high order and I would be the last person to disagree with it.

Crime

13. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with local authorities in the north-west regarding measures to reduce crime.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Home Office officials frequently discuss such measures with representatives of a number of key agencies in the north-west, including local authorities.

Ms Lynne: Has the Secretary of State any plans to speak to members of Rochdale council to explain to them the cut in the safer cities grant? Does he intend to take the opportunity of congratulating Rochdale council on finding the money to keep the scheme going, and also to provide extra funding for special constables to patrol areas on Rochdale estates?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Lady knows that the safer cities project in Rochdale was for a four-year term, and that it was intended that a local partnership should take the project on after that four-year term. That has been the pattern with the first 20 projects in phase 1 of our safer cities programme. It is working effectively in Rochdale, and the metropolitan borough council will have a close involvement in the continued partnership. Two safer cities project staff will be seconded from the Home Office to guide it.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend understand that many people in the north-west would like prisoners who are sentenced to five years actually to serve five years—cutting out all the remission, rehabilitation, and parole—and, if they misbehave, to be given extra years? Then we shall get to grips with law and order.

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend, as usual, makes his point most effectively. He will also be mindful of the fact that since the Criminal Justice Act 1991, prisoners will be serving more of the sentences given to them by the courts.

Mr. Lewis: Will the Minister inquire into the case this week in which a firearm that was used in a heinous crime in Greater Manchester was returned to its rightful owner? I have mentioned the subject in the House on a number of occasions since eight legally held firearms were stolen about two years ago, three of which have now been responsible for three murders and two serious woundings. There seems to me to be a case for a fresh examination of what happens to those firearms when they have been recovered.

Mr. Wardle: The firearm was stolen. Indeed, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, it was stolen two or three years ago. Obviously, the House will share the regret at the tragic deaths and serious injuries that stolen firearms have caused. However, the chief constable of Greater Manchester satisfied himself that their owner had the proper certificate and had kept them in a proper and secure place and that they should be returned to him.

Squatting

14. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further plans he has in respect of squatting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill contains provisions that will reinforce a new civil procedure for removing squatters from premises. In addition, I have tabled amendments to the Bill which will increase the protection given by the Criminal Law Act 1977 to displaced residential occupiers and protect intending occupiers of property that is unlawfully occupied.

Mr. Dunn: What opposition has the Minister encountered to changes in the law on squatting and how does he intend to overcome it?

Mr. Maclean: The welcome from the Opposition was less than enthusiastic and wholehearted, as we might have expected.

Madam Speaker: Order. Just a word of caution, which I have uttered before. Committees of the House are autonomous. They do their work upstairs, and only when the results of their deliberations are reported to the House are these matters discussed on the Floor. I remind Back Benchers of that, but it seems that Ministers, too, need occasional reminding.

Mr. Gerrard: Does the Minister really believe that his proposal to allow landlords to use violence for the purpose of evicting people will aid law and order? Will he accept responsibility when someone, whether a bailiff, a squatter or a tenant being illegally evicted, is seriously injured or killed as a direct result of his legislation?

Mr. Maclean: The House will find it quite unacceptable that, at present, a person whose house has been stolen by squatters cannot even break the window of the back door to get into his own premises, as such action is considered to be violence. That is nonsense, which we are removing.

Mr. Hendry: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in tackling squatting, prevention is better than cure? Is not it the case that inept, inefficient and incompetent Labour authorities up and down the country are sitting on tens of thousands of empty council houses and that if those houses were made available to tenants they would not be available for squatting?

Mr. Maclean: That is certainly the case, but it is not acceptable that, just because of some incompetent Labour

authorities that have thousands of empty properties, other people whose houses are taken over should not have a right to get them back.

Drug-related Crime

15. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives his Department is taking to tackle drug-related crime.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the oral answer given earlier today to the hon. Members for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) and for Wallsend (Mr. Byers).

Mr. Milburn: How can the Government possibly justify cutting funding for drugs education when, currently, just four in 10 school children have access to that vital advice? Why does not the Minister realise that being tough on law and order means taking action to prevent crime as well as imposing stiffer sentences?

Mr. Maclean: In the replies to questions Nos. 1 and 4 I laid out the elements of the Government's prevention strategy, a great deal of which is concerned with crime prevention. Last week, the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) made a speech entitled "Drugs: the need for action"—four pages of waffle against the Government, with three miserable paragraphs at the end. How much money will the hon. Gentleman spend? The last of the big spenders would provide £4 million to deal with the drugs problem. We spend £4 million every three days. But the hon. Gentleman will not be allowed even to keep his £4 million promise, as his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) will say that he did not make the promise of the Floor of the House.

Sir Peter Fry: Does my hon. Friend agree that the estimated level of drug-related crime is now so high that it makes nonsense of the complaint from Labour Members that crime is a result of unemployment or social deprivation? Does he agree that drugs constitute the main factor driving the crime figures up?

Mr. Maclean: Of course there is drug-related crime. No one seeks to deny or exaggerate that. The important point is that we have the strategy for dealing with it at all levels through the drugs prevention initiative; massive spending on the safer cities programme; the toughest penalties in Europe; tough action by the police and customs; drugs education in the national curriculum; and all the other action that the Government are taking. Those add up to more than £500 million a year worth of action on all aspects of the fight against drugs.

Bail Hostels

16. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on the provision of bail hostels in the west midlands.

Mr. Maclean: The Government continue to support the provision of approved bail and probation hostels in the west midlands, as elsewhere, where those meet the needs of sentencers in a cost-effective way and within the requirements of national standards.

Mr. Ainsworth: Does the Minister agree that people outside this place will find it absolutely incredible that Conservative Members have been complaining about people being released on bail when, in the west midlands, it is proposed to close two much-needed bail hostels and save £200,000, thus depriving the courts of the ability to choose appropriate accommodation for people who need it?

Mr. Maclean: What people will find extraordinary is that the west midlands has nine bail hostels. If the hon. Gentleman had told me that those were at 100 per cent. capacity I should be more concerned about his point. If we remove the two smallest hostels, we would remove only 15 per cent. of capacity. Given that there is at least 20 per cent. surplus capacity, the hon. Gentleman has not a leg to stand on.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. McFall: Now that the Minister for open government has given an entirely new meaning to the phrase, "lying in state", does the Prime Minister agree that the democratic process is undermined if Ministers imply that concealing the truth from the House is acceptable? Does he accept that it is a lie that the former Prime Minister, Lord Callaghan, ever lied to this House? If so, will he apologise to the former distinguished Prime Minister for that slur?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman may regret, on reflection, the way in which he phrased his question —*[Interruption.]* If hon. Members do not regret it, I believe that they should. The hon. Gentleman knows very well that it is not the case now, nor has it been in the past, that Ministers willingly mislead this House, and no one has suggested that that is the case.

Q2. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thompson: Bearing in mind the fact that, last night, the IRA launched yet another vicious terrorist attack endangering the lives of hundreds of innocent civilians, were not the Opposition, at exactly same time, voting against the very measure which our security forces need to combat this evil? Are not the Opposition soft on terrorism and soft on crime?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the attack that was launched yesterday on Heathrow airport by the IRA will receive and deserve universal condemnation. It was an unjustifiable attack and will make no difference whatever to the search for peace in Northern Ireland. But I believe that it should lead to every part of this House uniting on firm action against terrorism.

Mr. John Smith: With the issue of Ministers telling the truth now a matter of public debate, does the Prime Minister appreciate that what most undermines the credibility of his Administration is the blatant deception practised at the last election when the Conservative party promised to cut taxes? Since then, they have imposed the largest tax increase in Britain's peacetime history.

The Prime Minister: I shall turn directly to that point, but I must say that I am extremely surprised that the right hon. and learned Gentleman should pursue that matter on the day after a mortar attack at Heathrow and on the very day on which the Cabinet has been considering sending more troops to Bosnia to deal with an international problem. *[Interruption.]* I have made the point. The right hon. and learned Gentleman seems to think that these things do not matter. I think that people throughout the country will take a different view. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order.

The Prime Minister: On the specific point raised by the right hon. and learned Gentleman, taxation rose precisely because we kept our promises to protect the elderly, the vulnerable and the sick through the long recession. The recession lasted longer than we or other forecasters had imagined, and in order to sustain policy and bring down interest rates it was necessary to close borrowing. That was a responsible attitude. It was the right attitude. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman understood the first thing about economics, he would support it, not attack it.

Mr. John Smith: To come very directly to the point, does the Prime Minister deny that before the election he promised to cut taxes and he is now putting them up?

The Prime Minister: I have made it perfectly clear to the right hon. and learned Gentleman why it was necessary to raise taxation, although we had hoped not to do so. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman wants to consider taxes, he might look at the more recent figures of council taxes which show clearly how much more expensive Labour authorities and Liberal authorities are than Conservative authorities. Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman would comment on that.

Mr. John Smith: Having regard to the Prime Minister's feeble excuse for breaking his promise at the election, does he not remember telling the *Los Angeles Times* in his celebrated interview last year

"I said [to colleagues] the day after we won the election . . . 'Within the next 12 months the government will be the most unpopular we have seen for a long time.'"

He went on to say, "I was staggeringly prescient." Will the Prime Minister explain how he could know about the state of the economy the day after the election but not know before polling day?

The Prime Minister: I shall go back further than that for the right hon. and learned Gentleman. I made it absolutely clear on the day that I became Chancellor of the Exchequer that we would take whatever action was necessary to restrain inflation and put the economy on secure and steady growth. We have done that, including maintaining monetary policy with interest rates at a high level right through the election, because it was in the interests of the British economy to do so. That is responsible government. I am sorry that the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not understand that.

Q3. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Lady Olga Maitland: With the council elections approaching, does my right hon. Friend agree with me that what council tax payers want are efficient services at the lowest possible cost? Does he agree that it is the Conservative councils who deliver this, not the Labour councils and not the Liberal councils, such as the one that I have in Surrey?

The Prime Minister: I not only agree with my hon. Friend; it is what the statistics now becoming available on council tax charges show. At present, as my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning announced yesterday, Conservative councils that have now declared their council taxes come out, on average, at £129 less than Labour councils and £73 less than Liberal councils. It is clear who costs one more in the shires—it is Labour. It is clear who costs one more in the mets—it is Labour. It is clear who costs one more in London—it is Labour. No matter where one looks, Labour councils and—so as not to disappoint the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown)—Liberal councils, cost one more.

Q4. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr.Marshall: Is the Prime Minister aware that his recent morale-boosting visit to Scotland has resulted in his party achieving a record low in the polls of 13 per cent? Does he appreciate why the Scots are once more uttering the refrain:

"Will ye no' come back again"—

and again, and again?

The Prime Minister: As it happens, the hon. Gentleman is typically inaccurate. The data were before I visited Scotland.

Ministerial Visits

Q5. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will pay an official visit to the Imperial War museum at Duxford.

The Prime Minister: I know from private visits what a magnificent place the Duxford museum is. I can well understand the pride of my right hon. Friend in having it in his constituency. I hope that I may be able to pay an official visit at some time in the future.

Sir Anthony Grant: Will my right hon. Friend note that the United States air force flew from Duxford during the last war with much loss of life and, in particular, flew on the D-day operation? Will he give his support to the American air museum being created there, either by

visiting Duxford or by inviting the Americans concerned to visit him? It would be extremely good for Anglo-American relations.

The Prime Minister: I should like to visit Duxford again. I shall take an opportunity to do so and to look at the museum's plans. My hon. Friend is entirely right about the significant contribution of the US air force to the D-day landings. We have a continual debt of gratitude to them. It is right that we should celebrate the 50th anniversary and remember the heroism of the troops and the sacrifices that they made so that we can enjoy the liberties that we exercise in the House.

Health Issues

Q6. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister what proportion of his time he devotes to health issues.

The Prime Minister: A lot.

Mr. Hughes: In that case, given that one of the most obvious implications of the Government's policies for health services in London is that they plan to run down the hospital that the Prime Minister described as the flagship, and that the main building—a state of the art building costing £140 million—will never come into use, in all seriousness will the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State take a little extra time to listen to a proposal that keeps both Guy's and St. Thomas's as hospitals, saves the taxpayer money, reduces embarrassment and, above all, saves patients' lives?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that the changes to the health service in London are long overdue; they have been long sought by many people. We have won support inside and outside the health service for tackling that particular problem, not least from Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. As for the problems of Guy's and St. Thomas's, the hon. Gentleman will know that the clinicians at both hospitals believe that patient care will be improved by concentrating services on one site, not two. It is not just the Government's view, but that of the doctors involved. Thanks to the determination to embrace change, the Guy's and St Thomas's trust will have a secure future and its buildings, old and new, will be used fully, effectively and appropriately in the best interests of patients, medical teaching and research.

Engagements

Q7. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Sumberg: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the considerable concern in my constituency and throughout the country about the activities of television cable-laying companies? Pavements are uprooted, roads closed and businesses disrupted all with the objective of getting doubtful television programmes into our homes. Is it not time that we found a better way of organising these matters?

The Prime Minister: I recognise the concerns of my hon. Friend. Of course it is important that all those with the right to undertake street works should keep disruption to a minimum. He will know that there are duties to do so written into the terms of the licence issued by the Department of Trade and Industry. My hon. Friend will also know that in those areas where cables are laid, about one quarter of all homes subsequently decide to participate in cable television. That has led to investment across the United Kingdom of well over £1 billion.

Q8. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: Will the Prime Minister find time today to check on a transcript of the "Today" programme earlier this week, when his right hon. and learned Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, suggested that he would not be Prime Minister after November, or after the autumn? If that is the case, will he make sure that his right hon. and learned Friend is incorrect, as he is such a good asset to us in the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: I seem to recall cheap questions like that before the previous election. I am still here and the Opposition are still there.

Q9. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bellingham: Further to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), does my right hon. Friend agree that the IRA-Sinn Fein must now be treated with complete contempt? Does he further agree that unless it signs the declaration tomorrow, it should forfeit its opportunity to be part of it?

The Prime Minister: I think that every hon. Member of the House will have nothing but contempt for the IRA's behaviour. With the attacks that it has made, both in Northern Ireland and at Heathrow yesterday, it has demonstrated again its disregard for human life and for opinion on both sides of the community. I believe that my hon. Friend misunderstands the long-term purpose and import of the declaration that I signed with the Taoiseach in December. It sets out a series of principles on which we hope and intend to try to build a permanent peace for Northern Ireland.

British Forces (Bosnia)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the British contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping effort in Bosnia.

Since the first deployment of UNPROFOR troops to the former Yugoslavia, the United Kingdom has contributed to the growing international military effort to contain the conflict and alleviate suffering. In the spring of 1992, we sent an Army field ambulance to Croatia. In the autumn of that year, we sent an armoured infantry battalion group to Bosnia to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to the victims of the conflict. That deployment has undoubtedly helped to save thousands of lives. The Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force are also making a very important contribution.

There are now some 2,450 British soldiers serving in UNPROFOR's Bosnia-Herzegovina command—a contribution second only to that of the French. Since the beginning of the year, we have also provided the commander for the UN forces in Bosnia, Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose, who is carrying out his responsibilities in a most impressive manner. Our military effort in the former Yugoslavia is outstanding in scale, range and quality, and we need fear no comparison with the contribution of any other nation in the world.

Until recently, the diplomatic and military efforts of the international community achieved limited success. Spillover of the conflict was prevented and relief was successfully brought to its victims, but the warring factions in Bosnia seemed determined to carry on fighting. The prospect, however, has been transformed by the NATO ultimatum that followed the mortar attack on the Sarajevo marketplace on 5 February, the ceasefire agreement in Sarajevo, which was negotiated by General Rose on 9 February, and the removal or corralling of the heavy weapons attacking the city.

Those dramatic events not only brought a fragile calm to Sarajevo itself, but have acted as a catalyst elsewhere in Bosnia. On 23 February, a ceasefire was signed between the Bosnian Government and Bosnian Croat commanders which provided for withdrawal of troops from a buffer zone, withdrawal or UN control of heavy weapons and the opening of routes.

On Tuesday this week, United Nations troops took control of Tuzla airport. There have, of course, been many disappointments in Bosnia before, and there may be others to come; but if the ceasefires in Sarajevo and central Bosnia hold, they could be the first steps towards the ending of the conflict. I pay tribute to those in UNPROFOR who negotiated the ceasefires, and in particular to General Rose, General Cot and Mr. Akashi.

The ceasefires have brought not only new opportunities for UNPROFOR, but new responsibilities. To police a buffer zone and monitor heavy weapons, large numbers of men are needed on the ground. In central Bosnia, the front line between Muslims and Croats is 125 miles long. Quite suddenly, UNPROFOR has found its task greatly expanded and its resources greatly overstretched, both in Sarajevo and central Bosnia. The United Nations has therefore appealed for additional troops.

The Coldstream Guards, whose mission hitherto had been to support humanitarian aid convoys, have found themselves with a major peacekeeping task on their doorstep. Their enthusiasm is great; they are determined to do their utmost to make the ceasefire a success. But it has become clear that the effort involved, while tolerable for a time, is unsustainable beyond the short term with their current manpower.

The question of reinforcement has thus become an immediate issue, not just for the British contingent, but for UNPROFOR as a whole. The United Kingdom has a national interest in securing a peaceful outcome to the Bosnian conflict, but that interest is equally shared by other European nations, some of which have closer links with the Balkans, and is also shared by the world community at large.

Although the UK contribution to the region is already a large one, a further UK contribution at this stage as part of a co-ordinated international effort would help to make the difference between success and failure for the ceasefires. That in turn should contribute to shortening the conflict, and reduce the burden on British troops currently in Bosnia.

It was for those reasons that we took the initiative in convening a meeting of troop contributors, actual and potential, in New York—under the chairmanship of Sir David Hannay, our ambassador to the UN—to see whether the international community was prepared to provide more troops for UNPROFOR to take advantage of the window of opportunity that has suddenly opened there. The results of the meeting were very encouraging. Leaving aside any offer by the United Kingdom, there have been offers amounting to some 3,850 new troops, plus further offers to redeploy some 2,450 troops from elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. That gives a total of 6,300 extra troops for Bosnia, in addition to any UK contribution. Finally, up to a further 4,000 troops are expected to be deployed by the summer.

As part of this response, Her Majesty's Government have decided to reinforce the British UNPROFOR contingent by sending a second battalion group, some 900 strong, to central Bosnia, initially for four months. Its nucleus will be the 1st Duke of Wellington regiment, which is equipped with the Saxon wheeled armoured personnel carrier. Advance elements of the battalion will be in Split by tonight. The battalion group will include engineers, signallers and support troops, and a medium reconnaissance squadron of the Light Dragoons.

We will always be cautious when sending British troops to serve in a foreign country. We have had to strike a balance among a number of factors: the manpower demands of UNPROFOR's expanding role, the prospects of peace taking hold, our own national interest, the willingness of the rest of the world to recognise theirs and, above all, the need to ensure that British troops are not asked to do the impossible. Our judgment is that reinforcement is the right course at the present time. I am sure that the House will join me in wishing the battalion group godspeed.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement.

Labour has been calling for the dispatch of additional troops for peacekeeping in Bosnia for some time now, and welcomes the fact that, at long last, Her Majesty's Government have responded positively. We join the Government in hoping that the peace that has come about,

in a rather unexpected way, is maintained and, indeed, extended throughout Bosnia. We see the dispatch of British troops as part of that process.

Indeed, it is a tribute to the professionalism and impartiality of British troops that they are in so much demand by the United Nations throughout the world. We wish all the service personnel well in their undertaking of this dangerous and hazardous task in Bosnia, and their attempt to end the carnage and murder there; we trust and pray that they all return home safely.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that the extra troops will have the specific objective of maintaining the fragile peace—which is a somewhat different role from the original purely humanitarian one? Have the rules of engagement been altered to take account of that change of role?

In his statement, the Secretary of State mentioned that other countries had joined us. Can he give the House any idea of which countries have decided to help us to bring about and extend the peace, and has any progress been made in persuading the United States that the peace process actually is a process? Is the United States prepared to fulfil its promise to put in troops once a peace process has been agreed by the three sides?

Will the Secretary of State advise the House whether he feels that there is any danger in other parts of the former Yugoslavia, from where troops have been transferred? I presume that the transfer has been from Croatia and possibly Macedonia. Is there any news on whether the Americans will increase their contribution in Macedonia and thereby perhaps relieve other troops there?

The main question remains: why have we had to wait three weeks for the Secretary of State's announcement? Did not General Rose—having brought about a peace by his bold initiative—plead for extra troops from the Government three weeks ago? Why have the Government dithered so long when the troops have been ready and waiting to go since 17 February? Does not the Secretary of State realise that his vacillation and delay have put at risk not only the tenuous peace, but the lives of our overstretched troops in Bosnia?

The Secretary of State made great play of his efforts in the UN, and rightly so, but does he not realise that Britain, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has a responsibility to be a leader, not a laggard, when it comes to helping in United Nations operations?

Mr. Rifkind: I am sorry, but not surprised, that the hon. Gentleman should have spoiled his earlier remarks by his rather foolish and silly comments at the end. He must be as aware as the rest of the House that, far from dithering, the United Kingdom has taken the lead in coordinating the response at the UN. That has been widely recognised both by the UN and by the rest of the international community. The hon. Gentleman either displays total ignorance of what has been happening in the past week or a desire to be partisan, even at a time when our armed forces would expect the House to speak with a single voice on such a matter. He cheapens his role as the official spokesman of the Opposition in that way.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, for obvious reasons, we do not normally comment on the details of rules of engagement, but I assure him that the new forces that go to Bosnia will have the same opportunities to ensure their protection as all other British forces in Bosnia. In the past year, we have seen how British forces have not been slow to defend themselves with the military assets at their disposal, whenever that has been necessary.

Of course, it is for individual Governments to announce their national contribution—I cannot do that on their behalf—but the French, the Russians and the Czechs have already said publicly that they propose to make significant additional contributions and a number of other countries are at an advanced stage of considering doing so. The assurances that have been given at the UN add up to the 6,300 additional troops, to which I referred.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the implications, for example, in Macedonia if troops were redeployed from there to Bosnia. We understand that the United States is giving those matters some consideration and may make an early announcement. It is important that any troop movement from Macedonia or Croatia should be made only if it is operationally sensible to do so, and that might mean, in certain circumstances, replacing existing troops with those from other countries.

As I said, the main role of the Duke of Wellington regiment when it arrives in Bosnia will be to relieve the burden on the Coldstream Guards and to share the responsibility of monitoring the position in central Bosnia, given the improved position that now exists.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. Obviously, a large number of hon. Members want to be called, so I ask for brisk exchanges from both Back-Bench Members and the Government Front Bench.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, some members of the Select Committee on Defence have been fortunate enough to visit General Rose and the forces of all three services at Split—we returned yesterday. My right hon. and learned Friend will be reassured to know that the morale of our troops out there is extremely high and there is no doubt that they are carrying out their job superbly.

There is, however, great overstretch in our troops central Bosnia, principally as a result of the agreement on a ceasefire reached between the Croat and Muslim commanders. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right to send a battalion to support us in the difficult task, and I hope that he will be guaranteed the support of the House.

I have two brief questions. First, is it correct that the troops will be attached to the BRITFOR forces under the command of Brigadier Reith and be responsible principally to him? Secondly, on a more general note, is it still Government policy to refrain from any involvement in peacemaking but to reiterate the importance of peacekeeping?

Mr. Rifkind: I can reassure my hon. Friend that we do not perceive the basic role of British forces as having changed. They are there as part of a United Nations mission, not to enforce a peace but to contribute towards the peace that we hope is emerging in Bosnia. In answer to my hon. Friend's first question, the forces will come under the command of Brigadier Reith, but they will, of course, be under the overall command of General Rose, who will determine their detailed deployment, which we expect will be to help the British troops already in central Bosnia.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): May I welcome without qualification the Secretary of State's announcement? May I also congratulate the Government on the diplomatic achievement that they initiated at the United Nations? Will the Secretary of State say whether, during the Government's initiative, efforts were made to persuade the United States of not only the military value of their involvement but the psychological advantage that it would give to the whole UN effort in the former Yugoslavia?

Does the Secretary of State agree that any welcome that the House may give to his announcement will be more than outweighed by the favourable reception that it will receive from British forces in Bosnia who will see it as a welcome reinforcement of the considerable success that they have achieved in the past two weeks or so?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. and learned Gentleman for congratulating the Government on their diplomatic efforts at the United Nations, which have borne significant fruit—indeed, they have perhaps borne fruit to an even greater extent than many had anticipated. I know that the United States is giving serious thought to being able to make a useful contribution to the new initiative. Clearly, it sees certain constraints on it at the moment, but I think that it is likely that it will be able to assist the new efforts in a positive and helpful way.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that not every member of the Security Council sends troops anywhere in the world that the United Nations requires them and that, if the circumstances were to change dramatically, we still have provision for the safe evacuation of our forces?

Mr. Rifkind: We have always had contingency plans in case the withdrawal of British forces or other UN forces might be required. As for my hon. Friend's earlier comment, of the five permanent members of the Security Council, China does not, of course, at present participate in UN missions. The United States plays a significant part in the work of the United Nations, including that in the former Yugoslavia, as it has forces in Croatia and Macedonia, although only a small handful in Bosnia at present.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Secretary of State will have seen that his visit to Bulford camp yesterday featured on television. He appeared there with my son, who is currently accompanying the Saxons on their sea trip to Split. I am sure that we all have confidence in the ability of the units that are already deployed there and those that are joining them, and that we wish them well. However, I understand that the heavier assets that were there have been withdrawn. Can the Secretary of State assure us that, in the event of things turning sour, as they could well do, those assets will be replaced? Will he also say whether the four-month duration to which he referred is to be rotational and that units will be moved around?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's son is one of the many fine young men and women who are serving in Bosnia, doing splendid work in enhancing the reputation of United Kingdom armed forces. There have been times in the past year when certain equipment has been temporarily withdrawn if it was deemed to be operationally unnecessary, but it can always be returned if the situation changes—the hon. Gentleman may be assured of that.

On rotational matters, I have indicated today that the new battalion group is going out for an initial period of four months. Of course, we shall come to a judgment at the appropriate time about whether that should be continued, depending on the circumstances that exist in Bosnia at that time.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Now that it is clear that British troops have moved from a humanitarian role to a peacekeeping role, will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House for how many months he anticipates that some 3,500 British troops will be in Bosnia?

Mr. Rifkind: I cannot make that prediction; nor would I try to do so. Until three or four weeks ago, it looked as though little progress was being made towards the ending of this ghastly war. Then, perhaps suddenly, the situation began to improve in a fairly dramatic way. In the past month alone, there has been real hope and real prospects for improvement of a kind that had not been seen for some time. It is not possible to make the kind of prediction for which my hon. Friends asks.

I believe that the reinforcements which we and other UN countries are proposing at the present time create a better prospect for the success of the current, fragile moves towards peace. That would not only bring an end to the war, but enable the return home of all the UN forces at an earlier date than would otherwise have proved possible.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I welcome the fact that the announcement has been made at last, but will the Secretary of State give some indication of the effect that the further deployment will have on the emergency tour interval for our forces? In view of the increasing evidence of overstretch in the British armed forces, will he heed the specific recommendation made by the Defence Select Committee, that the Government should halt the rundown of the British Army?

Mr. Rifkind: The Government have the target of an emergency tour interval of 24 months, which should be reached by the time the draw-down has been completed in 1995. We still have every expectation that, notwithstanding today's announcement, that target will be met. I have checked that point in particular.

On the hon. Gentleman's general point, he should compare the 3,500 troops in Bosnia—our main new commitment in recent years—with the reduction of about 40,000 in the British Army in Germany. That huge reduction of the requirement to have forces permanently in Germany has enabled us to make the changes to the Army to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): In congratulating my right hon. and learned Friend on his welcome announcement, may I ask whether he will confirm that, during the past three, critical weeks, the UN and all the Governments concerned have had nothing but positive co-operation from the legitimate and recognised Government of Bosnia?

Mr. Rifkind: One of the changes that are to be welcomed over the past few weeks has been the increased co-operation from the Bosnian Government and from certain of the representatives of the other warring groups. It is precisely for that reason that the Croat-Muslim ceasefire, for example, in central Bosnia, has proved to

have far more substance than we have seen in the past. Without that co-operation from Croat as well as Bosnian-Muslim authorities, we would not be seeing the progress on the ground that we are now able to report.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Apart from the uneasiness felt by many people of different opinions at Britain getting deeper and deeper into what the Foreign Secretary described on 10 February as a civil war, is the Secretary of State aware that to send Turkish troops would be historically illiterate and intensely dangerous, not only because Turkey ruled that part of the world for six centuries, but because Turkish troops occupy northern Cyprus against United Nations instructions, and are themselves violators of international law? Will he make it absolutely clear that there would be no British Government support of Turkish troops being sent into the former Yugoslavia?

Mr. Rifkind: Obviously, the offer by the Turkish Government to send forces to Bosnia is a matter for the Secretary-General, on which he will come to a view. He will be the person who takes that decision on behalf of the UN. Although those are delicate and sensitive issues, there are already forces from Russia, for example, in Bosnia. Russia is well known to have close links in the historical relationship with the Serbian community. I do not believe that, automatically, it must follow that the historical background of various countries in the Balkans should preclude their being able to make a current contribution.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Does my right hon. and learned Friend appreciate that those of us who warned from the beginning against the dangers of committing British ground forces in the former Yugoslavia, even for the protection of humanitarian convoys, now view with a sickening sense of the inevitable the slowly unfolding fact that, as we all predicted, we are moving on from protecting the convoys to maintaining peace? In those circumstances, why are we sending only one battalion, when five divisions will eventually prove insufficient?

Mr. Rifkind: I appreciate that my hon. Friend has always opposed sending any British forces to Bosnia. However, he should reflect on the fact that about 30 members of the United Nations now are making some contribution of troops in the former Yugoslavia. Against that background, it is inconceivable that the United Kingdom could have declined to be part of the international effort to help when there is a huge amount of suffering in a fellow European country. The size of the reinforcements that we are now sending corresponds closely with what General Sir Michael Rose believes would be the kind of contribution from the United Kingdom that would help to meet his needs. That is an important factor to bear in mind.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The Secretary of State knows that there are dangers of civil war in other countries in eastern Europe. Is his decision today a sign that British troops may go into other countries in eastern Europe?

Mr. Rifkind: Any request from the United Nations is considered on its merits. British forces have been and still are in a number of other countries. One thinks of Cambodia and Cyprus, as well as other parts of the world. But it does not automatically follow that the United Kingdom sends troops to any international crisis. In Somalia, for example, we had no forces on the ground because we believed that the contribution that we were making elsewhere was quite sufficient in terms of our overall international responsibilities. Each crisis and each United Nations contribution will be considered on its merits at the time.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): As the armed forces in Bosnia are there under the auspices of the United Nations in a peacekeeping role, is it not vital that every major country in the United Nations, especially the United States, be represented? Would it not make a material difference to the commitment shown in Bosnia and to the prospects for peace if the United States had forces on the ground?

Mr. Rifkind: The United States already makes a major contribution to the affairs of Bosnia, as we saw with the imposition of the no-fly zone and the shooting down of Bosnian Serb aircraft by United States aircraft. The United States navy is also making an important contribution, and its forces are present on the ground in both Macedonia and Croatia.

I hear what my right hon. Friend says about ground forces in Bosnia. The United States has suggested that if there were an overall ceasefire in Bosnia and a consequent need for a larger UN force, it would be prepared to make a significant contribution to the ground forces that might be required. Whether the United States will respond to the present gradual implementation of a ceasefire is for that country to determine.

We are all conscious of the fact that the situation is different from what was expected in Washington and in other capitals a few weeks ago. We have what could properly be described as a creeping ceasefire in various parts of Bosnia, and that may influence the debate in Washington, as it has done in other capitals.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): I congratulate the Secretary of State, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary on having managed to borrow a bit of backbone from somewhere. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman share the general relief that America has taken over the construction of peace in the old Yugoslavia from the devious, damaging and dangerous policies of David Owen?

Mr. Rifkind: I would not want to enter into the personal estrangement between the hon. Gentleman and Lord Owen. All I can say is that, if I ever needed the advice of one or other of them to help solve a serious international problem, I might prefer that of Lord Owen.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): In the light of the long experience of Her Majesty's forces in Northern Ireland, where they have had to contain inter-communal strife in extremely difficult circumstances, and given that we have an all-regular system of engagement, are not British forces in Bosnia likely to make a contribution whose effectiveness will be out of all proportion to their numbers?

Will my right hon. and learned Friend look again at the "Options for Change" exercise, because the conditions that it presupposed, of a safer and more secure Europe, do not seem to apply any longer?

Mr. Rifkind: I very much agree with my hon. Friend's comments about the vast experience of British forces,

[Mr. Rifkind]

partly through their experience of Northern Ireland, and partly through the many other operations that they have carried out on behalf of the United Nations and elsewhere.

The "Options for Change" exercise postulated the circumstances that would exist with the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union. I do not think that there is any illusion in this country about the fact that Europe remains a very unstable place, where there are new threats and tensions. That is why we have every intention of ensuring that the British Army and the armed forces as a whole remain highly capable, well equipped, well trained and able to carry out tasks on behalf of the United Kingdom in years to come. It will be a smaller Army than it was during the cold war, but that is true of every NATO country, of Russia and, indeed, of virtually every other European country.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I ask the Minister and the Foreign Secretary to reflect on whether they should approach the United Nations—incidentally, we have a veto there—to plead with it to think very carefully before introducing any Turkish Ottoman troops to that area? Given history, and given their ruthlessness, it is really setting a keg in a very delicate situation.

Mr. Rifkind: These are matters to which the Secretary-General of the United Nations will wish to give appropriate weight. At a time when we have a strong need to ensure the level of UN forces in Bosnia to carry out the mandate, and when all UN forces in Bosnia will come not under national command but under Sir Michael Rose and General Cot, as UN commanders, most countries in the region have an important contribution to make and, therefore, can provide helpful assistance.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there is precious little point in our having the best peacekeeping troops in the world if they are not deployed, especially at the request of a British general who has been conspicuous in his ability to get things done in that tragic region? In view of the uncomfortable, long-term implications of such deployments, will he continue to urge other nations to make appropriate contributions, using as their yardstick the brilliant expertise and ability of British troops?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with my hon. Friend. That is why, over the past week, we decided to take the initiative in the United Nations in order to ensure proper co-ordination of the international response. Without that British initiative at the UN, it is possible that each country would have been waiting for every other country to make an announcement, rather than coming forward with their own proposals. We ensured that, in each of the capitals, concentration and effort were given to deciding what contribution could be made. That is why it has been possible today to announce a total of at least 6,000 additional troops. Indeed, that figure may increase in the weeks to come.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Does the Secretary of State accept that we not only applaud the fine work of our soldiers and military people in Bosnia but recognise that they are well respected as a highly disciplined and even-handed force by all the warring factions?

Has the participation of Russia been the most significant factor leading to the opening of Tuzla airport? Can the Secretary of State tell the House whether that means that the Russian troops who are presently situated in eastern Slavonia will have to be withdrawn? If so, where will replacements come from? May we have some information about the deployment or redeployment of the Russian troops?

Mr. Rifkind: The question of the deployment or redeployment of Russian troops is essentially a matter for the UN commanders in the former Yugoslavia. That is their responsibility, and they will report their views to the Secretary-General.

We welcome the Russian contribution, as we welcome the contributions from other countries. Clearly, Russia—with the particular relationship it has with the Serbian population—can sometimes influence events in a hopeful and constructive way. One of the great benefits during the past two years has been the way in which Russia and the other permanent members of the Security Council have worked closely in putting through various resolutions. We saw a clear example of that in the support that Russia gave to the action taken by NATO in shooting down the Bosnian Serb aircraft which had violated the no-fly zone. Such agreement would have been unthinkable a few years ago, and illustrates the change in the situation.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): Having had occasion a week ago to express my concern to the Prime Minister at the apparent delay in responding to General Rose's urgent appeal for more troops, may I now say to my right hon. and learned Friend—and, through him, to the Prime Minister—how warmly I welcome today's announcement of the dispatch of a battalion group to reinforce our forces in Bosnia?

May I also, through my right hon. and learned Friend, congratulate the Foreign Secretary on the excellent job that he and Sir David Hannay have done in drumming up support from other allied nations and the UN? Is it not clear that General Rose—by demonstrating that the Serbs are not 12 ft tall and that a bit of courage goes a long way—has done a superb job? We owe him, and the superb men under his command, a great debt.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks, which I am sure are entirely justified. I would add one note of caution, however. The UN has been successful in the past few weeks and I pay tribute, as does the House, to the remarkable achievements of General Rose. However, the war cannot be brought to an end solely by the UN, although the UN can be a magic ingredient—if I can put it that way—which enables the factions to end the conflict and come to some long-term peace agreement.

There are many hundreds of thousands of people fighting in Bosnia. The UN can make a crucial contribution when the time is right to bring peace. That time may now be near, and perhaps the UN can carry out that role. However, we must not expect either General Rose or the UN to deliver more than can be realistically expected of them.

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): The Defence Select Committee was privileged to meet General Rose and Brigadier Reith—two superb officers among many superb officers. I doubt whether any hon. Member who had been exposed to their arguments for additional troops, as

the Defence Select Committee was, could have argued against the use of additional forces. There has been a gross overstretch of forces, and there are historic opportunities awaiting us. The argument is overwhelming, and I welcome the initiative.

If the detachments are to go out early, when will the rest arrive? When will their equipment arrive and was not there a better way of sending it than by a protracted sea journey? Could not a heavy airlift have been considered? Most important, when will the troops be ready to operate? The time for intervention is now, and I welcome the Government's response, albeit slightly late.

Mr. Rifkind: The first company is flying out tonight and the remainder of the battalion group will join them in several days. The heavier equipment probably will have to go by sea. Some consideration has been given to whether some of it could be carried by an airlift; it would be preferable if that could be done.

The first task of the troops when they arrive, subject to their commanders, probably will be to take up static duties until their vehicles arrive. That will release the existing British troops to take on more mobile responsibilities, so there will be no waste of time. From the moment they arrive, they will be doing valuable and important work, and the overall pressure on the Coldstream Guards and the other existing forces will be substantially reduced.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Can my right hon. and learned Friend reassure the House that elements of the efficient NATO command structure, which played such a notable part in the success that we had in Sarajevo, will continue to be in place while we are maintaining and securing the recent peace agreements which were so successfully negotiated?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. One of General Sir Michael Rose's priorities has been to reform the command structure to make it more cohesive and effective. Brigadier Reith, the commander of the British forces, has an overall responsibility as a one-star officer not only for the British forces but for the Malaysian, Canadian and other forces in that part of Bosnia.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): My party is reassured that the Secretary of State has resisted pressure to take precipitate action to increase United Kingdom troop levels before obtaining the co-operation of allied nations. May I suggest that we shall be undertaking an open-ended task in Bosnia, because of the bitterness between the factions, unless we can obtain some means to ensure that those factions surrender their heavy field artillery and other weaponry, rather than simply withdraw them from particular areas at particular times?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it was important to ensure that the British contribution was made not in isolation, but as part of an international response to the request that the United Nations made to the international community as a whole. With regard to the duration of our commitment, from the first moment that we sent British forces, we could not be certain of the precise length of tour that would be required. We must seek so to assist the United Nations effort that a ceasefire becomes effective and leads to a political settlement. Only when there is a political settlement will the need for UN forces in Bosnia gradually disappear. We are actively working towards that.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on to the business statement.

Business of the House

4.11 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week.

MONDAY 14 MARCH—Estimates Day (2nd allotted day) (1st part).

Until seven o'clock, there will be a debate on housing, in so far as it relates to the Department of Environment's grants in aid to the Housing Corporation. Details will be given in the *Official Report.*

At 10 o'clock the House will be asked to agree all outstanding excess votes, supplementary estimates and defence votes A.

The Chairman of the Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 15 MARCH—Second Reading of the Local Government (Wales) Bill [*Lords*].

WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH—Until seven o'clock: Ways and Means resolutions relating to the Finance Bill.

Motion on the Grants to the Redundant Churches Fund Order.

Motions on orders relating to rateable values.

Motion on the Nuclear Installations (Increase of Operators' Limits of Liability) Order.

Motions on regulations relating to legal aid and advice (Scotland), followed by motion relating to the Local Government (Wales) Bill [*Lords*].

THURSDAY 17 MARCH—Motion for the Easter Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

FRIDAY 18 MARCH—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 21 MARCH—Opposition Day (8th Allotted Day)

There will be a debate on an Opposition Motion, the subject of which will be announced in due course.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committees will meet at 10.30 am on Wednesday 16 March to consider European Community documents as follows:—Committee A, document No. 7909/92 relating to the Court of Auditors' Special Report on the Environment.—Committee B, document No. 4911/92 and the unnumbered explanatory memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 4 February relating to the common rules for the internal market in electricity and gas.

[The Second Report from the Environment Committee of Session 1992-93 on the Housing Corporation (House of Commons Paper No. 466-I and II) and the Government's response thereto (Cm2363) are relevant]

[Wednesday 16 March:

European Community Document 7909/92 Environment (Court of Auditors Reprots)—Relevant European Legislation Committee Report: HC79-ix (1992-93)

European Standing Committee B—European Community Documents: a) 4911/92 , b) unnumbered—Liberalisation of Community Markets for Gas and Electricity—Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports: a) HC 79-i (1992-93) and HC 79-xx (1992-93)b) HC 48-vii (1993-94).]

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I thank the Leader of the House for that statement. May we press him for a further statement soon on the vexed issue of the Child Support Agency? He may know that there was a lobby earlier this week which highlighted the continuing serious problems. I realise that it is not long since we had a debate on the matter, but the Leader of the House will recognise that serious debts and concerns are piling up. It would be helpful to have something further soon.

Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement from either the President of the Board of Trade or the Foreign Office, whichever is appropriate? Is he aware that the Chemical Industries Association has sought an assurance for the past year that Britain will ratify the chemical weapons convention before it comes into force in January? The association has expressed the real anxiety that, unless we do so, the interests not only of Britain but of the association of the industry will be seriously damaged. We should like an early statement on that.

Finally, may I press the Leader of the House yet again to try to get his right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to make a statement about the registration of electors, especially as there are only about three weeks left during which people from other European Community countries can register to vote in the European elections? We understand that in every other member state a publicity campaign about that is being mounted and only in Britain is there no such campaign. May we have a statement about that soon, please?

Mr. Newton: Madam Speaker, I can be as brief as your injunction to us asks.

I am not in a position to promise a statement on any of those matters, but I will bring the requests to the attention of my right hon. Friends.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): May I ask please for a debate on Lloyd's? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] My interest in the subject is well known. In 1981, during the passage of the Lloyd's Bill, Lloyd's gave specific undertakings to the House and those undertakings involved the full disclosure and clear accounting of what happened at Lloyd's which would be revealed to the names and the investors at Lloyd's. That has not been done. Further, Lloyd's council—

Madam Speaker: Order. Unfortunately, I frequently have to caution the House about statements that are made. We are questioning the business statement for next week. I like it to be done briskly so that other Members can be called.

Mr. Marland: Lord Mackay confirmed in another place that those undertakings had been given by Lloyd's. May I urge my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that we should have a debate on that matter because allegations are being made outside the House that there is a cover-up, and that the Government and Lloyd's are hand in glove in denying justice to the Lloyd's investors. May I ask my right hon. Friend to try to find time for a debate on that subject?

Mr. Newton: I know that my hon. Friend would not himself endorse the allegations to which he refers, but equally, I think, everyone on both sides of the House understands his concern about the matter as a whole, and the difficulties for many families, so of course I will consider his suggestion.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Is the leader of the House aware that it is now nearly 18 months since we had a debate in the House on substantial issues of importance to the agriculture industry? In recent weeks we have had important changes of policy on milk marketing, on the condition of the pig sector, on hill farming and on the implications of GATT for British agriculture. In the past few days we have even had an acknowledgment from Europe that there is a new report on the future, the economic viability, of the common agricultural policy. The Minister acknowledges the existence of that report but is not prepared to come to the House and explain its significance. May we have a debate as soon as possible on the state of British agriculture?

Mr. Newton: I harbour some hopes of satisfying the hon. Gentleman before the recess.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): On Monday or Tuesday of next week may we have a debate and a vote to sustain the position that has been adopted hitherto by the Foreign Secretary on the size of the blocking veto in the context of an enlarged Community; or does my right hon. Friend think that such a gesture is wholly unnecessary?

Mr. Newton: I cannot hold out the prospect of a debate, but my right hon. Friend has referred to the objectives that have been set out in that negotiation in relation to enlargement and to the protection of significant minorities in the Community. I can assure him that the Government will continue to pursue those objectives with vigour.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Four reports have been produced by the Home Office on electoral matters following investigations into the previous general election, when the names of millions of people were missing from electoral registers. Now that the reports have been published, may we have a debate on that important matter? Some notice could be taken of my ten-minute rule Bill, which deals with those matters and could be taken on board by the Home Office if it is seeking an avenue to introduce a rolling electoral register.

Mr. Newton: I will make the hon. Gentleman's ten-minute Bill my bedtime reading.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 752?

[*That this House joins with all other parliaments throughout the Commonwealth in the observance of Commonwealth Day on Monday, 14th March; notes that in 1994 the Commonwealth will once again be in the eyes of the world as the Commonwealth Games are played out in Victoria, British Columbia; recognises the value of playing in a team and also notes that the United Kingdom Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association contributes to the team of parliamentarians throughout the Commonwealth by holding conferences, seminars and meetings in London and by arranging parliamentary visits to Commonwealth countries.*]

The motion stands in my name and that of many hon. and right hon. colleagues on both sides of the House. It draws attention to Commonwealth day on 14 March—next Monday—and asks whether it is about time that we had a debate on the role of the Commonwealth in the world and this country's role in the Commonwealth. A debate is a long time due and I would very much welcome one.

Mr. Newton: I need hardly say that the entire Government share fully the sentiments that are expressed in the motion to which my hon. Friend has referred. I wish that I could offer a debate next Monday on a subject that sounds rather more interesting than the one that I have announced. However, I am afraid that I cannot change the business immediately.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May we have next week a debate on official gifts given and received by the Prime Minister? If it is necessary for the President of the United States to declare all gifts of more than a nominal value, why should not the same rule apply in the United Kingdom? When public money is being spent, the public are entitled to know what it is being spent on.

Mr. Newton: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is referring to gifts received or to gifts given, but I shall draw his question to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): Will my right hon. Friend again consider a request from me that he find time to debate the issue of seat belts in coaches? This is a matter of great concern to the parents in my constituency. The House should be given an opportunity to look at the research into whether such seat belts are good or bad for the safety of children. In this case, I am joined by Mr. James Elles, the Member of the European Parliament for the area in which my constituency is located. Mr. Elles too is pressing for an examination of these matters.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that anyone would want to consider with great care any evidence in this field. I shall bring my hon. Friend's request to the attention of my right hon. Friend; and the Select Committee too may want to take note of it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Leader of the House aware that yesterday 3,000 disabled people—wheelchairs and all—were crammed into Westminster hall to demand support tomorrow for the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill? We believe that the Opposition can provide the necessary troops to take the Bill through its Second Reading. What disabled people want is a statement that the Government will provide the necessary parliamentary time to get it through its remaining stages. Will the Leader of the House oblige?

Mr. Newton: I remind the hon. Gentleman of what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on Tuesday, when he indicated that he hoped that the Bill would go to Committee for detailed examination of its provisions. It seems to me that that is the right course for tomorrow.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Bearing in mind the continuing terrorist campaign, will the Leader of the House inform hon. Members when time will be found for a debate on the London-Dublin deal, which the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland, as United Kingdom citizens, believe furthers the agenda of republicanism and is detrimental to the interests of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will, of course, be well aware of the fact that within the past week there have been three substantial opportunities on the Floor of the House to refer to Northern Ireland matters. My right hon.

[Mr. Newton]

and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be here to answer questions next Thursday, but at the moment I cannot promise anything beyond that.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): The Leader of the House may be aware that constructive receiverships, such as that which took place at Leyland, are threatened by a Court of Appeal ruling in the case of Paramount Airways. Has the President of the Board of Trade given this matter any thought, and will he consider making a Commons statement on the changes in insolvency legislation that are necessary if many thousands of jobs are not to be lost as a result of this court decision?

Mr. Newton: I have noticed the decision, as, no doubt, has my right hon. Friend, to whose attention I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): With regard to the question of the blocking minority, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) received from my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House an answer suggesting that the Foreign Secretary would act with vigour. Does my right hon. Friend accept that many Conservative Members, and perhaps many Opposition Members, regard vigour as including the need to say no on this occasion?

Mr. Newton: The vigour and determination with which the British Government's negotiating objectives have been pursued are very clear. As I have said, we shall continue to pursue those objectives with vigour.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Could the Leader of the House arrange for the Prime Minister to give us, in a statement next week, his latest thinking on the doctrine of collective responsibility—in particular, in respect of the position of the Minister for open government? Although statements made by the latter right hon. Gentleman have not yet been repudiated by the rest of the Government, one must assume that they are at variance with the views of the Prime Minister. In addition, there should be a look at the President of the Board of Trade and the Attorney-General, one of whom apparently has no confidence in the legal competence of the other. Surely the Prime Minister needs to clear up this matter and get a grip on his Government.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister commented on the first half of that matter in Question Time just now, and I shall not add to what he said. In the past few weeks I have commented, in both capacities, on the second half of the question—and I shall not add to that.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): May I refer my right hon. Friend to the question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen)? Many people have criticised the lack of publicity that our debates seem to receive these days in quality newspapers. Some people say that the best way to keep a secret is to make a speech in the House of Commons.

There is a vital point here. Qualified majority voting is of huge national concern. Some 20,000 directives have been passed into law in the past two or three years. Many of them have been vitally affected by qualified majority voting. On Monday and Tuesday, the House is to discuss estimates and local government in Wales. Those may be important subjects, but—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have not yet heard a question come my way.

Mr. Leigh: If there is a matter of such vital concern —we are presently arguing about it in Brussels and a final decision is to be made on Tuesday—should we not react to that and give the House an opportunity to debate the matter so that we can back up the vigorous defence which the Government are putting up in Brussels at the moment?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has already done that with his question.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Leader of the House find time next week to provide an opportunity for either a statement or a debate on the Government's submission on structural plans for the multi-annual guidance programme of the European Union, given its importance to the fishing and boat-building industries in many parts of the United Kingdom and the deadline that has been set for 31 March? Surely we should have an opportunity to know what is being said in our names.

Mr. Newton: I shall consider the hon. Lady's point, but I cannot promise a debate next week.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Even if the expansion of the Community is delayed, it could still go ahead. If we concede on the blocking minority, that will be it and the powers of this House will be significantly reduced. Will my right hon. Friend go a stage further and commit the Government to not making such a change without first allowing a significant, long and serious debate in the House?

Mr. Newton: Like a number of my hon. and right hon. Friends, my hon. Friend has made clear his support for the Government's position. I have now responded four times, and I cannot add to what I said on the previous three occasions.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): May we have a statement from the Secretary of State for Scotland that he will abandon proposals for a new law on criminal trespass to restrict people's right of access to the countryside, especially now that strong objections to the proposals have been lodged by Scottish National Heritage, the Law Society of Scotland, the Ramblers Association and the Mountaineering Council for Scotland? Is it too much to expect the Leader of the House to stand up for the rights of the common people against those of the lairds and landed gentry?

Mr. Newton: No, it is not; but it is too much to expect the Leader of the House to speak from this Dispatch Box as though he were the Secretary of State for Scotland. I am sure that the Secretary of State will consider all and any representations made to him.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): May we have an early debate on unemployment? Is it not strange that we have not had one on an Opposition day for more than a year? Does my right hon. Friend think that that is because unemployment has fallen over the past year by 200,000?

Mr. Newton: Yes, of course it is because unemployment has been falling over the past year, and the Opposition never like to touch on anything that might be regarded as good news. They have not yet announced the subject for their Opposition day on Monday 21 March. I look forward to their picking up my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): When might the Leader of the House be in a position to make a further statement on the additional voluntary contributions scheme, which he knows is of interest to hon. Members on both sides of the House?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman, who has followed the subject closely, will know of the efforts that I have made. I have recently been inquiring when the final details will be in place because I, too, should like to see that

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I know that this may seem like an echo, but why is there not to be a debate in the coming week on the implementation of the Jopling report? Will my right hon. Friend perhaps have a word with the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) about perhaps debating it on one of the Opposition days, seeing that so many Labour Members want reform as well?

Mr. Newton: There is another suggestion for the right hon. Lady, who, I see, is sitting patiently and listening carefully on the Opposition Front Bench. As for the objectives of the Jopling report, I would say that we have not done too badly in the past couple of weeks.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Did the Leader of the House notice yesterday that the Financial Secretary launched, outside the House, a consultative document on venture capital as a successor to the business expansion scheme? Will he arrange for the Financial Secretary to come here next week and explain why the business expansion scheme was such a failure, particularly since his PPS was the boss of a venture which went down to the tune of millions of pounds, costing the Earl of Bradford £1.2 million and the country £200,000 of taxpayers' money?

Mr. Newton: That sounds like a rather provocative question to me. I do not think that I want to provide time for further provocation next week.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): Will my right hon. Friend ensure that, during next week's debate on local government, there will be time for us to raise the subject of the increasing council tax that we see emerging from both Labour and Liberal shire counties, particularly in East Sussex, where the Liberal Democrats have increased council tax by 11 per cent.?

Mr. Newton: It seems very much in line with what is happening elsewhere, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said at Question Time. The figures so far for the billing authorities, taken together, in England are, for band C and two adults, £430, Conservative; £559, Labour; and £503, Liberals. From what my hon. Friend has said, the Liberals are running hard to catch up with Labour.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May I endorse the demand by the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) for a debate on Lloyd's? We could then see how, in 1981, all the Conservative Members voted to give massive legal immunities to the council of Lloyd's, and we could compare it with their views on trade unions. At the same time we could list the nine hon. Members who are defying the wish of the House in failing to provide information on the number of syndicates, on which the House passed a resolution requiring them so to do. I hope that we are given an opportunity to debate the subject, because this defiance is serious.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has good cause to know what the Select Committee has said in its report on the matter, and I know that it is being carefully considered by all the hon. Members to whom he refers.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Will my right hon. Friend allow time for a debate on the guidelines set by the Department of the Environment for allowing travellers' sites on green belt land? In the village of Failand in my constituency, this is causing a great deal of disappointment and anger, and although it is primarily the work of Labour and the Liberals on Avon county council, I am sure that many hon. Members have the same problem and would like a debate on the subject as quickly as possible.

Mr. Newton: I will certainly bring that request to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): May we have a debate soon on the claim made in today's *New Scientist* that 10,000 British people a year are dying from a previously unidentified cause—minute particles emitted by car exhausts? Are we not all concerned about car pollution which has caused a great increase in the number of children suffering from asthma? Is it not crucial that we address the problem rather than increasingly giving in to the car lobby and trying to satisfy the insatiable appetite of the car for our urban space?

Mr. Newton: Given the efforts of the Government to encourage the use of lead-free petrol and some of the announcements made about policy on the tax of road fuel, that is an unjustified question. I am sure that the scientific report, which I have not myself seen, will be carefully studied in the Departments of both Health and Transport.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): May I support my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) in asking for a debate on council tax because, in the course of it, we can highlight the fact that the Lib-Lab-controlled county council of Kent is hard on the heels of Liberal-controlled East Sussex with an increase of 7 per cent.? Gravesham council—now Labour—not to be outdone, has gone from having the lowest council tax in Kent to fifth from the bottom.

Mr. Newton: That is a useful supporting question to the one which was asked earlier. It is further evidence of the strenuous efforts that the Liberals are making to have as bad a record as Labour.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Now that the Public Accounts Committee has said that the standards of conduct in Government are at their lowest point for 140 years, the Cabinet Secretary has said that it is possible to tell Parliament half-truths and a Cabinet Minister has said that it is possible not to tell the truth at all, is there not a crisis of confidence in the conduct of Government? Is it not urgent that the Government should allow time for the House to discuss it?

Mr. Newton: I say with as much moderation as I can muster that there is something wrong when an hon. Member can give further credence to three straightforward distortions.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Bearing in mind that on 1 January 1996 the United Kingdom will lose its veto over the European Union's visa list, does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be appropriate to have a debate as soon as possible, not only on Britain's right to exercise its veto, but also on the extension of the European Union and the implications of that for other members who wish to exercise a veto?

Mr. Newton: I cannot add to what I said earlier on what I take to be part of my hon. Friend's question. Were agreement to be reached on enlargement, that would in due course require debate.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on the effect of gagging clauses and employer pressure on the ability of people at work to participate properly in the democratic process? I have been made aware by my constituents of the fact that some of those who work for British Rail Maintenance Ltd. in Eastleigh and for British Gas at the Botley depot in Eastleigh, who are facing redundancy, are unable to speak freely about their fears for their jobs and their futures because of those gagging clauses and that pressure. Should not the House send a clear message that anybody in Britain should be able to speak freely about the problems they face at work without fear of undue pressure from their employers?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State concerned with those industries will have noted the hon. Gentleman's words. I shall ask for them to be drawn to the attention of the chairmen of the bodies concerned.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): In the light of the Employment Select Committee report today, which concludes that labour market flexibility is vital to maintaining high employment levels, and as the Opposition will not use a Supply day to discuss the subject, would it be possible to have a debate on unemployment and flexibility in the labour market, particularly as the G7 jobs summit is to take place in Detroit next week? It would give the Government and Conservative Members the opportunity to say, first, that labour market flexibility is vital, and, secondly, that deregulation, not protectionism, is the way forward.

Mr. Newton: It occurs to me that one reason, in addition to that already suggested by one of my hon. Friends, for Labour's reluctance to initiate a debate on unemployment is that precisely that point might be made and the weakness of their position would be exposed. I have sitting next to me my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, who will shortly be departing for the G7 summit and will pay careful attention to what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on reform of the regulatory system for the privatised utilities? Will he bear in mind my early-day motion 764?

[*That this House notes Calor Gas has appointed the former Director-General of OFGAS, Sir James McKinnon to act as its adviser for an undisclosed sum as part of its push to enter the United Kingdom domestic and natural gas market which he in his former role aggressively deregulated to promote new market entrants (such as Calor); further notes that Dutch-owned Calor Gas is in partnership with Norwegian-dominated Alliance and considers Mr. McKinnon's decision to sell his unique knowledge to these companies not only a grossly unpatriotic act but a shameless example of a Tory government appointee serving his time before shoving his own nose into the free market trough; recognises this disgraceful episode as symptomatic of the need to regulate the regulators by instructing them not to pursue competition as blind dogma but to act in the national interest; and calls on the President of the Board of Trade to overhaul the regulatory regime of the privatised utilities ensuring, inter alia, that as a condition of their appointment directors general are prevented from taking up subsequent appointments with private companies in the same industry sector.*]

It condemns the fact that Sir James McKinnon, director-general of Ofgas, has now taken a job as a paid adviser to Calor Gas, a new entrant to the natural gas market, which he sought to break up and deregulate to encourage extra competition from companies such as Calor Gas. Now he is benefiting from that. Surely the employment contracts of directors-general of the regulatory agencies should prohibit such appointments.

Mr. Newton: I understand that Sir James McKinnon retired from Ofgas some two months before the decision was taken on the MMC inquiry. He is, of course, bound by the Gas Act 1985 not to take advantage of commercial knowledge gained during his period of appointment.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Is my right Friend aware that this month marks the centenary of Gladstone's resignation? Will he find time before the end of the month to debate the great ideals of Gladstonian liberalism—individual liberty, free trade, sound finance and parliamentary sovereignty—and at the same time debate why the modern Liberal Democrats have abandoned every one of those ideals, not least Gladstone's wish always to take a penny off income tax rather than, as they would do, put a penny on it all the time?

Mr. Newton: I think that that is one of the best business questions that I have heard for a long time. It shows that Gladstone would be turning in his grave if he could see what that lot gets up to.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Leader of the House will remember his response to me last week when I asked for a statement on thalidomide victims. Is there a possibility of a statement being made within the next week following the meeting of representatives of those victims with the Under-Secretary of State yesterday?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can promise a debate next week, but I can record my pleasure—I imagine that it will be shared by the hon. Gentleman—that, in the light of the meeting, the members of the group who were on hunger strike have decided to end their protest. I am sure that careful consideration will continue to be given to the points that they made.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the concern expressed about the new proposals for compensating innocent victims of

violent crime. Will he provide an early opportunity to debate the subject as, prima facie, the tariff system would seem to be wholly inadequate to replace common law and statutory principles?

Mr. Newton: We have, of course, had Home Office questions today. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend had an opportunity to make that point to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, but if he did not, I will ensure that he is made aware that it has been raised now.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate on early-day motion 634, which calls attention to the actions of 53 Opposition Members in voting against the increases in pensions?

[*That this House notes that 53 honourable and Right honourable Labour Members voted against the Orders to uprate pensions and social security benefits and to introduce the package of extra help with VAT on fuel; and recognises that if they had been successful, millions of pensioners and less well-off people would have been deprived of the support voted through by Conservative honourable Members.*]

A debate would give Conservative Members the opportunity of pointing out to our pensioner constituents the effect on their incomes if their action had been successful.

Mr. Newton: I should be pleased to arrange time for a debate, but my hon. Friend's question is a further useful opportunity to draw attention to that astonishing occasion when the Labour party voted against the pensioner.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Will my right hon. Friend consider allowing time for a debate on the new working practices in the House? Is he aware that many hon. Members feel that, since the usual channels have broken down, and despite the fact that pairing arrangements have broken down—I wish to declare that I do not have a pair, and so do not speak from interest—we are enjoying hours of business that are more predictable and business is transacted, in my belief, more efficiently?

Mr. Newton: I am not quite sure whether that will help or hinder the continuation of such arrangements, but in respect of part of my hon. Friend's question, I am sure that he has the sympathy of the whole House.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Can my right hon. Friend think of a way of providing an early opportunity for the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to come to the House and explain why, within minutes of the IRA mortar attack on the northern runway at Heathrow, he and 240 of his hon. Friends were in the Lobbies voting against a measure that would help the police to find the culprits?

Mr. Newton: If I thought that there was the slightest chance of the hon. Member for Sedgefield either being willing to explain or, indeed, being able to explain such a vote, I would very happily arrange an occasion for him to do so.

Consolidated Fund Bill

4.43 pm

Madam Speaker: I have a short statement to make about arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund Bill on Thursday 17 March.

Hon. Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 10 pm on Tuesday 15 March. A list showing the subjects and times will be published the following day. Usually the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise a discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer, up to a maximum of three hours.

Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list. As some debates might not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn in debate.

Orders of the Day

OPPOSITION DAY

[7TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Sex Discrimination

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.44 pm

Ms Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I beg to move,

That this House, in the week of International Women's Day, notes that women in Britain face discrimination in all aspects of their lives; deplores the Government's failure fully to implement European equality legislation or the recommendations of the Equal Opportunities Commission; and calls on the Government to introduce legislation to simplify, strengthen and extend the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts.

When the Leader of the House announced at Business Questions last Thursday that the Opposition had chosen this subject for debate, there were jeers and catcalls from hon. Members on the Tory Benches—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): No, there were not.

Ms Short: There were. If the hon. Lady was not here or did not hear them, she is simply not reflecting the truth.

It is still the case that many—not all—Conservative Members think that the issues of women's rights, views and demands for equality are a joke, at the margin of politics, not real politics, not serious politics. That attitude is deeply insulting to half the population and shows how out of tune they are with the reality in our society and across the world. There is no doubt that women's demands for equality in the workplace, the family and public life is a major force for social change, which will continue to force the pace of social progress and reform in this country and across the world. When Tory Members jeer at any mention of a debate on women in politics, they show how out of touch they are with the main stream of life in Britain and across the world.

I am sure that the Secretary of State would want to distance himself from such behaviour, but one of the pleasures of this debate is that we have at last "outed" him and forced him to admit that he is also the Minister for women. "Outing", if I understand it correctly, is forcing someone to admit publicly something that they have been trying to keep secret. Today, he is forced to admit that he is not just the Secretary of State for Employment, but is also the Minister for women.

It is noticeable that, over the past few months, the Secretary of State has appeared to have a personality change. He used to present himself as fairly mild-mannered and posed as a reasonable man. Over the past few months he has started to hector and sneer and jeer as though he is in competition with the Home Secretary. The general view of the Opposition is that he must be yet another Member of the Cabinet looking for an invitation to go on the radio and assure those listening that he has no intention of standing against the Prime Minister for the leadership of the Tory party. I also suspect that he likes to keep it quiet that he is the Minister for women because he fears that that might not impress the jeering Tories, whose votes in the future he might wish to try to get.

As the Secretary of State might tell us later, his role as Minister for women, with a unit in his Department responsible for policy on women, a Cabinet sub-committee to co-ordinate policy and lead responsibility for the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, which was transferred to his Department from the Home Office, is all the accomplishment of my predecessor and great friend Jo Richardson who, sadly, died on 1 February. Jo was, as everyone in the House knows, an enormous champion of the rights of women. For many years she was shadow Minister for women. She was determined to put into Whitehall, among many other things, a Minister for women to correct the bias in the upper levels of Whitehall and in politics, where a woman's perspective is still not fully taken into account.

Jo studied examples from around the world and made preparations for the establishment of a Ministry for women when—as she hoped—we would win the election and she would take office. Thus, in the period just before the election when, as is customary, shadow Cabinet Ministers meet civil servants to make preparations for the implementation of our policy she met Sir Robin Butler. He outlined his plans to establish Jo's Ministry for women, and they are the arrangements that we now have in the Department of Employment. Sadly, we did not win the election. Even more sadly, Jo did not become the Minister for women. But her work bore fruit and the present machinery in Whitehall to co-ordinate policy for women is a result of her work.

We intend to monitor closely the work of the Minister for women and his Department. This debate is part of that effort.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is the hon. Lady aware that 40 per cent. of appointments made by the Public Appointments Unit are of women? Four years ago, the figure was only 30 per cent. That is a substantial increase, over quite a short time.

Ms Short: I agree that that is something of an improvement. However, I am describing something far more important—the new machinery in Whitehall to co-ordinate policy for the benefit of women. As I have explained, that is largely a product of the work of Jo Richardson, who was deeply admired and loved in the House. I assume that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) does not wish to take anything away from Jo Richardson's accomplishment in achieving the arrangements that now exist.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Like the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short), I do not wish to take anything away from the work of a grand lady. Is she aware, however, that there has long been a ministerial group on women's issues in Whitehall? It used to be chaired by the Minister of State, Home Office: I recall that, because I was a member. The role of chairman has been upgraded by being moved to Cabinet level.

Ms Short: I am indeed aware of that—and the machinery that existed when the hon. Lady was a Minister has been massively strengthened because of the work of Jo Richardson. I do not want to keep repeating that point, but Conservative Members do not seem capable of taking it on board.

As I was saying, we intend to monitor the Minister's work carefully and this debate is part of that effort. On behalf of all the major women's organisations in Britain, I wish to ask the Secretary of State for an annual debate on the work of his Ministry and the Government's strategy in advancing the position of women.

I have received letters and messages from a wide range of women's organisations: the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Fawcett Society, the townswomen's guilds and the National Alliance of Women's Organisations, for instance. They are delighted that the debate is taking place; they point out that it is the first debate on the Sex Discrimination Act since it was passed 20 years ago—by a Labour Government, of course. They are also irritated that they were given such short notice of the debate and they ask for an annual debate of the sort that I have mentioned.

I shall be happy to give way to the Secretary of State if he wishes to respond immediately. If he does not—he is shaking his head—I hope that in his speech he will make a commitment that the Government will arrange an annual debate, in Government time, to monitor the progress of women's equality in Britain.

As I have said, women's demand for equality is a major force for social change. If we stand back for a moment, we can see how powerful it has been historically. We have just celebrated the 75th anniversary of women's getting the vote. What a struggle that was; what an insult it was that, as the franchise was widened, women were left out. But they fought and struggled and ensured that they were given the vote. That was one part of our great progress.

On and on it went. Women had to struggle for the right to be educated and the right to own property after they were married. They continue to struggle against the ugly problem of domestic violence, which still represents a quarter of all reported violent crime in Britain: it is a massive and often hidden problem, which reflects the inequality of power between men and women and demeans a civilised society.

It was announced today that the Secretary of State for Health is to take responsibility for co-ordinating policy on the family. I strongly suggest that she and the Minister for women agree to prepare a national strategy to deal with the problem of domestic violence. I congratulate the National Society of Local Government Women's Committees on its current "zero tolerance" campaign and on the startling and powerful posters and postcards that it has produced to challenge the widespread acceptance that violence against women in their homes is a normal part of our culture and society.

When we examine the historical record—women's struggle for the vote and for the rights to be educated and to own property—we see that women have advanced considerably over the years; but we also see that they still face major discrimination and disadvantage in society. It was the Prime Minister himself who said, at the launch of Opportunity 2000:

> "Why should half our population go through life like a hobbled horse in a steeplechase?"

That is the question before us today.

More than 20 years after the passing of the Equal Pay Act 1970—by a Labour Government, of course—women still earn only 79 per cent. of men's full-time hourly earnings. They cluster in jobs that are seen as women's jobs, often undervalued and underpaid. Women also form the bulk of part-time workers, with low pay and few opportunities for overtime or bonus earnings.

This reality—that the overwhelming majority of women are stuck in low-paid jobs, with little opportunity for training, promotion or access to pension entitlements, so that the overwhelming majority of those who are poor in old age are women—is currently the major barrier to women's advance. This is the issue that must be tackled if they are to cease to be what the Prime Minister called "a hobbled horse".

Despite what the Prime Minister said, the position of women in Britain has deteriorated since the Government came to power 15 years ago. In 1991—the latest year for which figures are available—the United Kingdom was at the bottom of the league in terms of pay differentials between male and female manual workers in Europe. In terms of women's earnings as a percentage of men's, the top country is Denmark, with 84.7 per cent; the bottom country is the United Kingdom, with 67.1 per cent. In 1980, just after Labour lost power, we were fourth from the bottom. The position has deteriorated.

We are also bottom of the European nursery education table, with just 35 to 40 per cent. of three to five-year-olds in nursery education, compared with over 95 per cent. in Belgium and France and over 85 per cent. in Denmark and Italy. Yet research undertaken by the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Government's own agency, and published in December 1992 shows that the cost to the Government of a phased expansion of subsidised child care —including out-of-school care, as well as nursery places —would be more than outweighed by savings in social security payments and increased tax revenue.

The strategy is available; the savings are clear. Such action would lead to a big improvement in the lives of women and children: the research makes it plain that nursery education causes children to do better when they go to school. Yet the Government have failed to implement the strategy.

We are also at the bottom of the European maternity pay tables, even after the Government's reluctant improvement this week—which was forced on them by the European Union. They resisted an improvement in maternity provision for all the women of Europe, but they have now grudgingly been forced to make an improvement. We welcome any improvement, but we know that we are still the worst off in Europe and that 20 per cent. of the poorest and lowest-income women in Britain will receive absolutely no maternity entitlement from the scheme announced by the Government.

Moreover, we are among just four European countries that fail to offer any parental leave provision, entitling parents to take time off work when their children are sick. It is, of course, Britain—of all the countries in Europe—that is blocking a proposed European directive that would give the father or mother the right to take time off to care for children.

The truth is that the British Government refuse to make the changes that are needed in our sex discrimination and equal pay laws so that women can cease to be "a hobbled horse" and try to resist the improvements coming from the European Union. When forced by the European Union to make changes, they do so grudgingly and with bad grace. An example that is central to this debate is the law on equal pay for work of equal value, which the Government were forced to introduce as a result of a European directive.

[Ms Short]

I well remember that night. The speech was the first to be made by Alan Clark, the new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment. He was horrified to learn that his first action as a Minister would be to introduce a measure intended to advance the equality of women, a cause for which he did not stand. What he did that night—as he has since admitted—was have quite a few drinks and then read his script for jokes. He introduced the measure in a way that showed the House that he did not believe in it—that he derided it. Since leaving this place, he has had the grace to admit in his memoirs that that is exactly what he did and that perhaps he should not have behaved in that way.

The law provides a right, but it had to be passed to meet the requirements of the European Union. Mr. Clark made it clear to the House that he intended the law to be unenforceable in practice. Lord Denning described it as "tortuosity and complexity beyond compare". It needs to be changed, simplified and made enforceable. That is one of the changes for which we are calling today and which the Government refuse to make.

The Equal Opportunities Commission is required by law—passed, of course, by a Labour Government—to keep the Equal Pay Act 1970 under review. The former Labour Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, made it clear when he introduced the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 that we saw it as only a beginning on which we would have to build to produce real equality for women. In 1988 and 1989, the Equal Opportunities Commission proposed to bring together, simplify and strengthen the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts.

On Tuesday—International Women's Day—I visited the Equal Opportunities Commission. In discussions, we agreed that if the Government wanted the rights that exist in theory and in law to be enforceable in practice, they would implement the changes for which the Equal Opportunities Commission has called. The Government will not do so, however. In public, they appear to be in favour of women's equality and women's employment, but in practice they are not.

The Government's behaviour in response to the proposals of the Equal Opportunities Commission shows their attitude. It took them five years to bother to reply; even then, their reply was almost completely negative. The Equal Opportunities Commission has made it clear that it deeply regrets that. It has asked the Government to think again. I also understand that the Government have not yet had the decency to respond to the changes proposed by the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland. As we examine the record, it becomes clearer why the hobbled horse continues to hobble.

The position now is that the Equal Opportunities Commission has made a submission to the European Commission to argue that the United Kingdom is in breach of its obligations under the treaty of Rome and the equal pay directive. The Trades Union Congress has also made an official complaint arguing that the abolition of the wages councils is a breach of European law. If the Commission finds in favour of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the TUC—it is difficult to see how it could do anything else—it is likely to take Britain to the European Court for breaching its obligations on equality for women.

The picture is clear. The Government's policy on women's equality is out of line with those of all the other Governments in Europe, and with European parties that share their political tradition. The other European Conservative parties understand that the agenda has to be taken forward and that women are entitled to equality. Only the British Conservative party cannot tolerate the agenda and tries to hold it back for women in Britain and the European Community. We have made progress only when the European Union has dragged a few concessions out of the Government, which they have always made grudgingly and half-heartedly.

The Opposition were absolutely delighted by the House of Lords' decision last Thursday—in response to a judicial review brought by the Equal Opportunities Commission—that it was illegal because of our obligations under our treaty of accession to the European Community for the Government to provide fewer employment protection rights for part-time workers than for full-time workers. I hope that the Secretary of State will tell us when he will introduce legislation and how he will implement that decision. We do not want any more dragging of feet, but urgent action.

The position of women and their rights in the labour market are at the core of the Government's economic policy. Since 1979, the strategy of the Government has been to deregulate the labour market, to remove all protection from low-paid workers, to reduce social protection in general and to compete by making British labour cheap. Women have borne the brunt of that policy and are the battering ram of that strategy.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): As the hon. Lady knows, the Conservative argument is that deregulation means more jobs. *[Interruption.]* Let me finish my argument. Between 1984 and 1991, there was a massive increase of 19 per cent. in the number of women in the work force. Should not she pay tribute to the achievement of those women, who now have new opportunities? Does not it show that what the Government say is right?

Ms Short: The hon. Gentleman should listen to my speech. The first great recession created by the Thatcher Government destroyed 2 million jobs in manufacturing industry and much of our manufacturing capacity. The jobs that were lost were overwhelmingly male.

The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) chooses his dates selectively. In the boom that was created to get the Government through one of their election contests, part-time, low-paid jobs in the service sector were generated and taken up by women. Labour market projections suggest that that trend will continue. More and more full-time jobs for men are being destroyed, low-paid jobs for women are being created, and the labour market is being dragged down.

The fact that women are cheap labour is bad for them and is being used to push men out of the labour market. That is not an economic strategy for our country. It drags down standards for everyone. It is not in the interests of women and men, or of the long-term health of the British economy.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): The Labour party has said that it is in favour of minimum wage legislation. Will the hon. Lady speculate on the disastrous effects that that policy would have on employment

generally and female employment in particular, as is shown in Spain, Portugal and France? The Labour party's policy would enormously increase unemployment, and that would affect women directly.

Ms Short: The hon. Gentleman shows the funny, strange and isolated world in which the Tory party lives. Every Government in the European Union has minimum wage protection. The United States has minimum wage protection. Every other developed country understands that the way to compete in the modern world is to have a highly skilled work force and a high-investment, high-technology economy.

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) *rose—*

Ms Short: I have not finished dealing with the intervention by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring). Only the British Government believe that the way forward is to compete with poorer countries by cutting wages. That strategy is a disaster for our economy. We need a minimum wage, which will pay for itself through the tax take and savings in family credit, to create a healthy economy of high skills and high investment. The Tory party is on its own. It is hobbling women and the British economy through its dedication to using women as low-paid workers and to cutting wages and conditions. It is damaging our future and the interests of everyone.

Mrs. Gillan *rose—*

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam) *rose—*

Ms Short: I want to make some progress, if I may.

Mrs. Gillan *rose—*

Ms Short: Will the hon. Lady please sit down? I shall give way after I have made some progress in my speech *[Interruption.]—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The House must settle down. I am finding it difficult to hear the hon. Lady.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Lady gave way to a man and not to a woman. That is sexist.

Ms Short: It is clear that some of my comments are stinging Conservative Members. They are making so much noise that they are not allowing the debate to continue.

Mrs. Gillan *rose—*

Ms Short: I said that I shall give way in a minute. The hon. Lady should sit down and then I shall give way.

This week, Britain is again isolated in Europe. It has blocked the accession of the European Free Trade Association countries because it is terrified of losing the right to veto any proposals that the other Governments of Europe might agree on social protection for workers. Britain alone is isolated and increasingly in conflict with all her other European partners, including those led by Conservative Governments.

Similarly, the British Government have today made it clear that they alone of all the Governments in Europe will seek to block protection for children at work. It is suggested that there should be a limit to the number of hours that school children can work, but the British Government cannot bear it. We will be the only country in Europe that does not believe that children should have some protection.

Mrs. Gillan: I thank the hon. Lady for giving way, although it took her long enough to do so. If the minimum wage is such a terrific idea, can she explain why France has now passed a law allowing workers aged under 25 to be paid only 60 per cent. of the minimum wage?

Ms Short: The hon. Lady was so anxious to intervene to make that devastating point. If she really believes that the fact that there has been an adjustment to, but not a sweeping away of, the minimum wage by a Conservative Government in France is a devastating point, she will really have to try harder.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose—*

Ms Short: I have already given way once to the hon. Lady. May I please continue with my speech?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has made it quite clear that she is not giving way.

Ms Short: The Tories do not like to hear the truth about their isolation from the main stream of economic development, so they are trying to barrack and make a lot of noise.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose—*

Ms Short: I have already given way to the hon. Lady. She knows that she should not stand and shout like that.

Britain is the only country in the European Union incapable of signing the social chapter. That is part and parcel of the problem. Britain's backwardness—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose—*

Ms Short: I have made it absolutely clear that I am not giving way.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has made it clear that she is not giving way.

Ms Short: The Government are isolated, trying to compete by social devaluation. They cannot succeed. They are causing ever more conflict with our partners, who are angry that Britain tries to attract investment by advertising the fact that British workers are cheaper than other European workers. What a prospect to offer to the country — "We'll make you the cheapest workers in Europe, give you the poorest protection and the worst conditions." What kind of quality of life is that to offer the people of Britain?

The European Commission's Green Paper on social policy stated:

"It is important to underline that high standards of social protection have been a contributory factor in Europe's economic success in the past."

Tory Members should read this paper—they might learn something. The report continues:

"Many would argue that high social standards should not be seen as an optional extra, or a luxury that can be done without once times get hard, but rather as an integral part of a competitive economic model. The debate between this view and those who argue that Europe's present level of social standards are becoming unaffordable goes to the heart of the issue"—

and it does.

[Ms Short]

The Tory party thinks that it can compete with the Pacific rim tigers who have massively lower wage levels, or with China, whose economic performance is rising, by bringing down British wages. How low does the Tory party think that the workers of Britain are willing to go? There is only one way forward for this country: high investment and high levels of training and skills. It is the opposite of the trajectory that the Government have given to the country.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Whatever the merits of the hon. Lady's comments, she must at least admit that they are arguable. Does not she think that it would be more democratic for her and her colleagues to get elected before her policies are inflicted on the country? Does she think that it would be democratic if her policies were imposed on us by court rulings and arbitrary judgments of the European Court?

Ms Short: It is my intention that I and my colleagues shall be elected to implement these policies and, to judge from the Government's performance, it will happen fairly soon. We are bound to test the Government in the local and European elections and there will then be a general election. The Government have lost the support of the British people who agree with us, not with the hon. Gentleman. I am grateful to him for giving me the opportunity to make that clear.

Lady Olga Maitland *rose—*

Ms Short: I must make some progress because time is short.

The issue before the House and the British people and which goes to the heart of the British economy is that the Government claim to be concerned about the needs of women in Britain, but, in practice, they will not strengthen the sex discrimination and equal pay legislation, as advocated by the Labour party, the Equal Opportunities Commission and all the major women's organisations in Britain. The reason is that the Government's economic strategy depends on using women as cheap labour. The Government therefore need women in this role and cannot implement the legislation that women need to enable them to cross the barrier in the labour market. The consequences for the future of this country are very serious.

As I said in response to an intervention from the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring), 2 million male jobs have been destroyed since 1979. The new jobs that came in the late 1980s were low-paid jobs in the service sector taken by women. The projection for the next 10 years is that the pattern will continue—more and more full-time jobs for men will be destroyed and the only new jobs will be low-paid, part-time jobs, the overwhelming majority of which will be taken by women.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Short: I shall give way in a moment when I have finished this point.

That pattern is imposing great strains on family life in Britain. I shall tell the House a story of a man in his fifties who came to my advice bureau a little while ago. He handed me a brown envelope and asked me to open it and read its contents. I took out a reference which said that he was a fine worker—he was a draughtsman. I told him that it was a lovely reference and that he was clearly extremely good at his job.

He started to cry and said that he wanted someone to know that he used to be some good. He told me that he had been made unemployed in his fifties, had not obtained another job and had exhausted his entitlement to unemployment benefit. His wife had a relatively low-paid job, but did not want to give it up and his marriage of 25 years was about to break up. This will be the picture if the Government continue their strategy of using women as low-paid labour against men and destroying full-time jobs.

A group of academics has today produced a report which concludes:

"The 'flexible' labour market championed by the Government is creating a new tier of insecure labour—of which unemployment is the most acute form—which is damaging health, sinking people into depression, increasing the chances of marriage break-ups and leading to social isolation . . . the stress generated by job insecurity was also sufficiently intense to destabilise relations in the family and to precipitate marriage break-up".

The Conservatives claim to be the party of the family, yet they run an economy that is ripping the heart out of many families by using women against men to drag us all down in the labour market.

The issues that we are debating lie at the centre of the major political and economic choices facing the country. Since 1979—

Lady Olga Maitland *rose—*

Ms Short: I promised to give way, so I shall.

Lady Olga Maitland: If the market in Europe is so marvellous for women, why is it that this country is second only to Denmark in respect of having the most women in work? Does the hon. Lady accept that women who take part-time work do so from choice to fit in with their family commitments?

Ms Short: I have heard that point made before and I have already told the hon. Lady that women in Denmark are the best off in terms of earnings as a proportion of male earnings in any European country. Many Tory Members make that point. I shall say only that virtually every woman in Bangladesh from the age of six onwards works. Very high participation rate in the labour market is not a measure of economic development. If there is a high-skill economy, people train and are educated and enter the labour market later. To boast about high participation shows how ignorant the hon. Lady is, as are all her colleagues, about how one achieves a high-quality, high-tech economy.

Since 1979, the Government have adopted an economic strategy of competing through driving down the costs of employment in Britain. Unemployment has grown massively. When the present Government came to power, unemployment was 1.2 million; using the method of counting which was then in force, there are now 4 million unemployed people. All protection for low-paid workers has been stripped away and the European Commission may soon say that that is illegal.

Inequality is much greater in our country, and the gap between rich and poor has grown greatly. Crime has grown, inevitably, in those conditions. Conservative Members should worry about the fate of young, working-class men who cannot gain employment. One in four are unemployed and, on current projections, an even higher proportion will be unemployed in the future.

The strain on families—

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West) *rose—*

Ms Short: I am coming to an end.

The strain on families throughout the country is great. Women have borne the burden of much of that deregulation and wage cutting. The strategy has been a failure. Our economy is a mess. The quality of life is low. We have been less successful than our partners in Europe in generating jobs. Simply, what women want is the chance—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: What about Spain?

Ms Short: We have the worst record on such matters of all the countries in Europe. The hon. Lady should examine the true historical record, instead of the propaganda that Conservative Members consume.

Women simply want the chance to be equal at work, in public life and in the family. To achieve that, we need a Government who are committed to equality. Instead, we have a Government who claim to support women's equality, but, in practice, oppose all proposals from British organisations or from Europe which would help to deliver equality. It is in the interests of men and women in Britain that we change that situation. The Government's failure is hobbling the British economy and women in the work force.

We need a U-turn from the Government; an admission that their economic strategy has been a terrible tragedy for our country. If they are not big enough to deliver it, women in Britain will vote to get rid of them and will start to put things right.

5.22 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'notes, in the week of International Women's Day, that women in Britain now enjoy exceptionaly wide and increasing opportunities underpinned by comprehensive and effective legislation; and calls on the Government to continue to pursue the policies which have made this possible.'.

It is sad that today we should hold a debate on this subject without Jo Richardson, who died recently, because she spoke for the Opposition on women's rights for 11 years, from 1982 to 1993. She campaigned indefatigably for the needs of women and I believe that I speak for everyone in the House when I say that she was much loved and much respected. Her especial interest was in women in lower-paid jobs who were trying to combine work and family responsibilities; and she served as a member of my Department's advisory committee on women's issues. I know that her presence always ensured a lively and stimulating debate. She was a doughty champion of the cause that we are debating today, and she will be sorely missed by everyone in this place.

There have been co-ordinating arrangements for women's issues at ministerial level for some considerable time, as my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) pointed out. However, in April 1992, my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard), became the first Cabinet Minister with responsibility for women's issues. I am proud to follow her in that capacity.

If the country is to be truly competitive and to achieve the highest possible standards, we must recognise the ability of all our people. Equality of opportunity is a vital principle. Discrimination against women is not only inefficient, but clearly wrong. I hope that Members on both sides of the House will agree with those simple statements.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): What my right hon. Friend has just said is absolutely right. Does he agree that it must be as wrong to discriminate against people on the grounds of their sexuality as on the grounds of their sex? Will he develop initiatives from his Department to encourage employers to eliminate discrimination and harassment against gay men and lesbians? Is it his view that the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 should be amended to make clear beyond doubt that its provisions cover sexuality discrimination?

Mr. Hunt: On 21 February, we had a lengthy, detailed and in-depth debate on the age of consent, when many issues relating to sexuality were raised. I know that my hon. Friend speaks for many Members on both sides of the House. I wish to show that I believe that, in its present form, the Sex Discrimination Act is right and is working. I shall explain why to my hon. Friend and the House.

In 1975, when the Bill was introduced, it was welcomed on both sides. It was recognised that it was an Act much built on the achievements of a Conservative Government and that its principles were wholly in line with Conservative philosophy. I wish that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) would recognise that there are strong views on the subject on both sides of the House. There is great scope—

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green) *rose—*

Mr. Hunt: Just one second.

There is great scope for a bipartisan policy. I felt that many of the hon. Lady's comments, which were founded on incorrect statements, sought to trivialise the debate to a considerable degree.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose—*

Mr. Hunt: I am about to give way to the hon. Lady.

I believe that the Sex Discrimination Act is about creating equality of opportunity for individuals and about giving everyone a fair and equal chance to be judged on their merits and to rise as high as their abilities will allow them in the job that they choose to pursue. It is also about challenging preconceptions which say that a woman cannot do this or that a man cannot do that simply because of their sex. Those are out-of-date attitudes and the Act makes that absolutely clear.

Mrs. Roche: The Secretary of State says that the Conservative party has given rise to much of that legislation. Nothing could be further from the truth. Will he acknowledge the contribution of my predecessor, Joyce Butler, who was the Member of Parliament for Wood Green until 1979? She was an early pioneer of that legislation and made strenuous attempts to get it into the parliamentary framework.

Mr. Hunt: In the course of the debate, tributes will be paid by hon. Members on both sides of the House to all hon. Members who have worked for the cause. I am seeking to point out that, in the past 15 years, there have been considerable achievements for women. The hon.

[Mr. Hunt]

Member for Ladywood was not doing justice to the debate by denying those achievements. I shall give a few simple facts to illustrate that.

Mr. Cryer *rose—*

Mr. Hunt: Let me give a few simple facts and then I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

First, more and more women want to work. The economic activity rate for women of working age has increased over the past 10 years from 66 per cent. to 71 per cent. Secondly, more and more women are working. The number of women in employment has risen by 16 per cent., or more than 1 million, over that same period. The number of women in full-time jobs has risen virtually identically with the number of women in part-time jobs—a fact that the hon. Lady did not acknowledge.

Thirdly, more and more women are expected to work in the future. Our projections show that about 80 per cent. of the labour force growth between now and 2006 is likely to come from women. More and more women will be able to contribute their talents in the workplace.

If we compare our record with that of our European partners, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) said, the United Kingdom at present has the second highest proportion of the female population in work in the European Union—65 per cent. —behind Denmark.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Hunt: I shall give way in a moment.

Between 1983 and 1991, female employment in the Community as a whole—now the Union—grew by 8 million, and a quarter of that was accounted for by the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has nearly 11.5 million women in paid employment—more than any other member state except Germany; and it is the only member state in the Union where women's unemployment is lower than men's.

That is an impressive record, and it is one of which the Government are proud. But it has not been achieved by chance. Job opportunities are greater here because the Government have steadfastly pursued the right policies.

Mr. Cryer: The Secretary of State said earlier that he wanted to promote some sort of bipartisan policy. Despite his continual sneering and sniping at the minimum wage legislation proposed by the Labour party, which is repeated by his hon. Friends on the Back Benches, does he know that such a measure would immediately benefit more than 2 million women who are paid rock-bottom rotten wages which no Conservative Member would even look at, and that the Government can embark on a bipartisan policy only by recognising the importance of a minimum wage for women?

Mr. Hunt: How can the hon. Gentleman expect me, as Secretary of State for Employment, to endorse a policy that would destroy 2 million jobs? That is what a statutory minimum wage would do.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Hunt: Just a moment.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) talked about wages. Let us look at the facts, because they were noticeably absent from the speech by the hon. Member for Ladywood. What is the average wage for women in the United Kingdom? The average weekly gross wage for women is £252.60. What was it in 1979? It was £63. There has been a cash increase of 301 per cent., and an increase in real terms of 54.9 per cent. Women's real wages have grown faster than men's since 1979, and it is about time that Opposition Members recognised that fact.

We have worked to create a labour market in which employers have minimum constraints on the jobs they can offer. We want minimal structural constraints on pay levels, which is why we have abolished wages councils. We want minimal structural constraints on hours of work which is why we are challenging the working time directive before the European Court of Justice. We want minimal extra costs, which is why we oppose the parental leave directive and other extensions of burdens on business.

Unlike some others, we do not have preconceptions about the sort of jobs that should be created, based on the stultified stereotypes of 20 or 30 years ago. We do not assume that a "proper" job lasts 48 or 35 hours a week, or that everybody wants to work full time, or that the service industry is a poor relation to manufacturing industry. We do not assume that women, simply because they are women, cannot work at night.

Those are the old assumptions of an out-of-date, out-of-touch male-dominated society. They are above all to be found in countries that have old-fashioned, highly regulated labour markets.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Hunt: Just a moment; let me put this point to the hon. Member for Ladywood. She referred to Europe.

I see that the European Commission has recently threatened Belgium, France, Italy, Greece and Portugal with legal action because those countries still ban women from night work. The United Kingdom swept away such outdated restrictions years ago.

Under the Conservative Government, the United Kingdom labour market has been able to offer a wide range of opportunities, and that has benefited women especially. I recognise that women often want to combine work with family commitments, and need an employer who can offer the necessary flexibility.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Secretary of State give way, on that point?

Mr. Hunt: No.

In the United Kingdom, there is no such thing as a standard working week. There is a wide spread of jobs available, with a whole range of different hours. We have far greater diversity than have other European countries with more highly regulated labour markets. Employers and employees therefore have a better chance of finding the working patterns that suit them both.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Hunt: No, I want to make progress.

For example, for most women part-time workers, especially if they have children, part-time work is their preferred option. More than 92 per cent. of part-time working mothers say that they do not want a full-time job.

That is why I am so pleased that Conservatives have created more than 2 million part-time jobs in the past 10 years—

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Hunt: No, I want to make a little progress.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State has made it clear—

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): What is he frightened of?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State has made it clear that he does not intend to give way.

Mr. Hunt: I am very pleased that the Conservatives have created more than 2 million part-time jobs in the past 10 years, and that so many part-timers are women. That is because it suits them. Overall, only 13 per cent. of those working part time would prefer to work full time.

Ms Short: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Hunt: Let me finish my comment first.

We believe that individuals, not Government, should decide their patterns of work.

Ms Short: The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that many women with young children want to work part time. What they do not want is rotten wages, no training, no promotion and no access to pensions, or to be sidelined in the labour market for the rest of their lives. That is why full-time rights for part-time workers are crucial to the equality of women in the labour market.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Lady does not acknowledge the statistics that I have given the House, based on the independent figures produced by my Department, which demonstrate how much women's wages and overall earnings have risen in the past 15 years.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Hunt: I am not giving way at the moment.

Of course women need a fair chance to fulfil their potential. Prejudice must be countered. The Government want fair play for women—I cite the English translation of the programme "Chwarae Teg", which I introduced when I was Secretary of State for Wales, in combination with Opportunity 2000 and the Equal Opportunities Commission. We also fund a nationwide campaign, New Horizons for Women, to promote opportunities for women at all levels in the work force and in public appointments —as one of my hon. Friends pointed out.

We fully support the employer-led Opportunity 2000 campaign. The civil service as a whole and many Departments, including my own, are active members. We are spending £45 million on increasing out-of-school child care facilities. We are glad to fund the work of the EOC.

I turn now to the role of the law in underpinning and guaranteeing equality of opportunity. We are fortunate in having the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. It is wide-ranging and covers discrimination not only in employment and training but in education and in the provision of goods and services. That goes well beyond any obligations that we have under any EC directive—

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the Secretary of State give way on that very point?

Mr. Hunt: No.

Those provisions go well beyond the practice in most member states.

The Act also established the Equal Opportunities Commission, to which the hon. Member for Ladywood referred. As we all know, the EOC's powers include taking up cases against the Government themselves. It would be hard to find a more visible example of independence in action. I do not complain about the EOC's pursuing the statutory role that Parliament gave it, but I believe that its powers and independence make a mockery of suggestions that the United Kingdom is somehow soft in its legislative arrangements for guaranteeing equal opportunities.

The hon. Lady suggested that our equal pay legislation is ineffective and lacks teeth, especially in delivering equal pay for work of equal value. I do not accept that. Equal value claims are recognised throughout Europe as very difficult to tackle, and the United Kingdom does much better than most. Those are not my words. I have a report produced by the European Commission's equal opportunities unit which discussed the difficulties of equal value claims. The report said that there was no case law at all on this subject in France, Luxembourg, Italy and Greece.

Mrs. Mahon: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It has been drawn to my attention that the reason why the Secretary of State is not giving way to interventions from women Members is that he has a plane to catch to Detroit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair. It is for the Secretary of State to decide whether he gives way.

Mr. Hunt: It also said—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it true?

Mr. Hunt: I am returning to the real subject of this debate.

The report said that the concept of "equal work, equal pay" was not properly defined in Belgium, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Luxembourg. I commend the report to the hon. Member for Ladywood. It also said that the United Kingdom was one of the few states where the basic concepts were understood and where case law was extensive.

Our law lays down in detail how equal value claims are to be decided. It gives particular weight to a tribunal receiving a job evaluation report from an independent expert. The hon. Lady will know that the idea of using job evaluation is still very new. The whole idea of one job being equal in value to another is full of difficulty and ambiguity. Different experts take different views. There is room for argument and appeals, and all of that takes time. But the United Kingdom has genuinely tried to make the concept work. I shall explain why.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Hunt: I shall give way in a moment—I am dealing with an important principle.

We have seen more than 100 cases presented to independent experts since 1984. Some of them have been resolved by the tribunals; many more have been settled out of court by the parties concerned. Those cases will have a

[Mr. Hunt]

knock-on effect on the pay of other workers. I simply say to the hon. Lady, if she would pay attention for a moment, that thousands of women have benefited from employers voluntarily restructuring their pay scales so as to value more highly work which tends to be done by women. We have seen that particularly in the retail sector.

Ms Glenda Jackson: The Secretary of State said that the Government funds the Equal Opportunities Commission. Therefore, why do they not take on board the commission's recommendations with regard to equality? The commission, in its very helpful briefing document, said that the existing law on equality is very complex, the legal procedures take so long and it is virtually impossible for people to obtain legal aid.

Mr. Hunt: I shall deal directly with what I have been discussing with the Equal Opportunities Commission. I acknowledge the work that Kamlesh Bahl and her colleagues in the Equal Opportunities Commission have done in examining the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Equal Pay Act 1970, and the formal recommendations that they put to the Government.

When I replied to Kamlesh Bahl last July, soon after I became the Secretary of State for Employment, I said that I would be pleased to discuss many of the Equal Opportunities Commission's proposals. We have already had discussions on the Equal Pay Act and I have agreed some changes to speed up equal value cases as far as possible.

I shall consult on further possible changes. I am happy to give the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) that assurance. I look forward to more discussions with the Equal Opportunities Commission on some of its proposals on the Sex Discrimination Act. In July, I said that most of the proposals can be either accepted fully or discussed further. I am happy to confirm that.

I do not believe that we should substantially reshape the legislation that we have. As I wrote to the Equal Opportunities Commission in July, I do not believe that that would help those who have to use the legislation. By and large, it has served us well. Important questions of interpretation have been settled by the courts over the past 15 years. More questions are still at issue, either here or before the European Court of Justice. Starting again from scratch would be a massive task, and I suspect that it would be of little use to most people. That is the extent of my commitment. I am happy that I will be discussing this further with the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): As the Secretary of State said that he thoroughly approves of women taking their cases to industrial tribunals, will he congratulate the two Scottish women who won their equal value case against Scottish Power last week? Will he also deplore the fact that it took them four years to do so? Will he commit himself to improving the legislation so that such cases can be dealt with much more speedily?

Mr. Hunt: I am very happy to give the hon. Lady that assurance, because I want to see such delays removed and the whole procedure speeded up. I also commend the many cases and awards that are reported in our newspapers. This morning, I saw that a girl won £24,000 in a discrimination case. The United Kingdom has a strong and comprehensive framework of anti-discrimination legislation and I believe that the decisions of tribunals confirm that.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Before my right hon. Friend leaves his discussion of the law of this country, will he say that the Government have no place whatever for a consideration of quotas in this matter of equal opportunities? Of course, it works both ways—equal opportunities for men and equal opportunities for women. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) made no mention of the Opposition's position on quotas, although at their last party conference they put in place a quota system for the selection of their parliamentary candidates.

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. I hope that the general theme of this debate will be a clear message that if the United Kingdom wants to be truly competitive in a fairly tough competitive world, it must recognise the abilities of all of its people, men and women. That is why we need equal opportunities and that is why I moved the amendment.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before I call any hon. Members in this debate, I must tell the House that no fewer than 22 Members wish to catch the Chair's eye, of which 15 are hon. Ladies. Although there is no time limit on speeches, a little self-discipline would be of some assistance.

5.48 pm

Ms Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): When my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) raised a point of order about the Secretary of State not giving way because he was in a hurry to catch a plane to the United States, the Secretary of State had nothing to say. He was kind and polite enough to write a letter to me apologising because he may not be able to stay and listen to my speech because he has to get to the United States and must therefore leave the Chamber soon after his speech.

When we are debating such an important issue, which affects more than half the population of this country—it affects not only women but their partners and children—it seems to be the wrong occasion for the Minister to race off. I do not want to take advantage of his courtesy in writing to me but the point must be made that it is the wrong time for him to leave. He should listen to what is said today because it is very important to all women.

Although the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 was a huge advance, it never worked as well as we hoped. It takes nearly three years for the average case to come to a hearing, and one case in particular took more than eight years. The Act that runs in tandem, the Equal Pay Act 1970, was followed by a huge regrading of jobs so that men who were doing the same work were given a new title and paid more than women. A tightening and an alteration is needed to make these two laws more effective.

The Secretary of State twisted the figures. He said that the average wage for women when compared with that for men had increased, and that is true. However, the average wage for women is still 30 per cent. lower than the average wage for men. For part-time workers—most women now are in part-time employment—the hourly pay for women is half the hourly pay for men in full-time employment. That is a huge gap and a huge difference.

Mr. Hunt: First, I thank the hon. Lady for her graciousness in accepting that I have to talk to the American Administration at the jobs summit in Detroit. I apologise to the House for having to leave.

Does the hon. Lady accept that the real growth in the hourly rate for the female working population has been 55.9 per cent. since 1979, against 40.4 per cent. for the male population? Does she acknowledge that the rate has risen considerably faster?

Ms Gordon: I do not know how the Secretary of State arrived at those figures, but we must take into account the lowering of the value of money.

The fact is that the average wage for women is still half that for men. The gap is still enormous. If there has been some increase, that is all to the good. That does not mean that the situation is satisfactory—it means that there has been some improvement, but there is still a long way to go.

The vast numbers of women who have young children and who cannot leave their children have not been taken into account. They can neither find nor afford child care and they must do work at home, such as threading beads and painting toys for a pittance. It is disgusting pay, and there is no regulation of it and no help for such women. What is happening to them is largely hidden from sight.

There are 6 million women in this country who are on poverty wages. Most of the poor people in this country are women—women on low pay, single mothers, women who have been divorced and women pensioners. We must do something about that because we are not content to go on being at the bottom of the pile, regardless of the work we do, the hours we put in and our efforts and abilities.

The Government want women to be low-waged. They see their value as a pool of low-waged workers and they think that that will make the country more competitive. That is false reasoning, and other countries do not feel that way. When the Government passed the iniquitous Child Support Act, they said that they would give a £15 disregard of maintenance to women on low wages and family credit. This would encourage women to accept work at lower wages than they otherwise would take. What kind of distorted thinking is that?

The Government do not want to improve the status, lifestyle and income of women. They want to force women to accept lower wages than they otherwise would do—in other words, a little bit above starvation starvation level.

Women are discriminated against not only in wages but in pensions. It was announced in the Budget that the pensionable age for women would be raised to 65 by 2020. The Government want to equalise pensions, but instead of allowing men to retire early if they wish or perhaps having a flexible retirement age, which both men and women might want, women are again penalised.

It is true that women had an advantage, but if we look at pensions in total we find that only 15 per cent. of women earn the full state pension in their own right. The average occupational pension earned by women is £30 a week, whereas for men it is £61. Again, we see that it is almost half—women get half the hourly wage and half the occupational pension. It seems that women often receive only half of what men get. That does not mean that men should get less—it means that women should get more.

What happens when a woman is divorced by her husband, as often happens? It may be that her husband had a low-paid job when they got married. The woman stayed at home, brought up the children, put meals on the table, washed his clothes and ensured that her husband was well-dressed. She helped him to work well and to improve his position at work. By the time they get divorced—he may be after a younger woman—the husband may be earning a great deal, and he would be entitled to a good occupational pension.

If they get divorced, the wife gets nothing at all for the work that she did in their partnership. That needs to be addressed. In cases of divorce, women should be entitled to half the value of the occupational pension until the time of the divorce. I have had many bitter letters from women about that, and the law must address it.

The carers of severely disabled people get some pension credits, but women get no pension credits for the years that they spend at home rearing children. Those years, apparently, are considered to be of no value to society. If we want older women to have proper pensions and not be the poorest in society, they should be given pension credits for the years of unpaid work in the home. Those years are just as important to society as the years spent in paid work.

That brings me to the whole matter of women's unpaid work, which is unrecognised, unvalued and considered to be almost invisible. However, it is the basis of the economy of the country. If one considers the economy of any country as a pyramid, it is based on the great pedestal of unpaid work which is done by women in the home and voluntary work.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Gordon: I am not going to give way. The Secretary of State did not give way, and Mr. Deputy Speaker has asked that we make our speeches short because 22 women —or, at least, 22 people—have asked to speak. I hope that the hon. Lady will have a chance to speak.

The economy of the country is based on the pedestal of the unpaid work that women do. I have introduced a Bill on the matter, and I shall continue to press that women's unpaid work be counted in the economic statistics and the GNP of this country. The value of all the work that women do in the home and in the voluntary sector would then become evident to everybody.

Mrs. Gillan *rose—*

Ms Gordon: I said that I was not going to give way.

Until women's unpaid work is properly valued, their work outside the home will not be valued and employers will continue to offer them low wages.

That brings me to the matter of increments. When I was a teacher, the National Union of Teachers negotiated for women the right to one increment for every three years spent raising a family when she returned to work. I always felt that it should have been one increment for every year. I believe that some banking organisations have a similar scheme.

The years that women spend at home bringing up families, the organisational skills which they learn and the value of rearing the new generation should be recognised. Women should not be considered to have wasted those years when they return to work, but to have enriched their value to any future employer. They should get incremental increases and not go back to work on lower pay than when they left to raise their families.

In other words, women should be enabled to take a full part in the life of this country, to live decently and to have decent pay. We feel our inequality in every way. A woman

[Ms Gordon]

has only to want to go to the toilet in a public building; she will see men whizzing by while she is queuing. The women's toilet is always the most inaccessible. Then we know that we are second-class citizens.

We have only to consider agism in Britain, which is always directed first and foremost at women, to know that we are second-class citizens. Studies have proved that, when children go to school, teachers give more minutes of attention per day to boys than to girls. In training, we get a worse deal. All down the line, women are treated as second-class citizens.

It is time that the debt that this country owes to women was recognised. It is time that the Government were forced to recognise it. Women demand a better deal. History has shown us that we do not get any improvement unless we fight for it—and fight for it we will. We want a better life, we want better recognition, we want equality and we want better pay.

6 pm

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): I hope that the House will not mind if I indulge myself by falling back on my previous occupation for a few moments at the opening of my remarks. I hope to do so briefly, and for the only time in my speech.

In 1948, the incomparable Fanny Blankers Koen, who won four Olympic gold medals at the 1948 Olympic games, confronted a newspaper headline in a Dutch newspaper after winning her second medal. It simply read "Fastest women in the world is an expert cook". The report said:

"This amazing Dutch athlete who holds the world record for the high jump, the long jump and the hundred metres has gained an Olympic double—the first women ever to achieve that feat. But at home she is just an ordinary housewife. She is an expert cook and darns socks with artistry. Her greatest love next to racing is housework."

We have travelled far, thank goodness, in the past 46 years, although it is still not uncommon to switch on the television and listen to a sporting event in which the commentators witter on about the hairstyles of the women competing rather than about the ability of the women competitors.

The history of female involvement in a raft of sports such as track and field has been one of attrition and determination, and of women forcing their way to the table. When they have got there, their contribution to those sports has been enormous. It has often transcended sport, set the trends in other socio-economic activities and done much to flatten misconceptions and prejudices about female work, status and physical ability.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I presume that the hon. Gentleman is moving towards suggesting that women in sport are more equal now. Can he explain to the House why Sally Gunnell is paid considerably less than Linford Christie for taking part in exactly the same athletic meetings?

Mr. Coe: I have been away from the sport since 1989. I could not tell the hon. Gentleman what the pay structure of British sport and British athletics is. If what he says is the case, I certainly do not condone it.

My wife is an equestrienne. She is a three-day eventer —a discipline which was originally designed as a test of the gentleman soldier, but which is now firmly in female hands. Men and women compete on equal terms even though women were barred until 1968 from any British equestrian Olympic team. It was believed that the event was simply too taxing for female riders.

In 1990, my wife won the sport's most prestigious event —the Badminton horse trials—fending off the world's best male riders. She took her place in the record book alongside the likes of Lucinda Green, who has a record six victories, Virginia Leng, arguably our greatest rider, Mark Phillips and Mark Todd. It is important not to fall into the trap of over-legislation or over-regulation in the pursuit of equal access. It is important for women to continue to make progress in sport, if they want to, free from ignorance about physical status. However, that is a cultural process.

Physiologists and practitioners of other disciplines in sport science recognise that women are better suited than men to many sports and have built-in physiological advantages, certainly in ultra-distance events. The modern sport of triathlon—the amalgam of swimming, cycling and running—is an event at which women compete on equal terms with men, and even surpass them. It is also known that under conditions of severe cold or heat women will outlast men. That is probably best summed up by saying that, if Captain Scott had been a woman, he would probably have made it.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): The hon. Gentleman raises an important issue in women's equality. I certainly agree with him that women have had a terrible time attempting to break into sport. Does he agree that the current practice of sex testing for female athletes—which gives the impression that, if a female athlete has competed and won, she might be a man so she must be tested to check that she is not—is extremely demeaning to women and ought to be abolished forthwith?

Mr. Coe: The hon. Lady has raised an important point. I should declare an interest here. I am a member of the medical commission of the International Olympic Committee. The issue she raises has exercised better medical brains than mine for many years. The hon. Lady is right. It is a major problem. We are considering ways of determining sex. Sex is important in competition, not simply in terms of making sure that a female who wins an event is a female, but the reverse. It is important to make sure that men are not competing in female events, which would discriminate against the final result simply on arguments of ability.

That is quite enough sporting parallel. I am having far too much fun. Suffice it to say that sport provides, and will continue to provide, an interesting sociological model of female achievement, often against the odds and almost always against the historical tide of perception.

However, let us be wary of the way in which, in recent years, the equal opportunities agenda has often been so grotesquely—and, in terms of women, so damagingly—hijacked. For many years, I was a member of a weightlifting club in the London borough of Hackney. It was an excellent club, funded by a very good adult education programme.

One night, a group of women from the local authority came into the gymnasium. They simply wanted to close it. The women did not want to close the club because we prevented women from joining. We could not have done that. They did not want to close it because we would have

been unpleasant or antagonistic to women if they had wanted to join the club. They tried to close it simply because women chose not to use the club.

I also use the example of a constituent who applied for a job in an adjoining London borough. She was told that she had not got the job. That did not come as a major shock, but she found out later that the person who had got the job not only did not have the right qualifications but did not have qualifications at all. On appeal, my constituent was told in no uncertain terms that, if the woman in question had had the same opportunities as my constituent and had obtained the qualifications in the first place, she would almost certainly have got the job.

I also fall back to my time as vice-chairman of the Sports Council. I was visited by a group of distressed parents from a south London school. They came to me to raise their concerns that the school in question had decided to put all competing school teams together as mixed events. The first time that the mixed football team played the local school, it lost 26-nil. The team that subsequently won had no significant sporting or educational gratification from that. The team that lost felt significantly dismayed. When that matter was raised—in the darker, sadder days of the old Greater London council and ILEA—an inquiry took place, and the headmaster and the PE staff were all congratulated on upholding ILEA's equal opportunities policy.

In identifying those excesses, however, we should not pretend that all in the garden of equal opportunity is rosy. Although it is fair to point out that, in the professions, remuneration is normally related to the job irrespective of gender, it is certainly more difficult for women to reach board level, for instance, in the average company.

Ms Short: Never!

Mr. Coe: Recent studies show that only 1 per cent. of women reach positions of top management, only 4 per cent. reach positions of senior management, and only 27 per cent. of women work in any management capacity. Whether that is due to institutional prejudice, to the discontinuity in women's careers or to the reluctance of many women to assume positions of responsibility because their families come first in their order of priorities, is not a question that I choose to explore any further in the confines of the debate.

Much has been done by the Government to promote equality of opportunity in the workplace. Women should be able to pursue their chosen path without obstacle to achievement and to success. There are effective ways in which women can pursue grievances. The complaints system is accessible, and generally more comprehensive than those in most parts of the European Community, through industrial tribunals. There is, as recent cases have shown, a remedy in law for those people who have suffered sexual harrassment, and a protection against subsequent victimisation.

There are more training opportunities for women—more special schemes to help women back into the workplace or to take up jobs that have not normally been associated with women. There are now more than 100,000 more women in higher education than there were in 1979. They now account for a higher proportion of all people attending universities—46 per cent. today, compared with 42 per cent. 15 years ago. Cornwall college, an excellent college of higher education in my constituency, has even better statistics: nearly 51 per cent. of students in the college are women.

The Government have strengthened the United Kingdom's traditional legal framework, which combats discrimination. In employment, it provides equal rights for men and women in recruitment, training and promotion. The law also ensures equality in pay and contracts of employment. Since the mid-1980s, the law in relation to the latter has been significantly strengthened to allow equal pay for work of equal value.

Women now make up nearly 50 per cent. of the UK labour force. More than 2 million more women have entered jobs since 1983, and the number of women who work full time in the work force has increased by nearly a fifth—all much to do with the supply-side changes to the labour market.

There are aspects in which the Government can do more. I should like some of the Department of Employment's excellent work in promoting conditions for women to return to work to be widened to embrace the advantages for providing flexible conditions and practices, and the greater provision of child care facilities. In that respect, the civil service should be singled out and commended for its range of options, including flexible work patterns and child care help, and for cutting the distinction between part-time and full-time work.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: As to child care, does my hon. Friend agree that flexibility is the key? It is no good having workplace nurseries if that involves taking a child a long way on a tube train at a busy time. It is much better to give the woman the choice of what she may have by some method such as coupons, but not to insist on workplace nurseries.

Mr. Coe: My hon. Friend is right, and I doubt whether any reasonable person would argue with that. That is why, when the scheme Opportunity 2000 was launched by the Prime Minister in 1991, from its very inception flexible patterns of work, which increase the quality and quantity of employment opportunities for women, were at the centre of its aims. When the campaign was launched in 1991, 61 organisations pledged increased opportunities to women. Employers covering 25 per cent. of the work force now belong to the scheme—a remarkable transformation in only three years.

Opportunities in employment are dependent on opportunities in education, but enhancing education is not simply about equipping or reskilling a work force to underpin our manufacturing base. Enhancing the role of education is inextricably linked to a more embracing issue—the position of women in society. Overwhelming evidence shows that when education is widely available to women, average family size drops sharply and many women marry later, start families later and have better career structures. The evidence linking the lowly status of women to population explosion and acute poverty and under-developed economies is overwhelming.

The United Nations Population Fund statistics show clearly that there is a strong reverse correlation between the literacy rates of adult women and total fertility rates. I recognise that that is straying into an international perspective that is not within the scope of the debate or the framework of the motion, but there have been few

[Mr. Coe]

empirical studies of the effect of legislation on discrimination, and those that have been conducted are less than conclusive.

Mrs. Gillan: It may help my hon. Friend to feel more comfortable with the areas into which he is straying to know that it is International Women's Day.

Hon. Members: It was on Tuesday.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It is in the motion.

Mrs. Gillan: It was on Tuesday.

Mr. Coe: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend.

In the present climate of opinion, it seems reasonable to assume that, as the number of women acquitting themselves with distinction in high office and in other fields of activity continues to increase as it has in recent years, the prospects will improve for all women with ability. I do not believe that women either want or need positive discrimination. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] They are quite capable of succeeding on their own merits.

6.17 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): When the then Home Secretary, now Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, moved the Second Reading of the Sex Discrimination Bill in the House of Commons on 26 March 1975, one year short of 20 years ago, he said—

Mrs. Currie: Nineteen years ago.

Mrs. Michie: One year short of 20 years ago.

Lord Jenkins said:

"The unequal status of women in our society is a social evil of great antiquity. Its causes are complex and rooted deeply in tradition, custom and prejudice. Its effects create individual injustice and waste the potential talents of half our population at a time when more than ever before we need to mobilise the skills and abilities of all our citizens."—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1975; Vol. 889, c. 511.]

Much of that still pertains today.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, together with the Equal Opportunities Commission, sought to secure equality of opportunity, equal pay and equal status for men and women. In the 19 years since it was set up, the Equal Opportunities Commission can claim a number of achievements, including independent taxation for married women, recognition at law that sexual harrassment and pregnancy are sex discrimination, and so on.

One of the EOC's priorities—I agree with it—is a fair deal and equal treatment at work for part-timers. According to evidence submitted to the Select Committee on Employment by the Equal Opportunities Commission —I refer to the Committee's report of 7 July 1993—

"Research shows that at a number of points in the life-cycle, many women would prefer to work part-time in order to cope with caring responsibilities, and many women and some men continue to prefer part-time work for part of their working lives. Their dilemma is that, in order to do so, many will have to accept work which disadvantages them in comparison with full-time employees."

That is the point that we want to stress. Despite the House of Lords' ruling on redundancy and unfair dismissal rights, there is still a great deal to be done.

Ms Short: Does the hon. Lady agree that it is astonishing that the Secretary of State's speech included no reference to the Law Lords' ruling, and that the right hon. Gentleman said nothing at all about what he intends to do to embody that ruling in legislation?

Mrs. Michie: It is indeed astonishing. It was as though the right hon. Gentleman did not know about the ruling, or wanted to run away from it. Perhaps we shall get an answer from the Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): Does the hon. Lady think it astonishing also that the Secretary of State made no mention of the contribution to the economy that women make by way of their unpaid employment?

Mrs. Michie: We were all astonished by the Secretary of State's failure to mention a number of matters.

I should like to draw the attention of the House to one or two facts. Why, for example, in United Kingdom primary schools, 81 per cent. of whose teachers are women, are only 49 per cent. of heads female? In the case of my own country, Scotland—

Mrs. Fyfe *rose*—

Mrs. Michie: I give way to my compatriot.

Mrs. Fyfe: As the representative of another Scottish constituency, I thank the hon. Lady for giving way. The hon. Lady's figures are slightly wrong. In fact, 46 per cent. of secondary school teachers in Scotland are women, but only 3 per cent. are head teachers.

Mrs. Michie: I am grateful for those figures. I was referring to United Kingdom numbers.

In Scotland, women make up 45 per cent. of the work force, yet they are concentrated in a very narrow range of activities, and are absent from all but a handful of Scotland's top jobs. Why are there so few woman surgeons in the national health service, for example—only about 3.2 per cent.? Of approximately 16 cardiologists in Glasgow, only one is a woman.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Michie: Yes, but for the last time, as I must proceed.

Lady Olga Maitland: On the question of female consultant surgeons, does the hon. Lady agree that the situation will change in the future? Women applying for consultancies today started their medical training long ago, when there were far fewer in the profession and there was therefore a smaller number available for these jobs.

Mrs. Michie: I do not accept that. There has been an enormous improvement in the number of women going to university to study medicine. In fact, the proportion is now 50 per cent., and those people are qualifying. I know of women who try for consultant surgical jobs but cannot get them. If hon. Members will bear with me, I shall try to show why this is happening.

I believe that this pattern of employment prevails because of the inability in the health service, as in other areas of employment, to cater for women who have children and family commitments. Women who take time out for maternity leave lose their place on the training and promotion ladder. That is what happens in the case of positions for consultant surgeons. Female doctors often have to find their own locums to cover maternity and annual leave, and, with minimum staffing levels in many

hospitals now, there is a reluctance to pay for locum cover. This is happening more and more in the new trust hospitals, and it is very worrying for women.

Many female graduates in medicine opt for sessional work in, say, cytology screening, for day sessions in anaesthetics, or for general practice part-time work that does not involve on-call night duty. I am not denigrating those sections of the profession; I am simply saying that many women have to go into such areas although they would rather pursue another aspect of the medical world.

The situation in the legal profession is similar. In Scotland women now make up 30 per cent. of the total membership of the Law Society, compared with only 2 per cent. in 1957. That is a considerable improvement. In the past two years, approximately 55 per cent. of those admitted as solicitors were women. That is good. But only four of the 50 members of the council of the Law Society of Scotland are women. Of the 91 full-time sheriffs, only six are women. There are no female High Court judges, although, happily, there is one temporary—I do not know how long she will be temporary. There are only five female QCs out of approximately 75 practising seniors.

Until very recently, a female partner in a law firm who decided to have a family was out. She could not be a part-time partner. Fortunately, that is slowly changing. There is now such a thing as a part-time female partner in a law firm.

I have used those examples to reinforce the need for far greater job market flexibility for women, for part-time working with proper pay and for job sharing for both men and women in all kinds of work. Unless this matter is addressed, the economy in particular will be denied access to the vast range of intelligence, abilities and skills represented by the female work force. I am convinced that the country will end up with a stressed-out female population who try to juggle all their commitments in terms of family care, home care and jobs.

It was never thought that sex discrimination legislation would be the whole answer. It had to be accepted by all institutions, employers and trade unions, and, at the same time, there had to be a profound change in attitudes and actions. Of course there is room for the voluntary approach, which has been referred to, but, inevitably, that approach has its limitations.

As we have heard, the Government support initiatives such as Opportunity 2000, whose aim is to improve the position of women at work in the United Kingdom and to promote good practice among employers. I understand that 61 organisations are now members of Opportunity 2000, but they represent only a quarter of the work force. What about the rest? What about the vast majority of women who work, particularly in the service industries?

We need enlightened employment practices and women-friendly terms and conditions of service. The Government need to encourage the role of the Equal Opportunities Commission in promoting good practice among employers. To do that together with all its other tasks, it must be well resourced.

Although child care is not strictly part of the sex discrimination legislation, and may be more appropriate to a debate on family law, it is extremely important. Good employers, whether large or small, should offer employees who are due to return to work after maternity leave various types of help.

I commend some good employers for helping their employees, before they return to work, to find and choose child care that will best suit the circumstances of the mother and the child. They are helped to decide between a child minder, nanny or nursery; if it is to be a nursery, they help her to choose whether it should be a private, council-run or workplace nursery. The best companies send in someone with expert knowledge on what is available for the returner to work.

Everybody should be offered a short returning-to-work course that advises on balancing home commitments and work, and builds up a support network for working mothers. We all know that mothers have lost the support network of their families. The course should also identify strategies to make better use of mothers' time and, above all, help them to deal with feelings of guilt and anxiety, which often overwhelm a mother returning to work. She is returning to work because she either wants to or has to, and we should make it as easy as possible for her to do so.

Being a working mother can have positive benefits for a woman, as it gives her greater independence and access to adult stimulation, and she is often better company for her children and their father. She can also bring positive benefits to the workplace, where she shows an increased sense of responsibility, sensitivity and maturity. Many working mothers become good managers, good negotiators and good counsellors.

What can the Government do for the returning-to-work mother? First, they can ensure that good quality, affordable child care is available, including pre-school and after-school care. Without that, "equal opportunity" becomes a meaningless phrase. Affordability is a key component, because the average woman's earnings are still nearly 30 per cent. lower than the average male wage. I therefore endorse the Equal Opportunities Commission's call for a family policy to complement legislation on equal treatment.

In supporting this motion, I make a special plea for part-time workers, proper conditions, good child care and a new single statute to bring together the law, which is spread over a number of Acts of Parliament, statutory instruments and legal decisions. It is a nightmare. That would help employers and individuals to recognise and understand their rights and obligations.

6.33 pm

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): First, I congratulate my hon. Friends on the Opposition Benches on bringing the debate to the Floor of the House. I agree with them that it is long overdue and I am delighted that they managed to get the men in their party under control once and for all and got their own way by putting the debate forward. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] I see that hon. Ladies have a sprinkling of the boys with them to support the motion.

I found attractive the idea put forward by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) to recognise women's unpaid work. I have contributed to my household for many years without receiving a penny for it and the thought that I may get credit for my unpaid work warms my heart greatly. I am sure that it would also warm the heart of the Secretary of State who, sadly, has had to leave us, because it would, in one fell swoop, remove 644,000 people from the unemployment register as they would no longer be deemed unemployed.

[Mrs. Cheryl Gillan]

I found it hard to recognise the terms of reference within which the hon. Lady made her speech. Had we read it between the wars, it might have been relevant, but we have made a great deal of progress since those days.

Ms Eagle: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gillan: No, I shall not give way.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) was extremely selective in her opening speech between regulations that she wishes to see introduced from Europe and those that she wants kept out. I was watching the reactions on the Opposition Benches when the Secretary of State was discussing the provisions that allow women to work at night.

Several of our neighbours in the European Union may have proceedings started against them because they do not allow women to work at night. The hon. Lady appeared to agree with that; she was nodding, as were several other Opposition Members. I cannot believe that she would seek to fetter the freedom of choice of women to work in the evening. I think particularly of the wonderful ladies who look after us in the Tea Room, restaurants and bars in this place, who want that freedom to work in the evening.

Lady Olga Maitland: My hon. Friend touched on a most important point about the right of women to choose to work in the evenings and during the night, particularly if they are nurses. Does she agree that one reason why women find that attractive and helpful is that it is much easier for them to get child care cover at home, particularly if their husbands can help out?

Mrs. Gillan: That is an extremely helpful point. I have friends who positively want to work in the evening because they can leave their small children with their husbands whom they feel they can trust implicitly.

The whole framework of the debate shows that the Labour party has, once again, got the wrong end of the stick.

Ms Eagle *rose—*

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gillan: No, I am trying to make progress.

The way in which the motion is framed is extremely negative. It says:

"women . . . face discrimination in all aspects of their lives".

That is not true. It fails to recognise the great progress that we have made in this century, particularly in the past decade. It rehearses tired, worn-out policies and attitudes that should have been consigned to the rubbish bin of history a long time ago.

Nothing illustrates that better than a subject on which Opposition Members were strangely silent—the positive discrimination to get women into Parliament. Hon. Members may correct me if I am wrong, but resolution 417 reported in the Labour party's "Conference Arrangements Committee Report 1993"—only last year—said that in future there would be

"women only shortlists in 50 per cent. of the seats where a sitting Labour MP was not standing for re-election."

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): Can the hon. Lady explain why the Prime Minister saw to it that Conservative central office is imposing a requirement whereby 50 per cent. of Conservative candidates for the next election will be women?

Mrs. Gillan: I thank the hon. Lady for that useful intervention, which enables me to point out to Opposition Members that in your case it is a quota and in ours a target, and that we expect our women to get there on merit. What an insult to force all-women lists on 50 per cent. of the Labour-held seats at the next election. What they are really saying is that women are not good enough to do it on their own, that the little women need a helping hand. It is a helping hand which I do not need. Neither do the lady Members who sit on the Opposition Benches.

Would you like to be regarded as the token women on your Benches because you are there as part of some quota?

Madam Deputy Speaker: May I remind the hon. Lady that she should address the Chair?

Mrs. Gillan: I feel passionately about this, Madam Deputy Speaker, and am being carried away. I apologise and will try to remain in order.

Do they want to be considered—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Gillan: Yes, of course I will give way.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend recall that, when Labour Members voted against some of the women, it did not stop their leader putting them on the Front Bench?

Mrs. Gillan: I remember that very well. I think that it was called the "tea room rebellion" by the men. It strengthens my argument, and I thank my hon. Friend for that timely reminder of the goings-on in the Tea Room in the House.

Would Opposition Members like to be regarded as token women, because they are part of some quota? I do not think so. Neither Madam Speaker nor you, Madam Deputy Speaker, is in her position because you are part of some positive discrimination quota. You are there because you are the best people for the job. I am forced to admit, with some reluctance as I do not agree with quotas, that had you been part of a quota, it would have been extremely successful in both cases, but I do not think that it would have done anything for your self-esteem or for this place, because it would have been reflected in the behaviour of hon. Members who are very tough judges of the Chair's performance.

Not one woman hon. Member was elected because of positive discrimination.

Ms Eagle: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gillan: No, I am making progress.

They got here on merit. I am sure, however, that hon. Members, certainly on the Conservative Benches and perhaps on the Opposition Benches, will have a very different view of the women who enter Parliament as Labour Members after the next election. They will have been selected by methods outlined by the Labour party, and they will be the token women, forced on constituencies by reason of their sex.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gillan: No.

The Labour party is into tokenism. As I looked at the Order Paper today, to read the motion put down by the Opposition, I noticed that six hon. Members were supporting the motion. I glanced at the motions that had been prepared for the six Opposition days that we have so far had this year. The token woman, the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), was one of the six hon. Members supporting the motion on each of the other Opposition days. On two days, there were women's issues, and the list of supporters included another woman, making four men and two women, the maximum number of women until today. Today, equality has come over the Labour party in a rush. We have three girls and three boys proposing the motion—even numbers; extremely twee.

I just want to point out that there is no sex discrimination, positive or otherwise, on the Government side of the House. The Conservative party put down its amendment to the motion today under the names of its top people.

Mr. Heald: Will the hon. Gentleman—sorry, hon. Lady—give way? *[Interruption.]* I apologise to my hon. Friend. I wonder if I really should speak in this debate, after that. We hear all this bluster from the Opposition, criticising the Tories. Does my hon. Friend agree with me that, while it is all very well to mention the suffragettes, the Pankhursts were Tories?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The Pankhursts left the Liberal party when it refused to put women's suffrage into the 1884 Act. They joined the Conservatives and we got it through.

Ms Eagle *rose—*

Mrs. Gillan: I have given way enough, thank you. I thank my hon. Friends for those two very useful interventions.

Dr. Lynne Jones: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. If the hon. Lady says that there is no discrimination in the Conservative party, why has she allowed interventions from men on her own Benches, but only one intervention from women Members on the Opposition Benches?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order but an intervention.

Mrs. Fyfe: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Just to set the record straight, Sylvia Pankhurst was a socialist.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I hope that hon. Members will recognise what are points of order and what are not.

Mrs. Gillan: I gave way to one Opposition Member. Her intervention was totally inaccurate, so I felt that I would give way only to my hon. Friends who have proved very helpful to the speech that I am trying to make.

Let us look at the real, up-to-date picture of women. Discrimination in any area is intolerable, whether it is against men or women, or on grounds of colour, creed or disability. As we have grown in knowledge and broadened our education, we have come to realise that it has no place in a civilised society.

There are three keys to eradicating discrimination: education, example and effective legislation. The Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 provide the legislative framework. The Government watch carefully for ways in which they can improve the legislation, and will continue to do so. However, we must guard against over-zealous interpretation of regulations and legislation that may eventually work against women, particularly in the workplace.

I read with some pleasure an article in *The Times* of 9 March entitled:

"285,000 women to gain from change in maternity pay".

Excellent news, I thought. But my heart fell as I read that a spokesman for the Confederation of British Industry had condemned the measure, saying:

"This is a social cost and should not be transferred solely to the employer."

He added that some employers might be discouraged from taking on female employees.

It reminded me of the days when I used to work outside this place and take on employees. It would be different today if I were considering a man and woman of equal qualifications and status, because I would have to think about the on-costs to my business. Those on-costs would sow a seed of doubt in my mind. That consideration may be sufficient to prejudice women against getting the jobs they deserve and for which they are qualified.

Over-protectionism can work against the very group in society for which we are seeking parity. I know that the Government will guard against that. Time has moved on, and in many ways the real enemy is prejudice; that is what we need to fight.

In the past week, I have spoken to more than 100 women. Some are colleagues here, some are friends, some are officials and some are former workmates. In virtually every single case, they attested that, although 10, 15 or 20 years ago, there was discrimination against them in the workplace, they now feel that it is plain prejudice and preconceptions of which sex fits the job.

A private secretary in the civil service told me that some men still think that she is a shorthand typist. A woman doctor friend told me that she is often taken to be a nurse or a telephonist or receptionist in the casualty department. Strange though it may sound, I have suffered from prejudice and the preconceived idea that the role of a Member of Parliament has been traditionally male. Only the other day, a caller refused to talk to me and insisted on being put through to my boss, Mr. Gillan.

The difference between discrimination and prejudice is important and we already have good legislation to cover genuine cases of discrimination. We must remember, however, that discrimination can work both ways. In a recent case in the Northern Ireland High Court, McConomy *v.* Croft Inns Ltd., the plaintiff was made to leave a public house that stipulated smart and casual dress. The plaintiff was asked to leave because he was sporting a pair of earrings. The plaintiff was a man and the High Court found in his favour, and rightly so, because a woman wearing a pair of earrings would have been served. That was an example of discrimination working against men.

Cases of discrimination should not be trivial. In a recent case—Automotive Products *v.* Peake—an employer operated a rule that female employees could leave five minutes before the men and was taken to court by the men who said that it was not fair and discriminatory that they should be asked to work five minutes longer than the women. The employer said that it was a matter of stopping overcrowding when the workers were leaving the workplace. In the judgment, the Court of Appeal judge said:

[Mrs. Gillan]

"It was not discrimination for mankind to treat womankind with the courtesy and chivalry that we have been taught are right in society."

The law recognises the fundamental difference between discrimination and prejudice and, in this day and age, we must guard more against prejudice.

As a woman Member of Parliament, I am naturally concerned with women's issues, but not to the exclusion of all other issues. I find it strange that so far we have heard very little reference to, for example, the exploitation and degradation of women in pornography, for example, or to such issues as access to education and training, domestic violence, wrongful working practices, access to child care, women's choice over their own bodies and the safety of women. Many of those issues are of paramount importance, but in a motion that celebrates International Women's Day, the Opposition have chosen to highlight political differences and political issues without addressing some of the real issues that affect women in the United Kingdom today.

I certainly want to increase the number of women who move into the highest echelons of politics, business, industry science, sport—virtually every aspect of life—and, as I said, we need examples and role models. I see no reason why any of my women colleagues in the House cannot act as a role model for women who wish to become politicians. Nothing in this society impedes our progress. We have many role models.

The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) was interested only in singling out lawyers and medics as a touchstone for how successful women can be. That is a crying shame because it ignores many successful women in many walks of life. What about our British astronaut, Helen Sharman? What about our Queen—Elizabeth? What about Stella Rimington who runs MI5? What about Val Strachan, the chairman of the board of Customs and Excises? What about Barbara Mills, our Director of Public Prosecutions?

Let me name a few women who are successful despite the terrible picture painted by the Opposition. What about Anita Roddick of the Body Shop or Kathleen O'Donovan, who at 35 became financial director of BTR? What about Prue Leith, Mary Archer, and our hotelier Anouska Hempel? What about our television journalists? We should look at what Kate Adie has achieved. What about our pop singers such as Annie Lennox, our designers, such as Zandra Rhodes, our sportswomen—Sally Gunnell, Sharron Davies and the golfer Laura Davies? What about our lawyers, Rose Heilbron to name but one; our writers —Iris Murdoch, Ruth Rendell and Jilly Cooper—I could continue.

I recommend that Labour hon. Ladies look at the 1993 edition of "The Best of British Women". I do not recognise some of the archaic pictures that are being painted by the Opposition.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mrs. Gillan: I am coming to the end of my speech and I do not feel that Opposition Members have much to contribute.

All those women demonstrate, as do tens of thousands of others in all walks of life, that what women require—and what the Government give them—is equal opportunity.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that long list of distinguished women. I wonder whether perhaps she had forgotten probably the most successful female in this century in Britain, our noble Friend Baroness Thatcher.

Mrs. Gillan: How could anyone forget Baroness Thatcher? We may be dealing with a whole generation of voters who have never lived under the misery of a Labour Government, but a colleague of mine told me of his wife's visit to a local school. When the young children asked her who was Prime Minister and she replied, "John Major", they did not believe her because they did not realise that a man could be Prime Minister.

We must remember that positive discrimination in favour of women can also be discrimination against men. Women will and do compete on equal terms. We shall win on equal terms, and victory will be all the sweeter.

6.58 pm

Ms Janet Anderson (Rossendale and Darwen): Somewhere in that rather patronising speech, the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) denigrated the Labour party for positive policies to get more women selected. Is she aware that her right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) is not with us this evening, presumably because she is, at this moment, scurrying around the country to try to persuade Conservative associations to select women?

I now turn to what the Prime Minister said—

Mrs. Gillan: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Anderson: No. The hon. Lady did not give way, so I am not going to give way.

At the launch of Opportunity 2000, the Prime Minister said:

"At present, there is a social revolution going on in the role of women in our society . . . Not only is this revolution right socially, it is right economically . . . Yet even apart from the economics there is a yet stronger argument for accepting that the change in the role of women is fundamentally right."

He continued:

Why should"—

as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) reminded us—

"half our population go through life like a hobbled horse in a steeplechase? The answer is of course they shouldn't, and increasingly they won't . . . I want to see all women having the same opportunities as men."

What has happened to the Prime Minister's Opportunity 2000 initiative? He seems to have been strangely silent on the issue ever since. Could it be that the Prime Minister and Conservative Members are singularly embarrassed by their failure to make progress? After all, if we look at the Conservative Benches we see only 20 women out of a total of 330, while on the Labour Benches we are proud to have 36 women out of a total of 266. Surely if the Conservative party were serious about establishing equality of opportunity for women, it would have done more before now to get women into this place. We need no clearer illustration of the difficulties that it has faced than the fact that it has chosen a man to be its Minister for women.

As has already been mentioned, Parliament has placed a duty on the Equal Opportunities Commission to keep the law on sex discrimination under review and to propose amendments where needed. In 1988 and 1990, the commission published sets of proposals in respect of the sex discrimination and equal pay legislation, which sought,

in the light of experience of the workings of the legislation, to improve the framework, clarify rights and obligations, including those conferred by European law, and ensure proper and affordable access to justice for every individual in Britain.

The commission has said that it deeply regrets that the Government have, so far, rejected most of those proposals, and is pressing them to think again. It has challenged the legality of the present situation on equal pay for work of equal value, which is patently denying justice to individuals whose only means of challenging inequities is through legal processes, described by Lord Denning as being of a

"tortuosity and complexity beyond compare."

The commission also proposed to the Government a range of other measures, particularly in education and training, low pay, part-time work, maternity rights and pay, and pensions. The commission believes that without such measures, it will be impossible for the Government to achieve the aims set out by the Prime Minister at the launch of Opportunity 2000. But the Government have consistently and steadfastly refused to act on the commission's recommendations. The Government pay lip service to equality for women, but do nothing to attempt to change the male-dominated culture that still pervades our society.

It is often said that an Englishman's home is his castle. But it is nearly always a woman who maintains it. Increasingly frequently, women run homes without the support of a man. Women customarily make major decisions for the household and family, often managing the household budget. However, it is more commonly the man who decides which areas of decision making he will leave to the woman and, furthermore, he may deny her knowledge of what he earns and owns. In addition, too many women remain restricted in what they may do outside the home by their partner's wishes.

A woman is expected to smooth family relationships, provide social and emotional support as well as running the home. That role in the household can leave her with little or no time for herself. Fewer than eight households in 100 at any one time are made up of a breadwinner husband with a wife or partner who is at home full time looking after children. Yet women still take responsibility for, and carry out, the majority of household tasks. That is so whether or not they work outside the home. If other members of the household share the work, they tend to be seen as "helping".

In UK households in 1987, 93 per cent. of the cleaning, 90 per cent. of the child care and 77 per cent. of the preparation of evening meals was done by women. No study since has found a significant change in that situation. In 1988, *The Daily Telegraph* reported a Gallup survey which found that three out of five women with families craved more time for themselves. It is estimated that, on average, basic child care tasks take around 50 hours a week. Even when the mother had no other job, basic tasks occupied more hours than most men worked in their job.

Long working hours among men are a significant barrier for many to the more equal sharing of domestic responsibilities. Working hours in Britain are among the highest in Europe. Surveys consistently find more than 25 per cent. of men working more than 50 hours a week. It is not a surprise if they cannot do their fair share of the work at home.

It has been calculated that the average woman who takes time off work or works part time to care for her family, loses £224,000 in earnings over a lifetime. Women are financially penalised for taking primary responsibility for the care of families. Women in full-time paid work are more likely to describe themselves as tired or exhausted than the men who were mostly working longer hours but doing less domestic labour than the women. Where the wife does not have a job, husbands are more likely to dominate in decision making inside the home. Conversely, wives who are dominant in decision making are usually in paid employment.

Surveys of people caring for disabled or frail elderly people have found that, for every male carer, three women are doing a similar job. A study on Tyneside found that 25 per cent. of women over 25 years old have such caring responsibilities. One woman carer cited in a 1988 study got up at 5 am and did not finish her housework until 10 pm in an attempt to resolve the conflicting demands on her time.

The Secretary of State—I am sorry that he is not still with us—seemed to imply that, in terms of wages, women were doing rather well. I hope that his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will convey this message to him. Only the other week, a woman constituent of mine came to see me to inform me that she had been offered a job at £1 an hour.

Twenty years after the Equal Pay Act 1970 was passed, women still earn only 79 per cent. of men's full-time hourly earnings. They cluster in "women's jobs", often undervalued and underpaid. Women are also the bulk of part-time workers, with low pay and few opportunities for overtime or bonus earnings. Fragmentation of pay bargaining is likely to widen the gap, as the abolition of the remaining wages councils already has. Performance pay systems contain bias and leave a clouded picture that affects not only pay, but training and promotion chances.

Britain introduced regulations in 1984 to provide for equal pay for work of equal value. But their complexity and limitations, and the legal marathons that they have launched, have meant that they have had little or no effect on the inequality gap. The equal pay laws and administrative provisions are failing to provide justice and ensure the principle of equal pay.

I am sure that all my hon. Friends will agree with me that sex discrimination is neither lawful nor acceptable. It wastes talents and resources and denies human rights. Yet it persists in widely differing pay for women and men; fixed notions about male and female roles and capabilities; and the financial vulnerability and impoverished old age of millions of women forced to juggle paid work and family care. To close that inequality gap, we need a robust and sensible framework of law, a well-resourced Equal Opportunities Commission, to which the Government will listen, and a programme of Government-backed action to change attitudes and behaviour.

Perhaps as a start, the Under-Secretary will take away with her a request that I have received from the United Kingdom Federation of Business and Professional Women, which has two active clubs in any constituency. That organisation has asked me to convey its opinions to the Minister. It believes that the publication of gender-based statistics would be of real help in highlighting problems and raising awareness generally. Such statistics would show that typical state pensions, SERPS values and personal pensions are usually based on men's earnings, resulting in misleading figures. They

[Ms Anderson]

would bring the difference to the attention of both men and women, and I hope that the Minister will seriously consider their publication.

7.9 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): We have not had a debate of this kind for some time. I must be truthful, and say that I would not always wish to participate in such debates. Much of the ground has already been traversed, and I shall not go over it again; I will say, however, that I wholeheartedly support equal opportunities, as I would expect all hon. Members to do. We may, however, differ on what we consider to be equal opportunities, and on how they can be provided in future.

I see much more equal opportunity now than I did many years ago, when I was starting my career. There have been changes. That does not mean that we should not seek further changes, but the Government are clearly helping. Later in my speech, I shall issue one or two challenges myself.

According to the motion,

"women in Britain face discrimination in all aspects of their lives."

We could probably spend not part of a day but a whole week debating that, and still have a fair amount to say; we might not all agree at the end, but I am sure that we would have a very good discussion.

I remember discussing equal opportunities with Dr. Sally Kosgei, then high commissioner for Kenya. Many of us got to know her quite well: she was a wonderful black woman from one of the villages in north Kenya. She thought that equal opportunities were fine; she said that they had equal opportunities in her country, for she had risen from a poor farming family to become a high commissioner. She had been educated in Africa and America. One day she said to me, with a large grin on her face, "If you want equal opportunities, you will have to decide that men will have the babies. As long as women have to have the babies—if they want them—there will never be equal opportunities in all aspects of our lives."

That woman was right, in that women often wish to take time off to have children. It is a choice that we can all make —and do make, at some point in our lives. I sometimes find it difficult to understand why many members of our younger generation want everything at once, which is not always as easy as it may seem. I do not think that any amount of legislation could ensure that younger women, coming along in their professions, can have the top job as well as a family—and perhaps even give time to a husband.

I acknowledge that some women choose not to do all that at the same time, but to concentrate solely on their careers; it is sometimes felt that they have an unfair advantage over those who give up work to have a family.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): The hon. Lady has suggested that young women seem to want it all. An increasing number of cases have been cited of women who deliberately plan their first pregnancies much later in life to accommodate their careers. Society's response generally is abhorrence of that choice: enormous pressure is still being exerted on women to have children in what were formerly regarded as their child-bearing years. I take the hon. Lady's point, but much more than the biological processes needs to be changed.

Mrs. Peacock: I hear what the hon. Lady says, but I believe that people choose to have children at different stages. Some still choose to have families when they are very young, while others choose to build up their careers before starting a family. I do not think that many of us would criticise those who want to wait until later in life, when they may find it easier to adapt to a full-time career. As I have said, we all have the opportunity to make that choice.

The hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) mentioned the United Kingdom Federation of Business and Professional Women. I pay tribute to that organisation, which has worked assiduously for women's equality since the early 1930s—not only in encouraging Governments to act, but in encouraging younger people. I have been a member for 30 years, during which I have admired many other members who have played leading roles.

Next month, I shall be a judge in the organisation's national public speaking competition, whose finals will be held in Brighton. The organisation arranges heats throughout the country, encouraging schoolgirls to participate. I consider it a very good project: it gives confidence to many young people. Having judged heats before, I know that many young girls are much more confident as a result, and have many more opportunities.

The United Kingdom needs equal opportunities—and it needs women as well. We make up more than 50 per cent. of the population, and I consider it vital to harness our talents. That, indeed, will harness all society's talents, while allowing individuals to fulfil their potential.

Ms Eagle: Does the hon. Lady agree that there is still a long way to go? Four per cent. of the judiciary are women; 3 per cent. of university professors are women; 4 per cent. of the current Government are women. A very low percentage of women seem to be rising to the top of their professions.

Mrs. Peacock: I shall come to that point shortly.

The public appointments unit records that, in 1993, women took 40 per cent. of all new appointments: that is a great improvement. My right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold)—who has been mentioned, but is not present this evening—is taking a great interest in encouraging women to stand for Parliament, and in recent years has recommended an increasing number of capable women to the public appointments unit. I welcome that.

Since 1979, the number of women in higher education has risen by 100,000. I am sure that we all wish that the figure were greater, but it is increasing. Since the 1992 general election, 40 per cent. of those selected for the Conservative candidates list have been women—and that has happened without any need for quotas. Between 1987 and 1991, the proportion of women in practice at the Bar rose by 8 per cent.; more and more women are taking law degrees, and going straight through to the Bar. In 1983-84, there were 5,000 female solicitors; now there are more than 14,000—20 per cent. of the total.

No party political issue is involved, but I discovered within a short time of arriving here that this place—like many others—ticks on the old boys' network. I think that we need an old girls' network. Some of us began to set up such a network some time ago. When John Timpson introduced me on a radio programme as the Member of

Parliament with a subversive network of women in the House of Commons, I took it as a compliment—although I am not sure that he meant it as one.

Most of the women with whom I come into contact —women of all ages—want equality of opportunity: there is no doubt about that. Most, however, do not want quotas. Women supporters of the Conservative party and of the other political parties do not want more women candidate short lists. They do not want a Ministry for women.

Ms Short: We have got one.

Mrs. Peacock: If we had a Ministry and a Minister for women, everything would go to that one Department at the end of a corridor and would get lost. Every Minister and Ministry should take into account women's needs. Of course it is right to have a lead Minister and a lead Department, but we should not have a Department with responsibility solely for women, which would do much more harm than good. I would not want to be shunted to the end of a corridor to discuss what I want. I would want to be in the midst of things and to hear what is going on in each Department. We would lose that capability if we had a special Ministry.

Women want to be taken seriously. If quotas and places were saved for us on committees or groups, the finger would be pointed at us, and someone would say, "We don't need to take notice of you. You're only here because we saved you a space." We would lose much of the credibilty that we have worked for many years to gain. I do not want that to happen.

A serious challenge faces my hon. Friend the Minister and the Government. Fifty per cent. of medical students are female, but only 15 per cent. of consultants are women, so there is need for improvement. Although 46 per cent. of students at universities and polytechnics are female, as the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) said, only 3 per cent. are principal lecturers or professors. Only 5 per cent. of circuit judges are women, and we certainly need improvements in that sector. Only 8 per cent. of the 144,000 managers of large companies are women.

Those figures represent our challenge for the future. I do not believe that we or the Government will meet that challenge by setting quotas. Women want to gain those jobs on merit, not through positive discrimination. If there were positive discrimination, we would not be taken seriously and it would undermine much of the work that has been done in Parliament and throughout the country in the past 20 to 30 years.

7.21 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): It is with some trepidation that I rise to speak as the token Opposition male. I shall not follow the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) in her arguments, although her speech was thoughtful and dealt with the issues—unlike that of the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan), which was trivial, petty and condescending. If she came here on merit, then by God the Tory party must be desperately short of good candidates.

Equally, I do not want to follow some of my hon. Friends, who rightly concentrated on discrimination against women in employment. Women are discriminated against in other sectors of life. I want to pick up from the comments of the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) about women's leisure activities and women in sport.

The hon. Member started his speech by quoting from a Dutch newspaper that in 1948 described the athlete Fanny Blankers Koen as a housewife. He said that we have moved on some way since then. He obviously did not see "The Club," a Channel 4 programme about a golf club in the "Cutting Edge" series. When asked why women were not allowed to play at 9 o'clock in the morning, a member of that club said that they were all at home making the beds and clearing up the breakfast dishes. How could they play at 9 o'clock in the morning, he asked.

Many women face great discrimination in sport. It starts at the top. For the good of the nation's health, women are actively encouraged to take part in physical activity. Television provides the biggest encouragement to people to take part in sport, because, after they watch it on television, they want to take part.

When do we see women taking part in sports on television? There are hours of coverage of men playing golf, bowls and tennis, but the women who take part in those sports are rarely seen, so there is no encouragement for women to take them up. As has already been mentioned, the men who win Wimbledon get paid more than the women who win it. Poor old Sally Gunnell is paid less than Linford Christie when she takes part in the same meeting.

There is also discrimination against women in sport at lower levels. The hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne referred to the fact that his wife is a top three-day eventer. That is one of the few sports where women compete equally with men and are not discriminated against. His wife is extremely lucky.

My wife is a good golfer, athough she is not of an international standard. Last October, she played two rounds with a fellow female member of her golf club and qualified to take part in the Lady Golf Union's centenary two-ball foursome tournament on the old course at St. Andrew's. Many hon. Members will have seen the old course, with its magnificent Victorian building by the 18th green. That building houses the headquarters of the Royal and Ancient golf club, the managing organisation for golf in Britain and almost throughout the world.

My wife and her golfing partner arrived with 250 women from all over the United Kingdom to take part in that prestigious golf tournament. For the practice round, they had to get changed in their cars in the car park, and they had to use public toilets because no women are allowed in the clubhouse of the Royal and Ancient golf course.

Ms Eagle: Does my hon. Friend agree that a similar position exists in cricket? This year, the British women's cricket team enjoyed the spectacular success of winning the world cup, but they had to be presented with the trophy on the pitch, because women are not allowed in the long room at Lord's.

Mr. Maxton: I know that my hon. Friend is a good cricketer. Prejudice also exists in that sport.

Some time ago, I raised the issue of discrimination against women in golf. I was accosted by a male member of a golf club in my constituency. He said, "But we don't discriminate against women in our club." I said, "You are quite right. You don't have any women members." That

[Mr. Maxton]

golf club is in the middle of Glasgow and takes up an enormous amount of space for leisure activity, but its members refuse to allow women members. They do not even allow women into their clubhouse.

Even if they are members, many women are discriminated against because they are not allowed to become full members or to take a full part in running a club. They feel that they are discriminated against at all levels.

The annual general meeting of my wife's golf club decided to place an extra levy on all members except juniors—on top of their subscription—to pay for a new roof for the men's changing room. The women have to pay a levy towards the cost, proportionate to their subscription.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Quite right.

Mr. Maxton: The hon. Gentleman may say that that is right, but those women did not have a vote at the AGM when it was decided that a levy should be imposed on them. Does he still believe that it is right that such discrimination should take place? Of course it should not. There is still widespread discrimination against women in sport, and it could and should be stopped.

It may be too draconian to decide at this stage that the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 should be extended to cover leisure activities, but the Government and the Sports Councils should make it clear that no grants, and certainly no money from the national lottery, will be given to any club or sport that discriminates on the grounds of gender, whether against its members or by refusing to have women as members in the first place.

Local authorities should certainly consider carefully whether to give rates relief to sports clubs that practise discrimination and perhaps licensing courts should consider whether they are prepared to grant a licence to a club that practises discrimination by refusing to accept women members, or by refusing to allow women to drink there.

Those are some actions which could be taken to solve the problem of discrimination, and I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), will give a sympathetic hearing to what I have said.

7.30 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): In case my later remarks should somehow be misinterpreted, may I first say that I appreciate the commitment of the hon. Lady for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) and the enormous amount of work that she has put in to help the cause of women. I know that she is sincere and has been working in this area for a long time. In many ways, we share common goals, but we differ in the means by which we want to achieve the fairest and best possible deal for women.

I admit that there has been prejudice over the centuries and even nowadays, but, in attempting to right a wrong, there is always an enormous danger of lurching so far in the other direction that one make things worse. The Conservatives are trying to keep common sense and a sense of proportion to the fore. Having listened hard and long to the debate, and having read many articles and features about the Labour party's position and its attitude towards women, I must take exception to the way in which it lectures us about the promotion of equal opportunities. I take particular exception to its attempts to remedy the problem by what I would call artificial social engineering.

Positive discrimination is very degrading to women. I do not understand how Labour's proposals could possibly help us. The Labour party proposes a mountain of regulations and controls which would make it almost impossible for an employer to be able to afford to take on more women, let alone keep those whom he already employs. Its call for the minimum wage and its support for the European Community's social chapter would mean fewer jobs available to women, not more. How can that possibly be regarded as a fair deal?

I see things differently and more clearly. I believe that there is a very strong socialist streak in the so-called reasonableness of the Labour party. That socialist streak is an attempt to control our lives rather than allow us women to make our own decisions. We should be carefully examining Labour's proposals and seeking examples of what it is doing so that we can make our own judgment.

I was a little surprised that the hon. Member for Ladywood omitted to mention a vote at the Labour party's annual conference last year in which more than 80 per cent. decided to accept women's quotas. In short, it was decided:

"This conference notes the Party's commitment to achieving 40 per cent. of women as MPs for Labour by 1999 or two elections time".

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) for drawing that to the House's attention, but the fact that she did so does not mean that I should not reinforce her remarks.

It is extraordinary that the Labour party believes that the only realistic way of achieving its aims is to implement the women-only shortlist in 50 per cent. of seats where a sitting Labour Member of Parliament is not standing for re-election. Not surprisingly, the move has been scorned by some Labour Members. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was reported in the *Evening Standard* of 23 November as saying that the plan was

"wrong in principle and probably unworkable in practice".

How right he is.

Mrs. Currie: Should not my hon. Friend be a little more charitable to the Labour party? Derbyshire has 10 constituencies, six of which are held by the Conservatives. However, there are three women Members of Parliament —two are Tories and one is a Labour Member. In other words, 30 per cent. of the seats there are held by women without the operation of quotas. I offer my hon. Friend the contrast with Scotland, where the majority of seats are held by the Labour party—indeed, only a handful are not—but the number of women Labour Members is minuscule.

Lady Olga Maitland: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It shows that the Conservative party believes in women progressing on merit alone and, my goodness, that is what they do.

Ms Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): As Scotland has been mentioned, will the hon. Lady explain why there is no Conservative woman Member of Parliament there? Might I suggest that it is either because women in Scotland have more sense than to join the Conservative party, or because the Conservative party operates an all-male shortlist in Scotland?

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Lady completely misses the point. The women in the Conservative party in Scotland would be insulted if they were artificially promoted to a seat because of their sex—the Conservative party prizes merit.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill) *rose—*

Lady Olga Maitland: I am sorry, but I cannot give way again; I have already done so a couple of times.

Ann Carlton, the co-convener of "Labour Supporters for Real Equality", was quoted in *Tribune* no less on 17 November last year as saying:

"Such measures are totally irrelevant to the abolition of the gender gap."

Indeed, Labour Back Benchers have shown little enthusiasm for the obligation to vote for the four women in the shadow Cabinet elections.

I shall tell a wee story almost out of school. I overheard a conversation between two male Labour Members. The first said robustly, "I think it is a load of nonsense. I have never heard such rubbish." The second said, "Well, I don't know; we have to be very careful about upsetting our sisters." One should never underestimate a man—indeed, one should never underestimate a woman—but the result was the Tea Room revolt.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: They got fewer women, not more.

Lady Olga Maitland: As my hon. Friend rightly says, the men got their own back and it became an electoral farce. Indeed, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was reported in the *Daily Mail* on 21 October as saying:

"There was resentment among some MPs who didn't want to be told who they should vote for in a sexual way."

Labour Members spread their votes as widely as possible and to the most unlikely women candidates, with the result that has already been outlined more than once this evening. We should re-emphasise the point because it reveals the triviality of the Labour party. Only two of the required four women collected sufficient votes and even the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) was voted off.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: She was still put on the Front Bench.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge) *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Lady Olga Maitland: I do not choose to give way to the hon. Member. It was interesting that *The Times* headed its leader column with the words "nonsensical election". When the Thunderer delivers an opinion such as that, perhaps it has a point. The affair did nothing to enhance the Labour party's standing, as *The Guardian* made clear on 26 October. After all, it trumpets the cause of the Opposition, not us, so Opposition Members should take heed. The article said:

"This week's Shadow Cabinet election results . . . tells us a lot of things about the state of the Labour Party—and all of them are bad. The Labour Party aspires to govern the country. But these were not the results of a serious Party . . . Labour goes about the task like a natural party of opposition."

Mrs. Anne Campbell *rose—*

Lady Olga Maitland: I think that I shall have to give way, because the dear lady is getting very upset.

Mrs. Campbell: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way at last. Is she aware that, in the previous shadow Cabinet elections, there were far more votes for women than ever before? *{Interruption.}* The average number of votes cast for women candidates was five per person instead of the compulsory four. Is not that an indication that Labour is voting for women as many candidates came near the top of the list—quite the reverse of what is happening in the Conservative party, where there are so few female Members of Parliament?

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Lady made a good attempt to try to portray that disastrous position. The truth was that the men cooked their goose for them.

I was also somewhat surprised that the hon. Member for Ladywood did not mention her party's commitment to the proposal for a women's ministry with full representation in the Cabinet. My hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) raised the matter first this evening.

Ms Short: I am sorry. The hon. Lady is being polite in the way in which she is rude, at least in relation to me. She was not listening. I mentioned the ministry clearly. I said that the existing arrangements are a product of Jo Richardson's work. We have been watching it closely and we shall build on it when we take power.

Lady Olga Maitland: I stand corrected if that was what the hon. Lady was trying to say. It was not at all clear. The brief for the so-called women's ministry, which seems to be designed to take on every male bastion in the establishment, will not do well for women and probably rebound badly. For a start, I do not think that women want to be put into a ghetto and I certainly do not think that we want to be marginalised. We see ourselves as members of mainstream society and we shall remain there.

In short, it should be recognised that, try as it may, the Labour party will always fail to attract the female vote. It certainly did at the previous election, when it secured only 34 per cent. of the female vote, compared with 37 per cent. of the male vote. The women went elsewhere, largely to the Conservative party. In a misconceived attempt to rectify matters, the Labour party has backed positive discrimination and special treatment for women, which is falling on deaf ears. They almost sound like desperate measures to try to cling on to a disastrous situation.

Labour Members are concerned about part-time workers as if they are trying to put across the impression that, if one works part time, it is somehow degrading, wrong or insulting. If one works part time, one inevitably receives less salary at the end of the week than if one works full time. The women who work part time do so entirely of their own free choice. They choose to do it so as to fit in with their family commitments and many of them do it in the children's early years when they cannot work full time. It is insulting to suggest somehow that they have become second-class citizens—far from it. If that was the case, why has the number of part-time workers escalated beyond all measure in the past decade?

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) referred to unpaid workers and implied that somehow it was insulting to be working in a voluntary sector. The wonderful charitable work that men and women have done has been enormously appreciated. The role of women in the charitable sector should never be undermined and should never be in any way regarded as derogatory to their

[Lady Olga Maitland]

status. Those women would be insulted to think that, if they were raising money for Cancer Relief or Oxfam, they would need to be paid to do it.

I am also absolutely astonished that the hon. Lady should suggest that housewives should be paid for looking after their families. She is probably referring to the "Wages for Housework" campaign. It strikes me that any woman wants to look after her family for all the hours that God sends. That means getting up in the middle of night, once, twice, three or four times. She does it out of the love for her family. The reward that I get from my family is their support and my sense of well-being means that we all become a much more united family. The mother who refuses to comply with her duties would be a rare animal. I do not think that it happens. It is the way we are made. It goes back to the real essence of "vive la difference". We cannot be changed.

We are perfectly capable, thank you, of making our own way. We only ask that we are judged on our own merits and that we have a fair chance. The ideals of Emmeline Pankhurst, who campaigned vigorously for the vote, have not been upheld by what I call the angry feminist brigade. The difficulty is that the women of that brigade have clouded the real issues. Emmeline Pankhurst would turn in her grave if she could see the way in which they have brought the issue of sexism into the whole subject and their personal style of sexuality into the workplace, which has become offensive.

We want straightforward, down to earth common sense and we want to get on with it. I am grateful for the practical approaches of the Government over the years to facilitate that chance. As a result of their commitment, a higher proportion of women work in Britain than in any other country in the European Community apart from Denmark. It is interesting that women work in Britain because the working community is available to provide the work. We are moving out of recession and there will be more opportunities for everyone.

There are certainly plenty of achievements of which to be proud. In the past decade, between 1983 and 1992, there was an 11 per cent. increase in the female work force in full-time employment and a 29 per cent. increase in those choosing to work part time. In all, as the Secretary of State pointed out, 46 per cent. of the work force are now women. The greatest shift has been in the number of self-employed women, which has doubled to one woman in four.

The best barometer of progress is in my constituency. Angry feminism has never entered their heads, but women play a key role in our society. Not one has ever mentioned to me that she has been a victim of sex discrimination. They all reflect the progress that has been greatly helped by the Government's down-to-earth, practical approaches. [*Laughter.*] Let me give some examples. [*Laughter.*] It is easy for the Opposition to chatter and jeer, but it may be worth while addressing what we have managed to accomplish.

The chief executive of our council is a woman. There are women editors of all the local newspapers. There are women-only GP practices. As has already been pointed out, women now make up more than half the number of medical students. I accept that the number of women consultants is not yet nearly high enough, but bearing in mind the fact that half the medical student population are now women I have no doubt that they will take their rightful place at the consultancy level once they have worked their way through the system.

The women head teachers in my constituency are of the highest calibre. Their achievements in their schools are interesting, too. More girls than boys have passed their A-levels and in general girls achieve better results than boys at GCSE. The number of lawyers in Sutton reflects the rapidly growing proportion of women solicitors and women at the Bar. Women now constitute at least one third of the profession.

Women in business have made a particular mark in Sutton. Indeed, in the past couple of years they have been slightly more successful than men in sustaining progress after starting up new companies. The Sutton Enterprise Agency tells me that that is because they are natural housekeepers and well disciplined. After handling a domestic budget with caution, women adapt well to handling a business budget without over-committing themselves. If they have one weakness, it is more to do with their initial lack of self-confidence than with discrimination by others.

Sutton did not need the Labour party to tell it how to select a woman Member of Parliament. I was chosen by an association that genuinely had no strong feelings on the subject—so much so that one third of the candidates that it chose to interview in the first instance were women. There is only one job still outstanding in Sutton and I hear that that lack may soon be remedied when we get a woman chief of police.

As something of a sideline to my speech, I pay a special tribute to the role of women in the police force, not only at WPC level, where women's contribution has been very professional, but as they work their way up through the system. The women assistant chief constables whom I have met have been most impressive.

There is only one development about which I must admit to a touch of regret, and that is the creation of women priests. We shall have our fair share of them in Sutton, but I object on religious grounds, not on grounds of equal opportunity, to their elevation to the priesthood.

If anything, the debate should be retitled "In Praise of Women's Progress". We should not allow ourselves to become complacent about what we have achieved. I believe that I have benefited enormously from the facilities that were put into my path when I was building my career. When I started in Fleet street 25 years ago, women made up only 10 per cent. of the work force on the *Sunday Express*. In those days the attitude was, "Oh, she can work in the fashion department, or the women's pages." Only because I had worked for a hard news agency could I manage to persuade people that I wanted to work in other areas.

To tell an anecdote slightly against myself, there was once severe competition for a job as head of department. Having been given that post, I turned up to work to find a man seated at my desk opening my letters, dictating to my secretary and using my telephone. I said, "I hope that you'll step into my grave as quickly as you've stepped into my shoes." He said, "I have a right to be here; you are only a housewife."

Ms Short: What happened next?

Lady Olga Maitland: I won; I tipped him out. By the end of the week he was gone.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Without a quota.

Lady Olga Maitland: Yes, without a quota.

Women in Fleet street have now well and truly made their mark. Now we find many women in all the top positions, whether as news editors or even as editors of newspapers. Eve Pollard now edits the *Sunday Express*, where I used to work, and I rejoice in her success.

We must examine the changes in our society and ask why they have come about. They have happened not only because of better education, and the fact that women are going into further and higher education, but because women now have higher aspirations. They will not settle for less. Moreover, society is more sympathetic to the idea that women can combine families with careers—something that our grandmothers could never do.

On the whole, I believe that the reason why women are so popular and successful in the workplace is their excellent track record. They are reliable; they work hard; they do not drink heavily; they manage their domestic lives efficiently; they do not build up the sort of criminal records that men do, or become involved in many squalid business deals. It is not surprising that women are in demand.

We must keep a sense of proportion about what we seek to achieve. We should not be in any way complacent. I should be grossly insulted if I were employed in any capacity because of positive discrimination. I believe that such a move would rebound disastrously on us all. However, there is one factor to which we must pay attention—child care provision.

I know what that involves, because I have three children, I have been a working mother and I have had to worry about them. I was fortunate, because having worked my way through Fleet street, I had what was described as an executive salary and could pay for my own child care, with someone resident in my home. But if one happens to be a woman who does not command such a salary—a teacher or a receptionist—

Ms Short: A cleaner.

Lady Olga Maitland: Yes, a full-time cleaner, or whatever—we should look seriously at the best ways to help to increase child care provision.

Ms Short: Good.

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Lady should not get too excited. She thinks that I shall ignore all the initiatives that the Government have taken so far. I shall not. I welcome the Government's achievements in that regard. I welcome the fact that they have been imaginative and have an excellent record in encouraging pre-school provision, so that 90 per cent. of all three to four-year-olds take part in some form of group activity with their peer group. No one can deny that there are more day nurseries and more child minders. There is tax relief for employers' nurseries, and the Budget introduced a child care allowance, beginning in October, worth £28 a week to people on family credit.

The National Council for One Parent Families was reported in *The Daily Telegraph* on 11 December as describing that allowance as

"a step in the right direction".

The measure will help 150,000 families and it is specifically aimed at encouraging single mothers to go to work and to move away from total dependence on state benefits.

I approve of another imaginative scheme—the out-of-school child care grant, which will help 50,000 children to have somewhere to go after school hours.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The Duchy fund in Lancashire gives assistance to a kids club to do precisely that—to provide out-of-hours care for children.

Lady Olga Maitland: Where Lancashire leads, the world follows. That is excellent news.

Nevertheless, we have some way to go and child care is an issue that I wish to watch carefully. I shall watch in particular the cost of child minders, because I have a feeling that they are operating something of a scam. I cannot understand how they can charge such high fees for taking care of a toddler. Indeed, their charges put them out of range of women who cannot easily afford them. What I would us like to do—it may not be possible yet, but I would like to consider it—is look at other ways of providing child care, for example, with nursery vouchers. Indeed, why cannot we have tax relief? It has been talked about for some time, but the time has come to look at this matter more seriously.

In conclusion, I welcome the Government's commitment to help women without being patronising. No one is more supportive than the Prime Minister. Ironically, he has done more to help women than his predecessor who, as we all know, was the first woman Prime Minister—Baroness Thatcher. The Prime Minister has shown his concern in this area by promoting more women to top jobs, be it in the Cabinet or his personal office. Indeed, he gave an enormous boost to the public appointments unit by appointing more women to public bodies. Our concern is to maintain the dignity of women and give them the very best opportunity to use their undoubted talents.

8 pm

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): The debate has shown the Conservative party at its worst. The hon. Members for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) and for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) illustrated something very interesting. As 22 hon. Members wished to speak in the debate, we were all asked to keep our speeches short. However, the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam bored on for 29 minutes. That is the height of selfishness in a debate where so many hon. Members want to speak, bearing in mind that this is the first debate on sex discrimination in the House since 1975.

As the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) said, the Second Reading of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 was 19 years ago next week. That debate and today's debate were initiated by the Labour party. The degree to which the Conservative party is embarrassed by that is shown by the fact that we have more women Members in our party than all the other parties put together. The Tory party busily reassembled its women Members to stick a few behind the Front Bench today because they have such a shortage of women Members and they are embarrassed.

In 15 years of Conservative Government, there has not been a single half-day committed to debating sex discrimination. Tory Members are being asked to support a Government amendment which says that women in Britain now enjoy exceptionally wide and increasing opportunities, and asks the Government to continue to pursue the policies that have made that possible.

[Ms Jean Corston]

That is spitting in the wind because the United Kingdom Government have been referred to the European Court of Justice on issues of women's equality more often than any other European Union Government. For example, they have been referred on pension age, retirement age, equal pay for work of equal value, invalidity pensions and housing benefits. Last week, the Law Lords ruled that part-time workers, almost all of whom are women, are discriminated against by the Tory amendments to the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, which weakened and eroded women's rights on matters such as unfair dismissal and redundancy.

The Government have constantly stressed the burdens on employers of treating women equally. It is interesting that they never tell us about the employers who do not agree with them. In the *Financial Times* of 4 March, the operations director of one company that had restructured its work force to increase the number of part-time workers to respond to daily fluctuations in customers' demands is quoting as saying:

"'When we took this strategic decision it did not even enter our considerations that employing people part-time would make it easier to dismiss them. Our whole objective was to produce the goods that our customers wanted at the right time. As to increased potential costs—we are not looking to get rid of people.'"

Despite 24 years of equal pay legislation, the United Kingdom is at the bottom of the league, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) said. When we look at women's earnings as a percentage of men's earnings—this covers all women; it is not only professional women whose salaries may be as high as 80 or 100 per cent. of men's salaries, as is the case with Members of Parliament and if it is good enough for us, it should be good enough for everyone else—we find that in the United Kingdom, women's pay as a percentage of men's overall pay was 67.1 per cent. in 1991. In Denmark, it was 84.7 per cent; in France, it was 80 per cent; and in Greece, it was 75.8 per cent. That is what the Government are boasting about.

We have seen the Government presiding over and encouraging the casualisation of the work force and job insecurity. They abolished the wages councils which were the last protection for hundreds of thousands of women working in low-paid jobs where it was difficult for them to be organised. We have now seen the sinister emergence of things called zero-hours contracts and key-time contracts which are offered to women, especially those in hotels and catering, and shops. A key-time contract guarantees some work but not regular hours. A zero-hours contract does not guarantee any hours at all.

Employers who provide zero-hours contracts provide no commitment to employees to provide any work. Equally, employees do not commit themselves to work any hours at all. They are not contracted to work any hours at all. They are expected to be available for work at short notice, but they are not contracted so to be. Therefore, they must be available for work all the time, but they have no guarantee of work at any time. The Government boast about that.

By 1983, it was clear that the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Equal Pay Act 1970 needed consolidation and strengthening. Jo Richardson, a friend of Labour Members and someone whom we miss very much—she would have been in the House 20 years a few days ago—introduced the Sex Equality Bill on 9 December 1983. That Bill was opposed by the Government. It is to her great credit that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) supported Jo Richardson's Bill.

That Bill recognised that the legislation needed consolidation. Jo Richardson proposed definitions of discrimination, including one that encompassed sexual harassment and pregnancy. She referred to the necessity for enforcement provisions in the Bill to include a procedure for assessing claims for equal work of equal value, and introduced the power to refer discriminatory or indirectly discriminatory collective agreements to the central arbitration committee. She said:

"People's attitudes have changed. We feel that the time has come to move on and make the legislation better than it was. Groups of people and individuals have become more frustrated at what they see to be an unfair and unwarranted limitation on their rights as individuals, and the continuing domination by men, confirming the traditionally accepted role of women as dependants and the inferior sex."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1983; Vol. 50, c. 581.]

That Bill was not supported by the Conservative Government and, as a private Member's Bill, it fell.

The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam and other hon. Members said that quotas are unnecessary. That has been the approach of several hon. Members, especially the Member who is probably the most senior of us all—if one likes, the first among equals. However, Barbara Castle who is much revered by Labour Members takes a different view. Last year, she wrote an article in a Sunday paper in which she said that throughout most of her political life she had been against quotas because she did not need any help. However, the older she got, the more she realised that that was an extraordinarily self-centred and selfish view, and she had received a lot of help to get in the House, as did many of us. She cited the case of one of her secretaries who, every time selections for a general election came around, tried to be selected to get in the House but who failed for years. That secretary was eventually elected in 1969, and is now the Speaker of the House. If Barbara Castle thinks that the experience of her secretary persuaded her to argue for quotas, it must be a convincing argument.

I did some research into sex discrimination at work in 1989. I found that women in middle management consistently came up against what could be called a glass ceiling, while other women were condemned to a life of low-grade, low-status jobs.

Only yesterday, the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham, who is no longer in her place, and I were part of a group of hon. Members who visited Holloway women's prison, which has a record number of 479 inmates. I asked for the proportions of men and women who were working at Holloway. I was told that there were 226 people in the lower grades of staff, 90 per cent. of whom were women. I was also told that there were 10 governor grade jobs in Holloway, only one of which was held by a woman. That says it all.

We have heard much about women's opportunities and child care, and the way in which women ought to be playing a part in the work force. However, Government policies place women in what I can only describe as a kind of guilt. If a woman is not working and has children, she feels guilty because the Government have eroded the concept of the family wage and driven down wages. She feels that she ought to be working, and that happened to me when my children were small and I wanted to improve my education. I did not have an opportunity to go out to work.

If a woman does work, she is made to feel guilty and told that she should be at home. There is no way for a woman to square that circle.

There is also the question of the skills that women acquire while bringing up a family. Women learn conflict resolution, dispute avoidance, time management and budgeting—all things which organisations such as Lloyd's bank spend a fortune training men to learn. Yet when women do get jobs, they are condemned to low-grade, low-status jobs. The attributes of women ought to be recognised.

We want legislation that gives part-time workers equal employment rights to full-time workers, strengthens the Equal Pay Act 1970, speeds up and simplifies equal value places, restores pay protection through wages councils, gives statutory parental leave, extends maternity leave to 18 weeks and ensures that all children have access to a nursery from the age of three. Above all, we want legislation that reforms the state pension system, because far too many women in this country are poor pensioners.

People come to my surgery who cannot afford a pair of shows, and no hon. Member should be proud of that. Those people have each week the kind of money that most Conservatives would spend on an evening out.

An old Chinese proverb says that women hold up half the sky. That is at the very least true, and it is a pity that the Government have done nothing to recognise that.

8.15 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I have listened with great interest to the speeches of hon. Members of all parties, and I hope that the House will bear with me if I depart slightly from what has gone before.

Many of the major issues of dispute between the parties have been trotted out for display on the specific issue of sexual discrimination, and I do not intend to go back over them. Suffice it to say that I think we sometimes make greater issue about this matter than we need to.

The reality is that there has been a natural progression during the past 30 to 40 years. There has been greater freedom for women in the workplace, and much of that has been brought about without Government legislation.

There has been a deep change in the nature of work across the western world. The old, heavy, industrial, metal-bashing, smokestack industries are producing less of the work in this country. Service sector jobs, such as banking, require less muscle and a great deal of brain and co-ordination, and they have taken over and are continuing to grow. They will produce the increases in employment during the next few years, and the reality is that, in those jobs, women are every bit as capable as men of producing the goods and, in some respects, are probably far better.

Companies must come to realise that there will be no excuse for them in the next few years. If they discriminate in any shape or form, they will only discriminate against themselves because the pool of talent is always limited and finite. It is up to companies to recognise that they need to make use of whatever talent is out there.

That is a natural progression, and I wish that the Opposition would recognise that as much the Government have. It is absolutely critical that companies recognise that the talent among women is every bit as great as that among men.

I often talk to my wife about aspects of sexual discrimination, and she says time and again that she wishes that women who go on about discrimination would not decry the role of women at home. She often talks to women who hold down jobs and, during the conversation, they ask her what she does. When she replies that she is a housewife, the career women immediately freeze and move away. That is important, for having watched my wife looking after four children and running a home, I know that she is not my equal—she is my superior. There is no doubt that I could not possibly do it, and without her I would not be here. Some Opposition Members may wish that that was the case.

Mr. Burns: My hon. Friend is right in noting that no one should be criticised or demeaned for deciding that they wish to be—for want of a better word—housewives. On the other side of the coin, does my hon. Friend agree that it is equally distasteful that women who decide that they wish to pursue a career and a family are more often than not also treated in certain quarters with some contempt, and are made to feel that, in some ways, they too cannot play a full role in bringing up a family and pursuing a job?

Mr. Duncan Smith: My hon. Friend raises an interesting matter, which, while it follows the point that I made, stands on its own.

There was a momentous event last week when I noted, with some horror, the ruling of the Law Lords on the rights of part-time workers under the Employment Protection Act 1978, which, it was suggested, resulted in inadvertent sexual discrimination. I notice that the Opposition mentioned that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had not referred to that decision. I hope that, by the end of my speech, they will perhaps have had enough of the matter. I wish to go into the basis of the ruling, because it is critical that we understand fully what the Law Lords have done. They said that the majority of part-time workers are women and the majority of full-time workers are men, using the 16-hour break point.

The Law Lords went on to say that the difference in treatment of part-time and full-time workers accordingly tends adversely to affect more women than men. They said that, unless the difference of treatment is "objectively justified"—a critical point to which I will come back—it constitutes indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex contrary to European Community law.

Finally, the burden of proving objective justification being on the Government, the evidence submitted by the Department did not establish that. It is important to note that the evidence consisted of an affidavit. I would ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to explain when she replies what constituted that affidavit, and what evidence was given to disprove that point.

My big worry is that the width of the judgment is quite staggering. It does not just deal with redundancy and unfair dismissal. I believe that it will also back into occupational pensions in a dramatic way. Although the case did not relate to occupational pensions, there seems no reason under article 119 why part-time employees may not sue both public and private sector employers for equivalent occupational pension rights to full-timers and for equivalent holiday pay.

Ms Short: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Duncan Smith: If our Government had decided to follow that course, that would have been fine. They were elected to make such decisions here and they would have

[Mr. Duncan Smith]

had to stand by them. In the same way, if the Labour party had been elected to government and carried through the House a decision to give part-time workers equal rights, that would have been the right way to proceed. The right way is not through the back door by means of a ruling based on European law, which has widened the aspect of the debate.

Secondly, the ruling has immediate effect on occupational pension and holiday rights and also on redundancy rights. Part-time workers will now be able to claim redundancy pay from both public and private sector employers after only two years employment. New amending legislation will not be required. It has already been proved in several cases such as de Freyn and Barber, that article 119 is held to have had direct effect. That is critical. Those in the public employ will be able to sue with immediate effect as a result of the ruling.

It is also possible to examine unfair dismissal. Public sector and private sector part-time employees who believe that they have been dismissed unfairly will be able to make claims again for unfair dismissal if employed for two years or more. Again, no legislation is required. It is also apparent that it will be possible to make some of the claims, if not all of them, retrospective. As a result of a decision taken not by my Front-Bench colleagues but by the Law Lords on a fairly debatable point, we may find that claims will feed through certainly for redundancy pay which are retrospective for up to four years. That will load costs on to industry in a way that I do not believe was ever entertained by the Law Lords.

The ruling is a major step. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is thinking hard what to do on the issue. The Government would not necessarily have taken that step, but if we had done so we would have been justified in taking that step through the House, having carried the House with us. After all, the House is elected by the public on that basis. I hope that Opposition Members accept that this is another matter in which our powers to decide such matters have been stripped away. It is a critical decision. I shall deal with some of the main reasons why it is critical later.

I hope that, instead of saying that a great decision has been made which has forced something that they wish to see come through into legislation, Opposition Members will see that if they were in our position they would consider that the ruling was not the right way to go about it. It is up to the Government to make such decisions and carry the House with them.

I shall not go into detail on inadvertent sexual discrimination, but it is a dubious point. I should like to know a little more, if possible, from my hon. Friend the Minister about what we presented to justify our case. Once the Law Lords decided that it was right to rule on the procedural matters, we had to put forward a defence that the current position was objectively justified. I believe that we would have been able so to justify it. Time and again, we have demonstrated that our employment policy is based on flexibility. That is to say that the work force should be able to meet and match the jobs that are available. As employment prospects grew, part-time work would develop into full-time jobs; it was economically vital.

Our position has been justified time and again. As we have moved out of recession we have been able to take advantage of the employment policy. Employment has moved up quickly immediately. We are not seeing that in other countries in Europe. The rate of unemployment in Britain is dropping. Much of that is due to the fact that we have a more flexible work force than probably any other country in Europe. That has a lot to do with our position on part-time work. Therefore, although the Law Lords ruled that there was inadvertent sexual discrimination, we could have objectively justified that. We had good economic grounds for it.

Once we have dealt with the basis of the ruling, it is important to consider why the ruling came through. There has been a major progressive change over the years. It has come from the European Court of Justice. As Lord Denning said many years ago:

"The Treaty of Rome is like an incoming tide. It flows into the estuaries and up the rivers. It cannot be held back."

The judgment from the Lords in the past week has demonstrated clearly how that tide of law affects the divisional courts. The decision was based wholly on European treaties and declarations, not on any British legislation.

Last year, in January, I made a speech in which I pointed out that, in many of the social provisions, sexual discrimination being one of them, we would see the tide of legal expertise flowing back from the court and avoiding our social chapter opt-out. Article 119, which I quoted on that occasion, article 118 and every other directive have thrown back all the social provisions that we would not necessarily wish to implement. Perhaps the Opposition would wish to implement them, but they should do so if and when they were ever elected to government. That is the key point. Opposition Members should not seek to introduce measures through the back door. They should seek to do so through their position in government.

Ms Short: My understanding of the House of Lords ruling is that the Lords interpreted the British law as incorporating the treaty of accession into British law. The logic of the hon. Gentleman's speech is that he wishes Britain to leave the European Union. Is that what he is saying?

Mr. Duncan Smith: No. The point that I am making is simply that while we signed up to several articles and declarations in the treaty of Rome, and subsequent amendments. The idea remained that we as a Parliament and a Government should be justified in making the decisions on how we believe that the economy should work here, as long as that does not affect other member states. That is clearly the case here. We decided to go for a flexible work force. We have produced such a work force. I believe that it has had beneficial results. We have more people in employment than ever before and a falling level of unemployment.

I accept that Conservative and Opposition Members will never agree on that point, but if the people of Britain had elected a Government to follow their views, that would be fine. That is exactly what the Opposition would have been justified in doing. However, it is not what the people elected us to do. That is the problem for us. I wish to deal with that point.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that the judgment about which he complains and the legislation about which he is worried would not have been invoked if the British Government

had treated women equally? Is he saying that, when the electorate last went to the polls, people consciously voted for a Government who would deny women equal treatment within the work force?

Mr. Duncan Smith: No. The problem with this is the contrary. The principle of long standing that no Parliament may bind another has clearly been broken. The equal opportunities legislation was passed during a Labour tenure. The Labour party was in government, as it was for the 1978 Act. The point is simply that the articles referred to pre-date the Single European Act by a long time and bind us on the issue. The matters were dealt with under Labour. Therefore, it is up to the Government to decide whether we wish to see such provisions implemented.

With respect to the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson), I said earlier that I did not believe that the law on part-time work demonstrated sexual discrimination in the way that has been suggested. That is the key. It is not that we believe in sexual discrimination. We do not believe that there was sexual discrimination. The matter is simply about part-time workers. The economic justifications for a flexible work force speak louder than ever before.

If I might make some suggestions to my hon. Friend, I think that we ought to fight the issue again rather than implement the judgment of the Lords. There is the opportunity to do that. In terms of legal precedence, the decision of their Lordships on that point is not a finding of law binding on other courts. It would be possible to allow those people who wish to do so to pursue the matter through the divisional court, to defend on the basis of justifiable reason, as we did previously, but to put more emphasis on the economic aspects.

I wish that my hon. Friend would take consideration of that, bearing in mind that we do not believe that it is in reality sexual discrimination, but that it is economically justifiable as it exists at the moment. We should watch that come through the divisional court and make a decision afterwards, rather than jumping now. It would be open to a sued employer to fight on that basis from there.

I would therefore support the Government in trying to do that. It would have grave economic consequences were we to accept the decision, not just in the aspects that I discussed earlier, but also as regards pension rights, the position as to which has yet to be quantified. We do not know what that would cost.

There is a possibility that we can produce a declaratory or clarificatory Act which may help with regard to the 1978 Act. It would be important to ensure that we had the opportunity of saying that the House should be able to speak about justifiable reasons and tell the court clearly that that was the case. It would be a good position to take and it would help with regard to the case.

My hon. Friend should bear in mind that it is time for us to think carefully about discussing again articles 117 onwards with our colleagues and friends in the European Community, because we would not wish all the social aspects of the treaty of Rome to be imported here. We believe that they will lead to an uneconomic and uncompetitive Britain. We also believe that the whole of Europe will become uneconomic, so we have to inform them that now is the time to ensure that we drop those aspects of the treaty. We should push for them to be taken out. They are not fields for common debate. They are fields in which national Governments must make all the decisions.

If the Labour party is elected, it will have to make a decision, simply on economic grounds, that its social policy is justifiable. It may well do so. It may be elected on that basis—I doubt it—but we have justified to our electorate that we believe that a flexible work force will be the one that will take us forward into the 21st century.

I believe that the problem is that the Law Lords have taken unto themselves the position as a constitutional court now, and we need to take careful consideration of what they have been able to move into—with the social aspects. I wish to put it to my hon. Friend that we should fight, to ensure that we establish the justifiable reasons that we believe are there. I hope that she and her hon. Friends will come up with the sort of decisions that I have outlined.

8.32 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): The hon. Gentleman—I regret that I have temporarily, if I ever knew, forgotten his constituency—[HON. MEMBERS: "Chingford."] The hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) referred to the Law Lords' decision in the case that was taken to them by the Equal Opportunities Commission, which related to the differences that the Government have created in wages and conditions of work between part-time and full-time workers.

In its extremely helpful little briefing pamphlet, "The Inequality Gap," the Equal Opportunities Commission says:

> "Britain has over 5 million part-time workers, 87 per cent. of them women, and the numbers are rising."

More than 2 million of those part-time workers

> "earn so little, or are so sporadically employed, that they do not pay National Insurance and have no entitlements to unemployment and sickness pay, or to a State Pension, for which if not working they might have got credits."

Another extremely helpful briefing document published by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, entitled "Unequal Opportunities," says:

> "The Equal Opportunities Commission's Annual Report for 1992 talks in terms of a 'surge in complaints about workplace sex discrimination' . . . The level of employment-related complaints and enquiries stood at 13,320, an increase of 47 per cent. on the previous year. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service reported a similar trend—sex discrimination complaints referred to the Service for arbitration rose by 67 per cent. in 1992."

At the beginning of our debate, the Minister who has found Detroit more attractive than his duties as Minister for women spoke of Jo Richardson and of her struggle and her constant fight for the needs of women. I believe that Jo Richardson would have called for the rights of women—rights to equality in education and to equal pay for work of equal worth; and to equality in promotion prospects, in pensions, in access to justice and in health.

Today I had the pleasure of declaring open—if that is the correct word for a piece of medical and scientific equipment—a new mammograph machine at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital, the women's hospital on the fringes of my constituency. It is a very pleasant duty for any Member of Parliament actually to be able to welcome an improvement in a national health facility these days, as opposed to endlessly standing in cold vigils attempting to prevent closures.

Another aspect of the basic inequalities that still work against women in this country is that 15,000 women die from breast cancer every year, 25,000 cases are reported

[Ms Glenda Jackson]

every year and, in the nation as a whole, the treatment, screening, after-care and counselling are patchy in the extreme.

That is why, I am happy to say, a couple of weeks ago an all-party group was formed in the House to deal with the issue of breast cancer. I am equally happy to say that the group has representatives from both sides of the House, male and female, because that seems to emphasise something that has tended to be ignored in our debates, at least from the Conservative Benches this afternoon.

Reference has been made to the value of women as housewives, almost as though women's work in the house, because essentially it is unpaid work—women in the house do not receive a brown envelope at the end of the week—is not really work. I assure Conservative Members that it is real work, and a great many women undertake it. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Burns: The hon. Lady does not need to reassure us.

Ms Jackson: There are somewhat garbled shouts from sedentary positions attempting to refute the point that I am going to make.

Mrs. Mahon: Do not give way to him.

Ms Jackson: I have no intention of doing so.

Obviously I did not make sufficiently clearly the point that there has been a great deal of patronage and patronising attitude swishing around the Chamber this afternoon on women's rights for equal treatment under the law in a range of our national life. One of the aspects that I have found especially patronising is the way in which men seem to think that, if they endorse our activities, that is the only validation we need, and that if they say that it is okay for women to work in the house, that is all we ever need to ask for.

I have to tell Conservative Members that I am of an age when I can remember that women on their own were lauded. It was, of course, during a war. The men were away fighting. Then, women attempting to raise their families on their own were little heroines. I have found it especially shocking during the past few weeks that Ministers of the Crown have attempted to blame all society's ills on women who, for three main reasons—death, divorce and desertion—are responsible for raising 2.2 million of the nation's children on the most scandalously low levels of financial support that could be conceived of.

I shall bring my remarks to a conclusion, as I realise that many other Members wish to take part in the debate. I must say, however, that the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) spoke as though the fight was over. She reeled off 10 or 15 women—I do not remember the precise number—who have achieved public recognition because they are successful in their chosen professions. Let us say that the number she gave was 15, and let us assume that the average age of those women is between 25 and 35. Let us assume also that women constitute half of the population of the country—in other words, 27 million human beings.

If we were to invest £27 million in a bank and after 25 or 30 years our return were £15 there would be an absolute outcry at such a shameful rate. That is what we are discussing—the shameful rate of return on the vast pool of talent that is female. It is the equality of women in society that we are discussing. Sadly, under the Conservative Government, the equality of women has taken many huge steps backwards. That is why I support the Opposition amendment, and why, if the House divides, I shall vote against the Government.

8.40 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): In the end, the speech of the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) presented a rather utilitarian view of womanhood. Perhaps it is the over-emphasis on mechanical feminist issues that puts some Conservative Members off women's affairs. However, I welcome this debate. It has been a good discussion, and it is good for men to sit through such an occasion. I have listened and learnt.

I endorse wholeheartedly the way in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State responded to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short). In a later intervention, the hon. Lady criticised my right hon. Friend for failing to say anything about the Law Lords' ruling. The extraordinary thing about the hon. Lady's speech was how little she dwelt on how that ruling had come about. It was a massive constitutional innovation, and surely it merited more than the cursory glance that she gave it. From my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State a welcome pause is extremely appropriate. A decision of such constitutional magnitude requires some thought before it is responded to.

I shall support the amendment in the names of my right hon. Friends, not least because it calls upon the Government to continue their successful policies in the field of opportunities for women. The last 15 years have seen a number of successful initiatives to enhance and promote opportunities and equality for women. Women now have independent and equal taxation; Opportunity 2000 will expand women's opportunities with employers; and there is a drive to increase the number of women in public appointments—to mention just three initiatives.

We are not averse to generous measures such as were provided earlier this week under an EC directive on pregnant workers. The United Kingdom now gives qualifying women a longer period of maternity absence than any other EC member state and, at 18 weeks, one of the longest periods of paid maternity absence. Unlike the law in many member states, United Kingdom legislation gives all women, regardless of length of service or hours worked, a right to paid time off for antenatal care.

But a key part of our policy has been a more laissez-faire attitude to some areas of policy that have benefited women. A higher proportion of women go out to work in Britain than in any other European Community country, except, as has been said, Denmark. Between March 1983 and September 1992, there was an 11 per cent. increase in the number of women in full-time employment and an increase of 29 per cent. in the number in part-time employment. Many women choose to work part time, and the Government's policies have encouraged the development of part-time work within a framework that safeguards employees against exploitation.

The irony of this debate, however, lies in the fact that some of these very opportunities may be choked by last week's court ruling in the name of sex equality. The substance of the Law Lords' ruling on the Equal Opportunities Commission case has serious political and

economic implications for industries dependent heavily on part-time workers. Businesses in my constituency that would be affected include retailers—not just the big ones but the small ones as well. Small business was the main job generator of the 1980s. This ruling strikes a blow against the interests of all small businesses, which hitherto have benefited from the lower costs and flexibility of part-time workers.

Whole industries, such as the restaurant and hotel industry, will be badly hit. The British hospitality industry plays a huge role. In fact, it is our biggest foreign exchange earner, bringing some £8 billion to £9 billion per annum into the United Kingdom. It may be that some Opposition Members do not attach much importance to these aspects of the argument, but many hon. Members support the Government's policy of leaving things as they are. Labour now wants everyone in one form of part-time work or another on a compulsory 35-hour week basis, but we believe that flexible labour markets assist economic growth and add to the general prosperity.

The Opposition may feel gleeful about the court's decision, but surely they should show a hint of anxiety at the fact that their policies do not have the usual democratic consent. We believe that these matters, along with overall conduct of Government policy on labour relations, should be decided here—by Government and Parliament, which are accountable to the electors.

Ms Short: Tory speech after Tory speech has subverted the rule of law. The House of Lords, on a judicial review, was interpreting British law. Tory Members of Parliament are saying that this is intolerable and will have to be overturned. The hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) suggested that the Government should subvert the ruling.

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Lady demonstrates that she—along with most of her Front-Bench colleagues, I dare say—has absolutely no appreciation of how this ruling has arisen. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Lady listens, she may learn something. Opposition Members cannot claim that this ruling was achieved on the merits of the argument. They will find that the Government made little or no effort in court to establish that the alleged indirect discrimination against women was—in the jargon—objectively justified. The Government were principally contesting the vires of the United Kingdom's courts to rule on this matter at all. *[Interruption.]* If hon. Members listen, they may learn something.

The House of Lords ruled that aspects of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 are incompatible with Community law. As the leader in *The Times* of 5 March pointed out, the ruling has, in effect, struck down as "unconstitutional" an Act of Parliament. That the Law Lords did such a thing demonstrates a new and perhaps alarming boldness. They could more tactfully have referred the matter to the European Court of Justice for adjudication. Instead, as *The Times* suggests—correctly, I believe—Britain now effectively has a constitutional court

"which opens up the possibility, which many would regard as alarming, of Acts of Parliament being subjected to trial by judicial review, by pressure groups of all descriptions, such as the Commission for Racial Equality, the Child Poverty Action Group",

or the CBI, the National Association for Freedom, the National Front,

"various trade unions, Greenpeace and even the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds",

come what may.

When we wanted to join the European Community, it was not explained that we would be setting up our own courts to compete with us as law makers in matters such as this. I invite hon. Members to speculate on the outrage and uproar that would have been caused had it been explained during the passage of the European Community's legislation or the subsequent referendum that that was how European Community law would develop. We should feel that sense of outrage now.

Mrs. Currie: Does my hon. Friend realise that one of the reasons why we signed up to the treaty of Rome and why people voted in the referendum to continue to accede to it was that we agreed with much of what it said, including its clear statement on equality?

Mr. Jenkin: When the argument was made for Britain to join the European Community—it is extraordinary how this relates to sexual equality, but it does—we were told that we were giving up certain aspects of our trade policy so that it could be handled together and that we were handing over control of agriculture and fishing because those matters would be better organised together. It was not explained in detail that we could finish up with new bodies creating legislation in our land. On the contrary, the cry during the referendum was, "You've always got a veto. No decision that affects British interests can be made without a British Minister being present."

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) said in the House that there would be no federation. He wrote in the White Paper that there would be no loss of essential national sovereignty. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) must try to justify those matters in her own mind as we carry on down this road.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend surprised that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) appears to want this country to be run from Brussels? The Opposition are federalists.

Mr. Jenkin: In the unlikely event that the Opposition were ever elected and had to face the stringent free market discipline that the Community also embodies, which is why the Conservatives always were a pro-European party—

Ms Short: They are not any more.

Mr. Jenkin: We remain pro-European because we understand how free trade binds nations together. If the Opposition ever suffered the monetary discipline embodied in stages 2 and 3 of monetary union—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I have heard the hon. Gentleman's speech once before on that issue and it was certainly not about sex discrimination. I hope that he will return to the issue that we are supposed to be debating.

Mr. Jenkin: I accept your admonition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and will return to the point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) is right. The Opposition want this country to be run from Brussels because they cannot themselves get elected.

[Mr. Jenkin]

We should feel a sense of outrage because, only last summer, Madam Speaker gave a ruling to uphold article 9 of the Bill of Rights. An Opposition Member had complained that a court was questioning parliamentary privilege. Madam Speaker considered the matter to be of sufficient gravity to rule on it herself rather than refer it to the Committee of Privileges. She said:

"There has of course been no amendment of the Bill of Rights, and that Act places a statutory prohibition on the questioning of our proceedings. Article 9 of the Act reads:

'that the freedom of speech and debates or proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of Parliament.'".—[*Official Report*, 21 July 1993; Vol. 229, c. 351-2.]

Who can possibly say that the Equal Opportunities Commission or their Lordships have respected article 9 of the Bill of Rights? *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman wishes to question the Speaker's ruling, I suggest that she rises to her feet and does so.

Mrs. Currie: I am delighted to do so—another sex change tonight. I merely wish to point out that their Lordships are part of this Parliament, so the hon. Gentleman's criticism is misapplied.

Mr. Jenkin: The case was originally brought in the Divisional Court and the affect of the ruling is that the Divisional Court can now rule an Act of Parliament illegal. The hon. Lady must accept that she is wrong on that point.

The Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 was passed after the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1971 and presumably in the full knowledge of it, and after the relevant Community legislation had also been agreed.

So what can we do in the light of that ruling? We can choose to accept the ruling. What that means for sexual equality and employment policy in the United Kingdom is that, as the Labour party wants, hon. and right hon. Members who sit on the Treasury Bench, whether they be Conservative or Labour, are to become mere agents and emissaries of a policy that is decided elsewhere. Instead of being servants of this House, they must be the apologists of others.

Under that ruling, the Law Lords have treated Parliament no differently from an errant local authority that has passed some unreasonable bye-laws or an employment scheme run by a private company. In the forthcoming European elections, let the Opposition parties tell voters that that is what they want Parliament's status to be.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did not negotiate an opt-out of the social chapter for it to be nullified so quickly in this way. In *The Economist* of 25 September 1993 he wrote that Britain had successfully used the Maastricht negotiations to reassert the authority of national Governments. One must assume that he was talking about sexual equality legislation as much as anything else. He went on to say:

"It is clear now that the Community will remain a union of sovereign national states. That is what its peoples want: to take decisions through their own Parliaments.

It is for nations to build Europe, not for Europe to attempt to supersede nations."

I applaud those comments.

For the Government now to continue their successful policies they must pursue a number of options. They could reassert Parliament's authority by ignoring the ruling, and contest the claims on substantive information as and when they arise, objectively justifying the case that we wish to make. Better still, we could enact a declaratory Bill in which we deem the Government's policy to be "objectively justified"—the correct term—but this would only buy time. What we need is to extend the social chapter opt-out into something much more comprehensive in order to regain control of sex equality and employment legislation.

We must opt out of articles 117 onwards of the Rome treaty, for this judgment was based not on the Maastricht treaty or even on the Single European Act but on articles contained in the original treaty of Rome. Subsidiarity is perhaps an argument that we should use, that these policies should be handled at the level of the nation state and not be in the treaty at all. Why was subsidiarity an argument not used in the ruling?

I agree with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade who, in his Stockton lecture last Thursday, attacked "Eurosclerosis" and complained:

"We burden our business with extra costs, preventing labour markets from working properly, stifling the regenerative processes of the capitalist system".

He could have been talking about this ruling. Emboldened by those words, these options surely merit his further consideration.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who said on Monday in Brussels:

"We should make our labour markets more flexible and job-friendly . . . That means not introducing new limitations on the labour market."

The Secretary of State exactly echoed those sentiments this afternoon, but since this ruling does exactly what he abjures, the proposals to scale down the Community's social ambitions surely invite his further judgment.

I applaud the Foreign Secretary's remarks in Brussels:

"A community which forgets that its legitimacy derives from its electors"—

Opposition Members would do well to remember this—

"is turning its back, not just on the constraints of democracy but on the wisdom of democracy."

What sort of Government will the British people be able to elect if they are compelled by the interpretation of European law to pursue policies to which they would otherwise be fundamentally opposed?

We all agree that sovereignty requires to be pooled for a common good, but should it be a crime to ask "How much?" or perhaps to say, "Too much"? The one real chance that we have to express this is at the intergovernmental conference in 1996. I have no doubt that we shall be reviled and hated by the chattering classes of all the European nations for standing up against the inevitable march, so-called, of European history. We should, however, make sure that future Governments are able to carry out the policies on sexual equality and employment, as all else, for which we are elected.

9 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I think that we have just heard a speech in favour of sex discrimination—I found it really sad.

May I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) and for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on initiating this debate? Given that it is the

first of its kind for 20 years, I hope that we will not have to wait another 20 years for the next. I hope that we can repeat it every six months.

I begin by paying tribute to the last Labour Government who gave us equal opportunities legislation. It is sad that the past 15 years have seen no improvement whatever. If anything, we have gone backwards under the Conservative Government. In 1970 I worked in a factory where I was paid less for doing exactly the same job as the men there. Many of my women friends deeply resented this. Some of them felt undervalued and inferior. I felt very angry, and I was very pleased when we had the first equal opportunities legislation. The Government, however, have not built on it.

In the area that I want to concentrate on—low pay and how the gap has widened and the discrimination worsened—it is still the case that women in full-time work earn, on average, only 72 per cent. of men's full-time salaries. It means that two thirds of the six million workers earning less than the European decency threshold are women. Black women take home less pay than white women, so there is a further level of discrimination there.

In the public sector, where women do the majority of jobs and where some occupations are almost entirely female, the picture of poverty pay in women's pockets still holds true. Three-quarters of ancillary health workers, two-thirds of local government manual workers, and most nurses and administrative and clerical staff, are women. In 1993, 61 per cent. of women in the health service's administrative and clerical jobs earned less than £220 a week, compared with 27 per cent. of men. These are some of the better paid jobs in the national health service.

The Minister told us that the average wage was £250 a week. They would have been glad to see that. In ancillary work, where part-timers form two thirds of the workforce, part-time women earned 42p an hour less than full-time men. On high or low grades, the story is exactly the same. The Government bear a large responsibility for this discrimination continuing and worsening. Their worship of the free market at the expense of all other considerations has increased inequality and encouraged discrimination.

The contracting out of ancillary jobs has left domestics, laundry workers and others taking a direct cut in wages as contractors put in lower bids than in-house tenders. It has also led to cuts in sickness benefit and holiday pay and a lack of pension rights. It has been hailed by the Government as a success story—but not for low-paid workers.

Over the years, I have tabled amendments to the employment legislation on the plight of home workers, who represent the lowest paid, least protected, most exploited part of the sweatshop work force that the Government have done so much to encourage.

The majority of home workers are women. I have found women home workers working for 28p an hour packing Christmas cards that are sold in Woolworths. I interviewed a pregnant woman who sat up all night for as little as 50p an hour knitting garments that sold in the high street for £100. That is not the world of Tory ladies such as the hon. Members for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) or for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland). As the debate has progressed, I have realised that we come from different worlds.

In Britain we have gender segregation, grade inequality, a lower value placed on many jobs where women are in the majority and job evaluation schemes that discriminate against women. Unequal access to pay enhancements such as bonuses, weekend additions and overtime pay account for most of the difference between the pay of men and women in manual work. There is a great deal of work to be done to end that discrimination in pay.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Mahon: Certainly not.

There is also discrimination against part-time workers in grading and enhancements.

The abolition of the wages councils has already been mentioned. Wages councils were the only protection for the lowest paid people in Britain, who are mainly women. The Yorkshire and Humberside low pay unit carried out a survey in my constituency of Halifax—a very low-paid area. It found that since last year when the wages councils were scrapped, nearly one fifth of the vacancies in former wages council industries are now on offer at the Halifax job centre at 20 per cent. below the old minimum rate.

A hairdressing job that last August paid £2.88 per hour is now on offer at £2 a hour. Is that progress? Is it what the Government think is good for Britain? Those women shop in the same marketplace as Conservative Members. They will be paying the same increased VAT on their domestic fuel, yet their pay has been reduced by 20 per cent.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that it is now an essential part of the Government's economic policy? Only two weeks ago, I happened to overhear a conversation in one of the male toilets in the House. Two Conservative Members were somewhat irate about the accusation that they were anti-women. One of them said to the other, "For God's sake, don't they understand that the vast majority of jobs that do not go to the third world go to women?" Does not that reflect their dependence on widening, not narrowing the gap of exploitation?

Mrs. Mahon: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. It says it all about Conservative Members and what they think the British work force is worth. That is the value they put on workers.

The Tory record—

Mr. Duncan: That is the economic reality, luvvy.

Mrs. Mahon: The hon. Gentleman said that that is the economic reality. The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) made £50,000 out of selling a council house. Opposition Members know too well the economic reality of that kind of chicanery from watching the antics on the Conservative Benches.

The Tory record on low pay has been well argued by other hon. Members, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood, who is on the Front Bench. I shall dwell on what I believe needs to be done to end low pay and the discrimination against women in the work force. We need urgent reform of equal pay legislation.

It was interesting to see the attack by Conservative Members on the House of Lords decision. The House of Lords simply found the Government guilty of discrimination against part-time workers.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: Does my hon. Friend acknowledge that the important thing about the Law Lords' ruling was that it was linked to European legislation? The key thing that the European Community has done for sex

[Mrs. Helen Jackson]

discrimination legislation is to insist that countries keep records. The statistics again and again place Britain at the bottom of the league. Does my hon Friend recognise that the Law Lords have, for once, done a major service in recognising what I would have expected the whole House to recognise? Labour Members would have expressed delight; Conservative Members would have said, "Well, it's a fair cop." I would have expected the House to accept that the ruling has at least done something for low-paid workers in this country.

Mrs. Mahon: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Law Lords recognised what was a clear injustice and put it right. I found it quite distasteful that very privileged younger Conservative Members, who clearly have no idea of working for the wages that we are talking about, spent 20 minutes filibustering to keep people out of the debate. I found that so disgraceful.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There has been no filibustering this evening.

Ms Rachel Squire: In view of her last point, does my hon. Friend agree that having listened at length to the comments of Conservative Members, perhaps we should propose that the industry and Parliament trust scheme is extended to enable Conservative Members to spend 28 days working as low-paid part-time workers in offices, shops and factories to help them appreciate the real world?

Mrs. Mahon: What a splendid suggestion.

Mrs. Gillan: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Mahon: There are no circumstances under which I will give way to the hon. Lady, who took half an hour to make a speech that completely trivialised what is a very serious inequality. She had her time. If she could not make a case—and she certainly did not—I am not giving way.

I think that, first, the equal opportunities legislation needs to be simplified, and, secondly, the burden of proof for justifying inequality in pay should rest clearly with the employer. We should end the nonsense where the employee has to go out and make a case. It should rest fairly and squarely where it belongs—with the employer. Perhaps we could then see some more decent employment practices coming into being.

I feel very strongly that the law should allow for group actions, and shift away from individual remedies, because women have become absolutely exhausted over the years going through the hoops of the law on an individual basis —we are pleased with the cases that have been won, and applaud them—only to find that when they return to the work force, they have to start all over again. How much better it would have been had they been acting for a whole group of women, and did not have to start all over again to get some justice.

There must certainly be an end to the system that allows employers to circumvent equality legislation. Following the passage of the Equal Pay Act 1970, job segregation increased. I welcomed the legislation of the mid-1970s, because I had been a victim of inequality; there is no doubt, however, that the five-year lead-in to implementation of the Equal Pay Act resulted in unprecedented arrangements in which bad employers segregated the sexes, putting women in "women's jobs" and men in "men's jobs".

The "equal value" amendment was designed to deal with that; but there is increasing evidence that young men are being employed in what are traditionally female jobs —for instance, as hospital domestics. A deliberate attempt is being made to prevent the pursuing of equal-value cases. The labour market is being desegregated to perpetuate low pay and avoid the achievement of equality.

Ms Rachel Squire: A good example of that is provided by the equal value claim made by five hospital domestics at the Royal Victoria hospital in Belfast. Ten years ago, they had the audacity to claim that their work was of equal value to that of a hospital porter and a hospital groundsman. The Government and the health board involved have wasted £1 million of public money in doing everything possible to prevent the making of equal value awards. That is an example of the Government's commitment to equal value and equal pay.

Mrs. Mahon: My hon. Friend has made her point very well; that is indeed a shameful example.

If the Government are serious about ending sex discrimination, especially in regard to pay, I believe that they could take many steps now to improve the position of women. Let me list them: I do not expect that the Government will do anything, but I think it is worth putting them on record.

All Opposition Members believe that a minimum wage is desperately needed. People are having to sweat to take home the rates that I mentioned earlier: following the abolition of wages councils, people who were earning as little as £2.88 an hour now earn £2 an hour, after just a few months. They desperately need protection. We are out of step with the rest of Europe and with America, which has a minimum wage. Surely the minimum wage is a basic right.

I also think that part timers and home workers should be given equal employment rights—which means extending some form of health and safety cover to the people, mainly women, who work at home and who are currently the most exploited workers in the country. Home working is on the increase. It is very convenient for spivs who want to make a fast buck; those whom they persuade to work at home have no protection. The work is completely flexible, and the women concerned are using their own light and heating. It is a truly exploitative, third-world practice.

We should bring back pay protection for workers in all low-paid industries. We should also extend maternity leave to 18 weeks, and bring it into line with maternity pay. We should ensure that all children have access to nursery places. We should make a commitment to improving and protecting universal child benefit, which is very important to women.

Conservative Members have praised the women who stay at home to look after their families, and Opposition Members would do the same; we do not force women to go out to work if they do not wish to do so, and it is nonsense to suggest that we do. Women at home with children, however, are the only women with no access to any form of benefit apart from child benefit, which they go and collect themselves rather than waiting for their husbands to give it to them.

The Government should reform the state pension scheme, although there is little hope of their doing so. I think that the pension age should be equalised at 60 for both sexes.

We have to keep low pay in the news. We have to keep showing what is happening to the flexible third-world work force that the Government have done so much to promote. We have to keep examining low pay, its growth and its effect on the work force because it is not good for Britain, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood said.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: Does my hon. Friend agree that women are most likely to spend their disposable income locally and in local shops? Cutting women's disposable income, therefore, does more to damage small businesses, which the Conservative party claims to support, than anything else.

Mrs. Mahon: I agree with my hon. Friend. That was well said.

If the Government believe that their strategy of promoting a low-pay, flexible work force will enable Britain to compete equally with its competitors in Europe in the next century, they are mistaken and they will damage our chances.

9.21 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on her speech. She spoke very much from her own experience and with considerable knowledge, unlike many Conservative Members.

I join other hon. Members in paying tribute to Jo Richardson. I was in her team for a year and I know how fiercely she fought her disability and how she continued to carry the banner high for women in the House and outside. She was committed to equality of opportunity. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingam, Ladywood (Ms Short) is carrying the banner in her place. It could not pass to a better person.

Everyone knows that ideas on men and women start almost in the cradle. Jo Richardson would have enjoyed part of this debate, but would have despaired at some of the attitudes expressed by Conservative Members. Recently, two primary school teachers in Wales asked the boys in their classes to write about the girls and the girls to write about the boys. Some of the pieces that were written, especially those by the younger children, are worth reading. They wrote:

"girls wear beads and high heels . . . Boys stand up at the toilet, girls sit down."

Some children wrote "no good" or "rubbish", and quite a lot used the description "fat". Boys were frequently described as

"strong, noisy and keen on sport."

Girls were described as "weak, quiet and scared." Some boys said:

"girls are cissies, boys aren't, they're brave".

It is not surprising that, even now, the GCSE education choices of English school children show substantial gender stereotyping, a matter that concerns my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell), who unfortunately was unable to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. More than twice as many boys as girls study computer science and physics, whereas nearly twice as many girls as boys study music, drama and biology. The degree courses of students are also divided on gender lines.

The hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) mentioned discrimination in sport. Despite their tremendous achievements, women are too often treated as second-class citizens. That is totally unacceptable at the latter end of the 20th century, but there has been one good piece of news today. Jill Bridge, who is 27, today became the second woman managing director of an English football club—Blackpool. Only two of the 92 clubs in England have women managing directors, so there is still a long way to go.

According to the Advertising Standards Authority, complaints about the sexual portrayal of women in advertisements trebled from 180 in 1992 to 536 last year. Last year, 56 complaints were upheld against one advertisement showing a young woman and the words:

"She's terrific in bed. She's witty, intelligent and makes her own pasta. She doesn't have a Linn Hi-Fi, but her sister does, and she's the one I married."

However, the Independent Television Commission let Danepak bacon off the hook despite complaints. Its advertisement showed a family of nudists cooking bacon and giving thanks that the low-fat product was less likely to spit in the pan.

There have been few changes on television. Presenter Fiona Armstrong left GMTV rather than shorten her skirts, as she was instructed to do by her bosses. There is, of course, a different set of standards altogether for women performers. The policy still seems to be, "Hire them for their age and looks and fire them for their age and looks." How many women can we recall who appear regularly on television and look like some of the men—grey haired, balding and with bags under their eyes? It seems that only men can grow old and show it on the box.

It is therefore not surprising that, after 60 years of campaigning, Millicent Fawcett wrote to a group of women:

"You know from your own experience that equal pay and equal opportunity are still withheld from us. I shall expect to see you, individually and collectively, putting your shoulders to that wheel, and pushing the car of progress along in your generation as we did in ours."

That was not advice that the former Prime Minister, now Lady Thatcher, thought worthy of note. In 1982 she claimed:

"The battle for women's rights has largely been won. The days when they were demanded and discussed in strident tones should be gone forever."

As many of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson), have said, we have made some progress, but there is still a long way to go.

There was a time when it was believed that the Almighty had designed men especially to be judges, Prime Ministers and captains of industry and women to be secretaries, housewives and hairdressers, but not, it seems, to be priests in the Church of England. The Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), has shown her lack of commitment to women very clearly. She said that she was opposing the ordination of women because she believed that

"it is theologically impossible for women to perform the specific role of sacramental priesthood."

She went on to explain her outrage by saying:

"considering the way the Church of England has been going over the past 2 or 3 decades, it would not in the least surprise me if one day I attended a nativity play and found that the Virgin Mary had a beard."

Mrs. Fyfe: Will my hon. Friend note the fact this month marks the 25th anniversary of the Church of Scotland

[Mrs. Fyfe]

ordaining its first women minister? There are now more than 100 such ministers and not a single thunderbolt has hit any kirk in those 25 years.

Mrs. Clwyd: I congratulate the Church of Scotland and hope that the Minister takes note.

To the question, "Are women breaking into the top jobs in a big way?", the answer must be no. The hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) seems to believe that people become Members of Parliament on merit alone. If that were the case, I assure her that there would be more women here now. The Cabinet contains two women, and there are only 60 female Members of Parliament. A survey in *The Economist* of the 100 top establishment posts showed that the number held by women had increased from two in 1972 to—wait for it—four in 1992. Men still rule the roost in Whitehall, despite a campaign launched by the Prime Minister two years ago to open up opportunities for women civil servants. New figures show that 90 per cent. of the highest-paid mandarins are men. Of course, Whitehall's huge female work force outnumbers its male work force, but women are confined mainly to typing, catering and cleaning.

The Employment Secretary, who is, as we know, also the Minister for women, recently admitted that he did not know how the drive for equal opportunities was progressing. That is not surprising, since he spent only one hour in the Chamber today. In an interview in *The Guardian* last year, headed "Our Man in the Cabinet", he was asked what his priorities would be. He said:

"taking up the cudgels on behalf of women in the workforce."

The article goes on say:

"When asked what his priorities will be, Hunt studies some typed notes on his desk on which several key paragraphs have been etched in yellow highlighter pen. 'We want to develop childcare and out-of-school and holiday childcare. I want a wide range of opportunities for women,' . . . how near is the Government to achieving this? 'I haven't been able to make a full assessment of the position yet, . . . come back and ask me in a month.'"

Nine months later, we are still waiting for him to tell us. He certainly did not tell us this afternoon. Again, we know why and we are grateful to *The Guardian* for the information. He has gone to Detroit. It says that the Employment Secretary and the Chancellor

"are preparing to descend on the Detroit job summit next week to lecture the world on the best way to provide quality employment opportunities . . . In readiness, they have produced a glossy, 16-page book titled The UK Approach."

We know all about the UK approach. In the Employment Secretary's own Department, only two of its top civil servants are women, while only three of its 719 typists are men. I collected data from 15 Ministries which show that there are 69 women among 686 civil servants in the top four grades. At the Education Department, no women who have jobs in the top four grades, yet nearly half its staff are women. At the Foreign Office, all but three of the 819 secretaries and typists are women, but there is only one woman employed in the 31 top jobs.

What happened to Opportunity 2000? The truth is that, despite so many of the Government's claims, women are still in the low-paid, comparatively menial jobs in the civil service, yet the Government continue to pat themselves on the back and say that they are encouraging women to reach their true potential.

The Tory record on promoting equal opportunity has not exactly been impressive. As we have heard today, they have done nothing to plug the loopholes in the Sex Discrimination Act or in the Equal Pay Act. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) noted, Britain, much to our shame, has been brought before the European Court of Justice for its failures on equality more often than any other country in the European Union.

The Government seem to have gone out of their way to block or to scupper every EU directive which improves the position of women in the work force. They have blocked directives on parental leave, on part-time workers and on working time. They have gone out of their way to block any progressive social legislation. British maternity rights are still the worst in the European Union. The Government have removed the right of women to return to work after childbirth, and although they have been forced to agree the minimum 14 weeks of maternity leave, perhaps the Minister could explain the absurdity of a system which gives women 18 weeks maternity pay, but only 14 weeks maternity leave. The Government have removed the right of women who work in small firms to return to work after childbirth. They have removed the right of women to have child care costs taken into account when claiming income support.

Despite the fact that the European courts and the House of Lords have forced the Government to concede some of the more blatant aspects of their continuing discrimination against women, the Government have fought tooth and nail all the way to resist. Unlike Conservative Members, we want a Europe that sets high social standards. The social chapter represents a set of basic standards to which civilised industrial nations should aspire.

In opting out of the social chapter the Government have sought to deprive the workers of Britain of the rights and protection that workers in other European Union countries take for granted. The Government's double whammy in the workplace, through privatisation and deregulation, has robbed women of health and safety provision and of protection against unfair dismissal and exploitation, and has given them poverty wages.

Three quarters of those protected by wages councils were women, so scrapping the councils has given yet more opportunities to cut wages in jobs heavily dominated by women workers. My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) told us that the poor in this country are largely women. She also mentioned the isolation and poverty wages of home workers, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax. If the Government do not tackle low pay and unequal pay and provide help with child care, women cannot in any sense be equal or have equal rights. There is no point in asking industry to promote equal opportunities policies when many have to be enshrined in a legal framework, or employers will take not a blind bit of notice.

As even the Secretary of State conceded, the Government have presided over the most dramatic change in the role of women. In the past 20 years, there has been an increase of 2 million in the number of women in the work force and a fall of 2.8 million in the number of men. As everybody has said during the debate, those positions are mainly part time, and part-time work brings with it fewer employment rights and lower rates of pay.

Last September, there were 10.6 million men and 10.3 million women at work. In 11 counties in Britain, women already form the majority of the work force. Even

Essex working man may be a thing of the past, because in Essex there are more women working than men. It may already be true that in Britain the typical worker is a woman.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson) mentioned the conflict that can occur between home and work. The Health and Safety Executive reckons that 40 million working days a year are lost because of stress-related illness. What better argument could there be for the Government to agree to the parental leave directive?

The rapid growth of the number of women in the work force needs new thinking, new policies, new attitudes and new expectations. The Government must face up to that by supporting the parental leave directive, providing adequate child care facilities, offering part-time workers more of the same rights as full-time workers have, bringing Britain into line with the rest of the European Union and providing a statutory minimum wage.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax and many others have said today, a minimum wage would reduce the large and growing pay gap between men and women, thereby reducing the need for many people at work to claim benefits that in the end are funded by the taxpayer.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Should not the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon), who has taken part in the debate, be here for the wind-up?

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot hear the hon. Lady. She is speaking much too quickly.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I was asking, Madam Speaker, whether it was a matter of courtesy to the House for those who have taken part in the debate, such as the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar, to be here for the wind-up?

Madam Speaker: It is certainly a custom of the House for those who have taken part in a debate to be present for the wind-up.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Where is the Secretary of State?

Madam Speaker: Order. Not only this evening but on other evenings I have made a note of those hon. Members on both sides of the House who have taken part in the debate yet are not usually here for the wind-up. I have noted tonight, as on every other occasion, those who are not present for the wind-up.

Mrs. Clwyd: Of course, Madam Speaker, we understand that the Secretary of State—our Minister for women—is in Detroit giving the people there the benefit of his experience of how to destroy 3 million jobs during a Government's period in office. Instead of the Government's nauseating hypocrisy about "back to basics", why do they not give a genuine political commitment to support men, women and families in the ways that we have suggested?

In the end, equality of opportunity is determined by the attitudes, self-confidence and persistence of women. Generally speaking, whenever women have pushed on the door, they have usually found that it was not really locked. Sometimes, it has needed a good hard shove and thousands of women with intelligence and talent have lived tragically wasted lives because it opened too late for them. As the Government cannot or will not help to open the door, it is Labour who will gladly tackle the deprivation and discrimination that the majority of women suffer. Women's voices will be heard, but not by the deaf ears of this corrupt, incompetent and uncaring Government.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I join the tributes that were paid by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and the two Opposition spokesmen to the late Jo Richardson. It is a sad event that we are having this debate and she is not able to be present. She was always an extremely good proponent of women's rights. As one who sometimes opposed her—not on women's rights but various other issues—I have to say that she was always a very straight fighter. She is a major loss to the House, and I am delighted to join the tributes that have so far been paid.

Having begun on a friendly note, I regret that I must now turn to the speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short). That speech was a wasted opportunity. The hon. Lady thoroughly trivialised a very serious subject. She carefully avoided acknowledging any advances that had been made. She found every European comparison statistic that was bad, and carefully avoided any that were good. She raised a number of issues on which she said Britain lagged behind the rest of Europe, and then utterly failed to address areas where we are ahead.

The hon. Lady even had the audacity to suggest that this Government are interested in exploiting working children. She failed completely to point out that British law is stronger than the proposed directive in terms of the hours that children may work early and late, and in terms of the limits for hours of work during school holidays. Of course, she did not say that.

The hon. Lady rightly called for investment in skills. But did she then welcome general and national vocational qualifications? Did she then welcome national vocational qualifications? Did she then welcome investment in people? Did she then welcome the national training targets? Did she then welcome the education and business partnerships? She did not. She merely called for investment in training, and then ignored the fact that it has been going on while Labour has been asleep.

The hon. Lady raised what is admittedly an extremely sad case: that of a man in his fifties who was finding it difficult to get a job. As a result of that, did she welcome the Government's "getting on" campaign? Did she welcome the raising of the training age? She did not. She blamed the Government for an increase in crime, and comfortably ignored the fact that crime is increasing in every western country. Presumably the Government are to blame for that as well.

The hon. Lady concentrated on what she saw as Britain's disadvantage in maternity pay. She quietly forgot to acknowledge that we have the longest period of absence, with 40 weeks, or that 18 weeks is one of the longest periods of pay. What a speech. What a wasted opportunity. What a trivialisation of a serious subject.

I come then to the speech of the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon). Normally, I would not comment on the fact that she is absent. The reason I do comment on it is that she had the crying impudence to criticise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for being absent. My

[Miss Ann Widdecombe]

right hon. Friend is preparing for a jobs summit. I do not know what the hon. Lady is doing, but I somehow doubt that it is entirely comparable.

The hon. Lady's statistics were selective. She talked about women being disadvantaged in pensions, but she utterly neglected to mention that this is the only country in Europe where a woman who has never contributed a penny piece can nevertheless draw a pension in her own right when both she and her husband reach retirement age. She omitted to mention that there has been a growth in the numbers of women taking out occupational pensions, and she did not appear to understand the proposals for home responsibility protection.

Once again, she called for skills during career breaks to be recognised, but she did not even mention accredited prior learning, an initiative of my right hon. Friend.

The hon. Lady's speech was not exactly impressive, but that of my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) was. My hon. Friend spoke about the participation of women in sport, a serious point which was echoed on both sides of the House. He talked about surveys which show that there has been an increase of 1 million in the number of women taking part in sport from 1987 to 1990. The Government support the Women's Sports Foundation, which was founded in 1984 to raise the profile of women in sport. A nationwide award scheme for girls and young women was launched only last year. Therefore, I must say that that area has not exactly been entirely neglected.

My hon. Friend welcomed Opportunity 2000, and I am sorry that that welcome was not echoed by Opposition Members.

Mr. Maxton: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Widdecombe: No, I am terribly sorry. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) was not interrupted, and time is extremely pressing. My hon. Friend welcomed Opportunity 2000.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Get to the serious bit.

Miss Widdecombe: I am going to get to the serious bit. I will demonstrate how the hon. Gentleman, the shadow spokesman for employment, gets the facts wrong time and time again. I hope that he is looking forward to that part of my speech.

Before I come to that, I will mention the reasoned speech of the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie). She raised the matter of the Law Lords' judgment, as did some of my hon. Friends. This is where I come to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and his statements, and indeed those of the hon. Member for Ladywood. On different occasions, both hon. Members have said that they were delighted by the Law Lords' judgment, because it had driven a coach and horses through the Government's employment policy.

That is interesting, because the maintenance of thresholds of difference between part-time and full-time workers was the policy of both our parties in government since 1963, when the Conservative party first introduced employment rights. Why were we the first to introduce employment rights if the labour party is so concerned about them?

The difference between part-time and full-time work was maintained by the Labour Government in its Redundancy Payments Act 1965, and again in a further Act in 1975. It is nonsense for the Opposition to try to pretend that the Law Lords' judgment drives a coach and horses through a specific piece of Conservative policy. Until recently—when the Labour party saw the chance for a cheap piece of political comment—the Opposition held exactly the same views as we did.

We heard from Opposition Members that there were so few women in top posts. I ask them—can we hear the answer loud and clear?—how many general secretaries of trade unions are women? To save them the embarrassment, I will give the House the answer. There are three, out of 73. That is a great achievement for the Labour party.

Mr. Prescott: What about the Church?

Miss Widdecombe: Opposition Members are no better at theology than they are at politics.

Then we heard an endless list of demands backed up by what appeared to be an equally endless list of spending pledges on child care. It is worth looking at what has happened to child care. If one listened to the Opposition, one would be forgiven for believing that there had been no increase in child care during the Government's term of office. Yet there have been substantial increases. The number of places in registered day nurseries, which are mainly used by working women, grew by 153 per cent. between 1988 and 1992.

Ms Short: In Labour areas.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Lady suggests that the increases have taken place in Labour areas. In fact, today there are only 23,000 places in 580 local authority-run day nurseries, compared to 29,000 in 1988. So the number of places in local authority nurseries has fallen. In 1992, there were 109,000 registered child minders with places for 254,000 children aged under five. That is an increase of 40 per cent. since 1988.

Why are Opposition Members not welcoming all that? Why are they not cheering? Why are they not delighted at what those increases represent for freeing women to go to work? Why do they sit there with long faces? Why is it that, every time something goes right and someone in Britain benefits, Opposition Members do not like it? It is because they think that we might get some of the credit.

One thing we know for a certainty. They certainly do not appear to get credit for their long spending lists. They have not managed to convince the electorate for a long time. I do not believe that they will be able to convince the electorate for an even longer time to come.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) referred to positive discrimination. I know that the issue embarrasses the Labour party. It must be especially embarrassing to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley, who replied to the debate for the Labour party. Positive discrimination did not work for Labour Members who contested shadow Cabinet places. Positive discrimination does not work. All it does is result in is a thoroughly patronising attitude to women.

At present, every woman who sits in this House—I sincerely hope that the numbers are set to multiply—knows that she got here on her own merits. She was not

handed it as a patronising gift from men. It is my ambition that every woman who sits in the House in future will also be able to sit here on her own merits.

The hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson) suggested that to choose a man as Minister for women was rather odd and an insult to women. But if we seriously believe that only women can represent women, there must be an argument that only men can represent men. It does not take us much further forward. It is a remarkably silly argument. We all represent all our electorate. We would do well to remember that 50 per cent. of our electorate are men.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) mentioned of private clubs. I entirely understand the difficulties that face women over private clubs. I understand the sort of case that the hon. Gentleman made, and I would not seek to minimise it. Nevertheless, if we are to have freedom of association and people are to be able to get together and form private clubs which they fund, it is right that they should have the freedom to do so.

Mr. Maxton: I might accept that that might just be justifiable where clubs are funded entirely by their members' own means. However, I have grave reservations about that, when clubs take large amounts of land which is designated for use for leisure activities, and use it exclusively for men. When they then expect to receive rates relief and grants from the Sports Council for their activities, it is time that the Government put their foot down and said enough was enough.

Miss Widdecombe: That is not an argument for amending the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, which we are considering today, although it might be an argument for considering means of encouraging, rather than compelling, such clubs to consider their rules.

The Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) was very critical of the fact that this is the first time that we have debated the Act since its inception, and the hon. Lady said that it was the Government's fault. Have there been no other Opposition Supply days in the past 20 years? If it was so overwhelmingly important, why have not only the Government but the Opposition not put the subject forward for debate? The hon. Lady criticised us for abolishing wages councils. I do not remember her uttering any criticism of the abolition of 11 wages councils by the previous Labour Government. In fact, there was no criticism at all.

What proves the Government's commitment is not the words we have heard from the Opposition, but what has been happening. Let me tell the House what has happened. We now have more women in full-time work; more women in part-time work; more women receiving and contributing to occupational pensions; more women rising higher in their place of work. Women are better able to choose their patterns of work. More women are breaking through in sport. There are more women in education—the Opposition did not mention that—and more women in public organisations. Real wages are 50 per cent. higher.

We have managed to achieve all that without patronising women through positive discrimination. We have managed—

Mr. Prescott: More women in the Church.

Miss Widdecombe: The Conservative party had the first woman Prime Minister, and the Labour party has never got over that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Last but not least, what about the poor men? Sex discrimination means that there should not be discrimination against either sex. Quite honestly, the poor old men have had it quite hard too. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Until recently, they had to work five years longer than women for their pensions, in spite of living five years shorter. Until recently, they were expected to bear the sole responsibility for being a breadwinner and the sole responsibility for fighting the nation's battles.

They also had the horrible prospect of being regarded with unremitting hostility by the massed ranks of the Labour sisterhood. To them are not the opportunities of part-time work; to them are not the same opportunities of flexible work. Where are the career breaks for men? Why have those things for so long been regarded as the prerogative of women? The Government's initiatives in relation to part-time work and flexible work, and encouraging new ways to work, are bringing liberation to workers of both sexes.

I suppose that it is possible—I admit that I would be rather satisfied if it happened—that in 20 years' time men will be sitting here, earnestly claiming their rights in the face of 600 women Members of Parliament. In fact, I have never really understood why the 300 Group limits itself so much. I have never understood either why those limits also seem to apply to what Opposition Members have to say.

Mr. Prescott: There is no need to shout; you only have two minutes.

Miss Widdecombe: I have no need to shout to the hon. Gentleman—for the very simple reason that, no matter how loudly anyone speaks, the hon. Gentleman somehow never appears to hear. Even when he hears, he does not understand.

Had they been here, the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Chancellor would have been interested in Labour Members' spending pledges—universal child care, vast extensions to maternity pay, all the costs that would go with a long series of amendments. Is it still the Labour party's attitude that it can promise anything and cost nothing? If so, the result will be just what it was last time.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 257, Noes 303.

Division No. 160] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Bayley, Hugh
Adams, Mrs Irene	Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Ainger, Nick	Beggs, Roy
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Bell, Stuart
Allen, Graham	Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Bennett, Andrew F.
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Benton, Joe
Armstrong, Hilary	Bermingham, Gerald
Ashton, Joe	Berry, Roger
Austin-Walker, John	Betts, Clive
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Boateng, Paul
Barnes, Harry	Boyes, Roland
Barron, Kevin	Bradley, Keith
Battle, John	Bray, Dr Jeremy

Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge HT)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'ld'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Warsing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter

Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B. (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Riifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Sleet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'ter V)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'fld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 301, Noes 253.

Division No. 161] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Rushl)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'shs)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den

Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Ellelson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanham, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'sh'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Farnham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Riffkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bex'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria

Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'k'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House notes, in the week of International Women's Day, that women in Britain now enjoy exceptionally wide and increasing opportunities underpinned by comprehensive and effective legislation; and calls on the Government to continue to pursue the policies which have made this possible.

Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Bill [*Money*]

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other Act.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10.25 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I do not wish to detain the House for long. I apologise for not being present for Friday's debate; I had to attend a public inquiry in my constituency.

It is clear that the Government did not consult adequately before encouraging the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) to present his Bill. The Rights Of Way Review Committee has been established for a long time—chaired originally by the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr Spicer), more recently by the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) and now by the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning).

I am sure that, if the Department of Transport had consulted that committee, the problems that have now cropped up could have been avoided; I am delighted, however, that a fairly hasty consultation has taken place today. I hope that the Minister will confirm that tomorrow he will formally accept two amendments that will be proposed, and that, when he draws up the regulations, he will meet the requirements of ramblers and others who use footpaths.

If we vote this motion down, the Government will have a fairly red face, but the taxpayer will save a small amount; however, the tour de France—which is coming to Britain in the summer—will be considerably embarrassed. The Government are trying to rush the measure through to make it possible to close the highway, enabling the event to take place.

That strikes me as admirable; the worry is that the definition of a highway covers not only tarmacked roads but footpaths. Ramblers fear that it may be used to close footpaths for up to three days, causing them considerable inconvenience. I hope that the amendments will be carried tomorrow, and that that fear will be alleviated as a result.

One or two cynics believe that the measure is much more expensive for the Government than it might have been, because the hon. Member for Hexham was persuaded to take the Bill on board in return for the provision of a bypass. No doubt the Minister will deny that. I will not say that I want a motorway in my constituency in return for my co-operation—although I would be quite pleased if the Government could speed up the Denton-Middleton part of the M66.

I would settle for something much more modest from the Minister. I think that, when the first order is declared to close a road, he should simply ride a bicycle along the road at some speed, proclaiming that the order is in place.

Seriously, I hope that the Minister will confirm that he will ensure that the amendments go through tomorrow, or, failing that, that they will be tabled in the Lords; and that the regulations will allay the fears of the ramblers and other groups.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Bill was passed on Friday, and the money is obviously needed. Let me suggest a way of dealing with the matter quite easily.

There are tentative proposals to widen the M1 to God knows how many lanes between junctions 28 and 32. In Derbyshire and South Yorkshire people do not want that motorway to be widened, so I suggest that the Government could use the £200 million they would have had to spend on it to pay for the Bill, which will enable the tour de France to take place in parts of southern Britain.

Mr. Bennett: I shall leave the Minister to respond to my hon. Friend's intervention.

I want assurances from the Minister that the amendments will be made to the Bill, and I want assurances about the regulations. What is even more important from the ramblers' point of view, we need assurances that his Department will consult the Rights of Way Review Committee before it introduces highway legislation that affects footpaths. That committee has done an extremely useful job during the 10 or 12 years of its existence,

10.30 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Bill, under the heading "Financial effects of the Bill", states:

"the Bill is not expected to result in any significant increase in public expenditure."

However, by passing the money resolution, we shall clearly authorise and give powers to a Minister to spend public money.

My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) mentioned the tour de France, which is just one major event. Significant costs could arise from the tour, because roads will have to be closed throughout much of our highway network. The legislation does not merely authorise that expenditure, however, as it provides for continuing powers for the Minister, and therefore potentially authorises continuing expenditure.

When Bills are introduced, it is usual for the Government to give some sign of the likely annual expenditure that will result. Will the Minister give the House that calculation? I realise that the amount might be subject to some variation, but surely his Department has made some assessment of the costs involved; otherwise, it would not need this money resolution. I hope that he will tell us what expenditure of taxpayers' money will be involved.

10.31 pm

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I endorse what my hon. Friends have said—especially the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). There was a fairly extensive debate on the Bill on Friday, with much filibustering aimed at preventing the debate on women that was to take place later.

During the debate on Friday, it was said that the Ramblers Association had made some out-of-place comments on the Bill. Reading *Hansard* will clearly show that I asked the Minister whether he would fully consider all the matters that that association brought to his attention.

The money resolution allows us the opportunity to press the Minister for a firm undertaking that the amendments tabled in our names, which will be discussed tomorrow—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Lady must understand that we are discussing the money resolution, not other matters.

Ms Walley: You are right to draw my attention to that fact, Madam Deputy Speaker. Because of the amount of money involved, proper consultation with the local authorities and with the Ramblers Association is crucial to ensure that the provisions that result from the Bill accord with what was genuinely intended by its introduction.

No one wants to stop the tour de France passing through local authority areas in the south of England. However, we must make it clear that we should not use a private Member's Bill to introduce legislation that should properly be introduced by the Government.

I am asking for proper consultation with the Ramblers Association. As my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish mentioned, there is a Rights of Way Review Committee—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is straying too far.

Ms Walley: I think that I have made my point, and I look forward to the Minister's comments, because I know that he wants the Bill to reach the statute book.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It would not be a bad idea if, at this juncture, we considered the possibility of a new Standing Order to the effect that, before a Minister rises to speak, he must utter the words, "I speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter on which I can rule tonight.

10.34 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson), who is promoting the Bill. I shall explain why a money resolution is necessary. It might be useful to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) if I begin by setting out what the money resolution is all about.

It is a technical resolution, because the Bill is unlikely to result in any overall increase in expenditure out of votes. It is therefore not possible to guess how much money might be involved, and I shall explain why. A money resolution is required because the Bill will in some cases allow traffic authorities to exercise order-making functions, instead of the police in London or district councils in the shires. The resolution is necessary for the potential transfer of costs rather than any net increase.

It is worth noting that we are considering whether to give traffic authorities discretion to charge commercial organisations for making orders under section 150 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, which is not possible at the moment. With the exception of the tour de France, most events covered by the Bill have been taking place for many years. I am thinking specifically of the London marathon, a number of carnivals such as that in Notting Hill, the Lewes bonfire party and other bonfire events in southern England. We are discussing transfers, not additional expenditure.

I deal now with the issues raised by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) did not find it necessary to make representations to us about the Bill, although we should of course have listened carefully had she done so. I understood that ramblers were consulted about the road safety aspects of the tour de France, and it was not through lack of courtesy on our part that they did not make representations earlier than they did.

However, as the hon. Gentleman said, we have indeed had constructive discussions today. It is my understanding that we are all of one mind, in the House and beyond, which is good news. I confirm that I accept the two amendments that we have discussed. I have no difficulty with that.

The regulations are a particularly important aspect of the Bill. Of course, the Bill as drafted ensures that traffic regulation for large events such as the tour de France can take place without fear of challenge. It does not seek to amend the position of smaller events, which are dealt with under other powers. As the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish knows, new clause 16B limits the effect of the orders to three days, and states that they cannot be used more than once in any calendar year. I hope that he is reassured.

Consultation is absolutely central to this method of legislating, not only for the tour de France but for other events. The fact that we were delighted to accept the offer of my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham to promote the Bill does not mean that we are sidestepping our responsibilities. It was the quickest and surest way of getting a narrow aspect of legislation on to the statute book. I understand what the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) said, but the most important issue to be covered by the Bill is consultation. As I said on Second Reading, I am minded to require a fairly lengthy period of consultation.

The Bill covers large-scale events, which will be planned well in advance, and early consultation is essential. There are a number of ways in which traffic authorities may be required to give notice of events. We should bear it in mind that it is not the traffic authorities—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the Minister, but he too is going too wide of the money order.

Mr. Key: Let me accept your wise guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall simply say that of course I take the point about the importance of notification of consultation.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has kindly offered the transport supplementary grant for the county of Derbyshire, as well as the motorway widening money and the other trunk road money from his constituency and county. I shall seriously consider the offer. It would be of enormous benefit, and I am grateful to him for his offer.

Ms Walley *rose—*

Mr. Key: I gladly give way.

Ms Walley: In relation to the money resolution, is the Minister not aware, as we are, from having read the annual report of the Department of Transport which has just been published, that the amount of money from central Government which is granted to local authorities such as Derbyshire will be cut substantially in future years?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. May I remind hon. Members on both Front Benches that that is beyond the scope of the money resolution?

Mr. Key: I am ever grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. However, it means that I am deprived of the opportunity to say how much more money I look forward to saving in the constituency of the hon. Member for Bolsover, but I shall not go into that now.

Mr. Skinner *rose—*

Mr. Key: I am delighted to give way.

Mr. Skinner: Just to ensure that it is correct, I am talking about money for widening the M1 between junctions 28 and 32. It has nothing to do with other moneys for trunk roads. Get it correct: Ministers should speak the truth.

Mr. Key: It is a question of clarification—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Ministers must also be relevant.

Mr. Key: I always try to be relevant, and I shall seek to reply to the hon. Gentleman in a relevant way by saying that I note his kind and generous offer of giving up motorway widening schemes in his constituency. I am sure that his constituents will be grateful to him for the effect that that will have on his local economy.

Mr. Bennett: I appreciate the Minister's assurances, but may I take him back to the issue of the Rights of Way Review Committee?

If the Department of the Environment has any proposals which deal with footpaths, it refers them to that committee at the beginning of consultation. The Department of Transport does not seem to realise that highway matters also cover footpaths.

It would be simple to stress to the officials in the Department that they will refer those matters to the Rights of Way Review Committee at the beginning, rather than when they find out that some mischief is afoot. That would save the Government considerable expenditure and time in chasing around trying to get it right at this late stage.

Mr. Key: There is absolutely no confusion. As I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, there is a division of responsibility on rights of way as access to the countryside between the Departments of the Environment and of Transport. The definition of a road and of a highway, with which we are concerned, is one thing, but a byway open to all traffic or a bridleway is a different issue. I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I was going to go down the path of consultation, but I was reprimanded from the Chair, so perhaps we can discuss it at another time.

I am grateful to the House for listening so carefully to the importance of the money resolution. It is a modest measure, which, as I said, is about transferring funds which may be necessary as different authorities are asked to manage traffic for events which are not sponsored by those traffic authorities but for which they nevertheless have a responsibility for the management of traffic. That is about the sum of it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham did a grand job of lobbying on behalf of his constituents for the Haltwhistle bypass. However, that had nothing to do with the issue before us. That bypass was in the roads programme some 20 years ago, long before he was the Member for Hexham. I hope that, in 20 years' time, my hon. Friend will be remembered not only as the Member for the Haltwhistle bypass, but as the Member for the tour de France as well.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other Act.

Mr. J. S. Craig (Ex-gratia Claim)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10.44 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to bring to the attention of the House the experience suffered by my constituent Mr. John Craig in seeking custody of his son. I am grateful also to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary for being here to reply to the debate and I look forward to his response with great interest.

There are a number of questions that have not been answered to my satisfaction. That is why over the next 10 minutes I shall press especially strongly the case that Mr. Craig has put to me. I hope that I shall receive satisfactory answers at the end of the debate.

The breakdown of any marriage and the pain it causes to the parties involved, especially the children, must be matters for regret. Unfortunately, parents who have divorced cannot always agree which of them should retain custody of their children. Decisions on custody matters often have to be taken by the courts after hearing the parties involved, and on the basis of expert advice.

The tragedy is that elementary failures in procedure by Norwich county court and the court welfare service prevented Mr. Craig from securing a proper hearing at all, and have left him seriously out of pocket.

Mr. Craig's case was originally straightforward. In February 1992, he obtained better rights of access to his son, who had remained with his former wife. At his solicitor's request, a court welfare officer, Mrs. Tanner, was appointed to compile a social inquiry report on Mr. Craig's son. A full hearing for Mr. Craig's claim for custody of his son was set for Friday 22 January 1993 in Norwich county court. Mr. Craig's solicitors briefed a barrister, Mrs. Margaret Gee, to represent him. Mr. Craig had to meet the costs of his barrister and solicitor himself, while his former wife was legally aided.

I must make one point absolutely clear at this stage. Mr. Craig's solicitors, Howard Pollock and Webb, told the chief clerk of Norwich county court that it would be

"a fully contested action which would occupy the Court for the entirety of the day".

Mr. Craig's counsel, Mrs. Gee, took the view that the case would require a full day, and the barrister representing Mr. Craig's ex-wife, Mr. Wardlow, apparently thought that it would take a day and a half. There can have been no doubt about the length of time that the lawyers expected the case to take, and that was known to the court before proceedings began.

There were two judges hearing civil cases in Norwich on 21 and 22 January 1993. Judge Head and Judge Mellor had cases estimated to last one day listed for 21 January. They were each expected to hear a further one-day case the following day, and one of those was Mr. Craig's. Unfortunately, it became clear that Judge Head's case would overrun 21 January, so he would not be available on 22 January.

Judge Mellor was approached by the listing officer on 21 January about the problem, and he took the view that he could deal with both the cases due to be heard on 22 January himself. Unfortunately, his original case was not concluded until after 11 am on 22 January. That meant that the case before Mr. Craig's, despite its extremely brief settlement, was not concluded until midday.

Judge Mellor then saw counsel in Mr. Craig's case. Mrs. Gee and Mr. Wardlow, the two barristers involved, applied to the judge for an adjournment to a later date. Both agreed that, because of the delay that had already occurred, the case could not be fitted in to that day's proceedings. Judge Mellor could not sit on the following Monday, and Mr. Wardlow would not be available then either. New dates were therefore agreed—18 and 19 March. Mrs. Tanner, the court welfare officer, was present in the listing officer's room when the new dates were set and agreed, and she agreed that she would be able to attend then to give her report.

That may all appear complex, but it is important that the facts be set out exactly as they have been presented to me in answer to my inquiries. The barristers and solicitors in the case had made it clear that it would not be possible to conclude the case that day, and that was known to the judge and to the listing officer. That is what makes what happened next, and the explanations given for it, so hard to believe.

The outstanding case before Judge Mellor was settled very rapidly and the listing officer, Mr. Crane, tried to contact the two counsel in Mr. Craig's case to reinstate it. Unfortunately, Mr. Craig and his representatives had left the court, so Mr. Crane could speak only to Mr. Wardlow, who declined to agree because an adjournment had already been granted and the other party's representatives had left. Attempts to use the Tannoy system to contact them failed.

At this stage, I want to be absolutely clear on two points relating to the events in question. The first is that Judge Mellor granted the adjournment. It has subsequently been claimed that he had predicted that the other case would be rapidly compromised. Mr. Crane, the listings officer, argued that on 18 March.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department referred, in his letter to me on 16 July, to the judge's belief that he would be able to deal with both this case and that of Mr. Craig on 22 January. If Judge Mellor had believed that when counsel appeared before him on 22 January, he would not have granted an adjournment of the case at all. Up to two hours of the court's working day of five and a half hours had already been lost.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): Will my hon. Friend accept it from me that Judge Mellor's decision to take the two cases on the Friday was made on the Thursday before he realised that his own case would overrun?

Mr. Thompson: I shall pursue my argument to its conclusion and then possibly respond later to what my hon. Friend said. The important point in this case is that the information that I have received as Mr. Craig's Member of Parliament has been highly confusing. The responsibility lies with my hon. Friend to establish the facts. I can only operate on the facts and the understanding that I have been given.

Mr. Crane knew that a full day was needed, yet still tried to argue that the case could have started, even though it could not finish. Indeed, he went further. He claimed that Judge Mellor believed that the court had been misled by a premature application for an adjournment. No one reading

[Mr. Thompson]

the evidence from the two firms of solicitors and counsel about the likely length of the case could believe that. The explanations offered by the court administration lacked basic credibility.

The failure to hear Mr. Craig's case on 22 January cost him £1,000 plus value added tax in fees to his counsel, apart from his solicitor's bill. Worse still was to follow for him. The hearing on 18 March began on time. Unfortunately, the court welfare officer was absent, despite her commitment to attend given on 22 January. Inquiries to the probation service revealed that Mrs. Tanner was on holiday in Australia for four weeks. It was only on 13 May that a copy of a letter from her dated 29 January announcing her unavailability was provided to the clerk of the court. Mr. Craig had become liable for a further bill of £500 plus VAT to his counsel without the case proceeding any further at all.

The case was reallocated to dates in August 1993. However, because of the delay in hearing the case, Mr. Craig was advised to abandon his claim for custody and seek better rights of access. He was obliged to accept that advice. The courts are understandably reluctant to remove children from one parent's custody when they have been settled for a lengthy period.

Serious questions arise from this case. First, there is the failure of the listing officer to contact Mr. Craig's solicitors on 22 January. That is particularly inexcusable as Howard, Pollok and Webb are a local firm which was already known to the listing officer at Norwich county court. I must stress that, despite that fact, absolutely no attempt was made to phone or fax them on 22 January.

Secondly, there is the delay in responding to the complaints of those solicitors. It took the listing officer six weeks to respond to their initial letter of 2 February complaining about the proceedings in January. His explanation of events then was not credible. Moreover, Mr. Crane declined to refer any of those initial matters to the court administrator's office. Clearly, that was obstructive, and only when pressed again did he consent to do so.

Finally, there is the matter of a letter of 29 January from Mrs. Tanner. I have no means of knowing whether it was sent by the probation service to Norwich county court at that time. If it was sent, what happened to it? Someone must have lost it. What explanation is there for the fact that, if the clerk of the court received a copy on 13 May, my hon. Friend's Department did not know of it on 18 May when it wrote to my constituent's solicitors refusing to pay compensation? Which officer of the court failed to inform my hon. Friend of the letter's existence before he wrote to me on 16 July again declining to accept liability for the administrative errors that had occurred?

How was it that my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), a Minister of State, Home Office, was able to write to me on 23 August last year informing me of the letter's existence, but no acknowledgement of its existence was given from Lord Chancellor's Department before 12 November?

One or more officers of Norwich county court failed to tell the full story. I have no doubt that it was convenient for the county court administrators to be able to blame the probation service for not having informed the court that Mrs. Tanner would be unavailable in March. To ordinary people, it looks like a cover-up.

Is not the truth that the county court officers at Norwich have been more than economical with the truth because of their blunders?

I said that I felt strongly about the way in which my constituent has been treated, and I am trying to get that across during the debate. The most alarming feature is that no one was willing to accept responsibility for the mistakes that occurred. Norwich county court's listings officer has blamed the counsel in the case for the failure to hear it on 22 January. That is not acceptable or credible, for the reasons given by the Lord Chancellor's Department to Mr. Craig's solicitors in May 1993. The court must rely on the estimates of time given by the parties' solicitors—in this case, one full day.

It is on the basis of the fallacious information supplied by the listings officer that compensation has been refused by the Lord Chancellor's Department to Mr. Craig. I hope that my hon. Friend will announce that there has been a change of heart tonight. I am equally concerned that neither the Home Office nor the Lord Chancellor's Department accepts responsibility for the failure to conclude the proceedings in March 1993.

It is not good enough to accept that Mrs. Tanner's letter was sent to Norwich county court, and that no blame therefore falls on Norfolk probation service. If it was sent, Norwich county court should have made the parties to the case aware of it. If the explanation that I received from the Home Office is right, Mr. Craig has been failed by the county court's administrators. The county court appears to prefer to rely on a claim that it did not receive the letter at all. We can all recognise the buck-passing here, which is occurring on a grand scale.

Mr. Craig should have had justice in the courts—instead, he got a shabby deal. All he has received has been a litany of incredible excuses. I hope that tonight he will receive a proper apology, a full explanation and the overdue compensation which he deserves. I look forward to receiving a positive response from my hon. Friend and, once again, I am grateful to him for hearing me out.

10.57 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): I know how strongly my hon. Friend feels. He has been my hon. Friend for 11 years, and my personal friend for 20 years. I can well understand also the distress that his constituent Mr. Craig feels at the adjournment on two occasions of his application for custody of his son. As a result, he has suffered not only a delay in resolving an extremely sensitive and important family issue, but the wasted legal costs of the adjourned hearings.

My Department is always prepared to consider any reasonable request for payment for such costs. However, there is an extremely important principle to consider whenever requests for payments from public funds are made. That is the duty that I have to the taxpayer to ensure that the financial loss from which payment is sought has genuinely arisen as a result of errors made by departmental staff. In this instance, I do not consider that to be the case.

To explain why, I shall outline the circumstances that led to the adjournment of each hearing, and the reasons for the refusal of Mr. Craig's claim in each case. I beg the forgiveness of the small audience present, and that of the

perhaps larger readership tomorrow, if there is good deal of overlap between what I have to say and what my hon. Friend said.

The first hearing took place at Norwich county court on 22 January 1993. As my hon. Friend said, two judges were hearing civil matters at the court that week, Judge Head and Judge Mellor. On the day before Mr. Craig's hearing, each judge had a single case in his list for which the parties had given a time estimate of one day. On 22 January, two one-day cases were listed, one of which was Mr. Craig's. Thus, there was every reason to suppose that Mr. Craig's case would be heard.

Unfortunately, it became clear during the preceding day, the Thursday, that the case being heard by Judge Head would considerably overrun. That meant that Judge Head would be unable to hear either of the two cases listed for 22 January. On Thursday 21 January, the court listing officer, Mr. Crane, consulted Judge Mellor, who examined the files and decided that he would be able to hear both cases. He instructed that the other case be listed before Mr. Craig's case, as he believed that it was likely to settle.

In the event, Judge Mellor's case of 21 January overran until 11.15 am on 22 January. Then counsel in Mr. Craig's case requested an adjournment, which was granted. Judge Mellor began to hear the other outstanding case, which reached settlement within a few minutes. The listing officer made urgent attempts to locate Mr. Craig and his representatives to see whether they wanted the judge to hear the case after all, but they had already left. The listing officer was right to do that. Mr. Craig's solicitors wrote to the court on 2 February complaining that the list for 22 January had been overloaded. The listing officer did not reply to that letter until 18 March. I apologise to my hon. Friend for that delay, which was clearly unacceptable.

My hon. Friend doubts the version of events given in the listing officer's letter. I agree that the letter was confusing and that the tone in which it was written was unfortunate. Specifically, the listing officer's initial refusal to refer the matter to the courts administrator's office, as requested, was clearly wrong. For that, too, I apologise. However, the fact remains that Judge Mellor instructed the listing officer on 21 January to list both cases before him on 22 January, and he did so.

There are two important principles here. First, in preparing lists, courts have to rely on the time estimates given by the parties. If the estimate proves to be inaccurate, that is not the fault of the court. The president of the family division has recently issued a direction which emphasises the responsibilities of the parties in that matter.

Secondly, there is the fundamental principle of judicial independence. As my hon. Friend will know, the judiciary is entirely independent of Government. That means that neither I nor any of my officials can intervene in individual cases or seek to question or influence judicial decisions. Listing is a judicial function, not an administrative one. The judge decides the list; the listing officer does his bidding. No blame can be attached to the court for its actions on 22 January.

The second hearing of 18 March 1993 was fixed when the hearing of 22 January was adjourned. The court welfare officer involved in the case was present on 22 January, as my hon. Friend said, and confirmed that she could attend on 18 March. However, on 18 March the court welfare officer failed to appear. The judge asked where she was and was told that she was in Australia. The judge then adjourned that hearing.

The court subsequently asked for an explanation from the local court welfare service, which, as my hon. Friend knows, comes under the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. The service wrote to the court on 13 May enclosing a copy of a letter from the court welfare officer to the court dated 29 January, in which she said that she would not be able to attend the hearing. There was no record that the original letter had been received by the court. Subsequent exhaustive searches have failed to produce any evidence that it was ever received.

Regrettably, some confusion arose in the course of my correspondence with my hon. Friend about the case, because court staff did not initially tell officials at the Lord Chancellor's Department's headquarters of the court's correspondence with the court welfare service following the second hearing. I apologise for that error. My hon. Friend asked to be told who it was made by. It was made by the deputy chief clerk in the absence of the chief clerk. However, I am satisfied that that was an unfortunate oversight by the court, and that there was no intention to mislead Mr. Craig.

As I have said, there is no evidence that the court welfare officer's letter was received by the court before the hearing on 18 March. The court cannot be expected to have taken action on a letter that it did not receive. In those circumstances, the court cannot be held to be at fault and thus there can be no payment.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: On the subject of payment, does my hon. Friend accept—I am sure that he does—that the delays that we have debated tonight have cost my constituent, Mr. Craig, a considerable sum of money? I specified the approximate sums in my speech. Therefore, in spite of the technicalities, my constituent has lost money, and he has a case in natural justice. Will my hon. Friend respond to that argument?

Mr. Taylor: I am sure that Mr. Craig has lost money. I think that the whole tenor of my remarks has been to concede that. However, the Lord Chancellor's Department is bound by law. There are only certain circumstances in which payments can be made. There must be demonstrable administrative error that gives rise to the consequential loss. It is my Department's case that there is no demonstrable administrative error causing the loss.

I have also indicated to my hon. Friend, without seeking to be at all personally critical of the listing process, that the listing process is not administrative but judicial, and it is independent of Government and independent of the Lord Chancellor's Department.

As I have said, there is no evidence that the court welfare officer's letter was received by the court before the hearing on 18 March. The court cannot be expected to have taken action on a letter which it did not receive. In those circumstances—at the risk of saying it twice—the court cannot be held to be at fault and thus there can be no payment.

I sympathise with Mr. Craig in his misfortune and the financial loss that he has suffered. However, I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that it would not be proper for

[Mr. Taylor]

me to authorise payment from public funds when that loss was not caused by administrative errors on the part of my staff.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 11 March 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Disabled Persons

9.34 am

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): I have the honour of presenting a petition under the seal of the city of Edinburgh district council in support of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry), which prays that this honourable House will take steps to ensure that the bill shall be passed into law in order that people with disabilities can achieve equality of opportunity throughout the land.

To lie upon the Table.

Heathrow (Mortar Attack)

9.35 am

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish for guidance relating to incidents that occurred in my constituency during the past two days. You will recall that Heathrow is in my constituency and we had a mortar bomb attack on Wednesday evening. I wrote to you on Thursday, asking for you to give consideration for me to ask a private notice question, which you, in your wisdom, turned down. I wrote to you in that way because I understood that the Home Secretary was not prepared to come to the House and make a statement.

As you know, there was another mortar bomb attack last night in another part of the airport in my constituency. If the Home Secretary is not prepared to come here to make a statement, for whatever reasons he may feel valid, and you decline, in your wisdom, to allow me a private notice question which would make him come to the Chamber, how can I raise issues on behalf of my constituents about that major situation if I cannot get access to the House? Those issues are being debated in the public domain, but we are being prevented from debating them here in the House of Commons.

Madam Speaker: It is not my usual habit to grant a private notice question on a matter of terrorist bombings, which involve the national security, but I would remind the hon. Gentleman that neither the submission of a private notice question nor its subsequent rejection by me should be referred to publicly.

I understand the difficulties that the hon. Gentleman may well be placed in. He wants to keep his constituents informed, and to give them some confidence in these matters. The Home Secretary of course did make an announcement during the debate on Wednesday evening. The hon. Gentleman might, at that time, have tried to put questions or involve himself in that debate, but at present I am not inclined to grant a private notice question on matters of security.

Mr. Dicks: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. First, I apologise to you for making public that decision. I was not aware that it was a confidential decision. The reason that I did not raise the subject in the Chamber was that I was not here at that time, but the Home Secretary made a statement only on the facts as they were coming in. I wanted a statement the next day, when the picture was becoming clearer.

Madam Speaker: I do understand. The Home Secretary did not make a statement. He in fact made an announcement. He informed the House of the factual occurrences at the time.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Well, it would have been difficult for anyone to engage in a debate with the Home Secretary the other night when the House was discussing the finality of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, because he told the House what had happened in the last two minutes of his statement, and he used it for another purpose, as we all know. The hon. Member could not have questioned him at all, and neither could anyone else.

It used to be the case that, if there were crises of that type, and major disruptions, there were statements in the House. I find it very strange and disturbing that this Government, as opposed to any other, have decided in recent years that it is not the done thing to talk about such matters as bombing.

The public know that that is a big issue, and the House of Commons is supposed to represent the views of the people outside. I cannot understand why the Government can be very selective about those issues that they want to talk about, but matters of major importance—irrespective of the issue and the side that anyone might take—are not debated in the House at all. Therefore, I would have thought that it was incumbent on the Home Secretary or one of the Ministers to put themselves at that Dispatch Box to answer questions about those major matters.

Madam Speaker: To make the matter clear, I may tell the hon. Gentleman that I have not been told by any Minister that he seeks to make a statement.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. On a day on which we are to debate civil rights and disabilities, I am sure that you and the rest of the House share my opinion about the taking of the basic civil right in Northern Ireland last evening, when a police constable relaxing in his pastime of greyhound sport was murdered. That is a much more serious aspect. I know that the House, on behalf of all the people of Northern Ireland, would wish to express its sympathy.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that we all endorse the hon. Gentleman's sentiments.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. There was a series of outrages throughout Northern Ireland last night, including that to which my hon. Friend referred, yet no statement has been forthcoming from the relevant Minister. The time has come for a statement to be made to the House on matters that are

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

in the public domain and of real concern, and which ought to be debated in the House. Where else should the nation's difficulties be debated than in the House of Commons?

Madam Speaker: I am sure that those who are present on the Treasury Bench this morning have heard the hon. Gentleman's remarks, and they may well take note of them.

Orders of the Day

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.40 am

Mr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The aim of the Bill could not be clearer—to secure for disabled people a statutory right to protection against discrimination. It is not about charity, being paternalistic or —as someone said to me the other day—being nice to disabled people. It is about rights.

The Bill's purpose is to ensure that the disabled have the same rights as everyone else in employment, housing, education, public transport and provision of other goods, services and facilities. It is certain that the Bill, or something like it, will eventually reach the statute book. When that happens, we shall look back and wonder why on earth that took so long—why, in 1994, we had to spend time debating whether or not 6.5 million people in this country should have the right to protection against discrimination.

This Bill and others having the same objective have been before the House several times previously. The Bill is not new, and nor is it mine—except that I used my good luck in the ballot to reintroduce it. Credit for the Bill's authorship and promotion must go to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who is the parliamentarian above all who has done most to campaign for equal rights for disabled people and to secure legislation to support them. It is a privilege and pleasure for me to move the Second Reading of what should be regarded as my right hon. Friend's Bill.

I am grateful to those right hon. and hon. Members who sponsored the Bill and so successfully campaigned for it. The Bill literally has all-party support. For the first time ever, it can be said that a clear majority of right hon. and hon. Members are on record as supporting such a Bill. I pay tribute to the crucial role played by the all-party disablement group—so ably co-chaired by the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) and by my noble Friend Lord Ashley—in promoting anti-discrimination legislation. The role of the group will no doubt be referred to later. Suffice it to say now that its support for the Bill was both unequivocal and extremely active. I place on record my respect for the sterling work of the hon. Member for Exeter.

Credit for any success today and any success at subsequent stages of the Bill must go to organisations and individuals outside the House who campaigned long and hard for anti-discrimination legislation. There cannot be a right hon. or hon. Member who has not been lobbied and received letters, telephone calls and, yes, postcards. A quarter of a million postcards were sent to right hon. and hon. Members—and that campaign was certainly not co-ordinated by me.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): By the Post Office, perhaps?

Mr. Berry: Then God bless the Post Office.

Although we all like to take credit when we can, that remarkable campaign—which included Wednesday's

mass lobby—was co-ordinated by a network known as Voluntary Organisations for Anti-Discrimination Legislation. Every organisation of and for disabled people was involved. The number is so great that it is impossible to name them all, but they are well known to right hon. and hon. Members. They want not thanks for a campaign well run but action from the House to eliminate discrimination.

I have received countless letters of support from organisations, and many local councils went to the trouble of passing resolutions. I also received letters from mayors here, there and everywhere. I am grateful for them all, and if I do not refer to all those organisations in this speech, it is only because I want to leave time for the many other hon. Members who want to speak.

Of the thousands of letters, telephone calls and postcards that I received in support of the Bill, I have yet to receive one opposing it. If any interests, community organisations, hon. Members or other individuals are unhappy about the Bill, thus far I have not received such communication.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his success in the ballot. Presumably he is not on the mailing list of the Institute of Directors, because there are some rather uncertain signals coming from that body. Yesterday, I received a fax from the institute that suggested, somewhat disappointingly, that right hon. and hon. Members should oppose the Bill. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should note that opposition from one quarter.

Mr. Berry: It would appear that I am not on that institute's mailing list, because I have not received a communication from it on the Bill, or any other matter, in recent weeks.

At least 6.5 million disabled people in Britain face discrimination every day—an average, I remind right hon. and hon. Members, of 10,000 people in each parliamentary constituency. Discrimination may be direct or indirect, and the Bill seeks to address both forms. A disabled person with the skills required to do a job may be denied it because the employer refuses to appoint disabled people. Alternatively, inaccessible buildings, inadequate public transport and necessary conditions of employment may exclude a disabled person from undertaking a particular activity.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I must tell my hon. Friend that the Houses of Parliament are among the worst in provisions for disabled people. In the mid-1980s, a friend of mine who suffered a disability came into the House. There were no handrails on the steps coming in to Central Lobby to help him to get up. He asked me whether I would undertake to try to get them provided. Does my hon. Friend realise that it took two and a half years to get them? Even when we start to make some progress in the House in helping people with disabilities, it takes an awful long time. Should we not also put our own House in order?

Mr. Berry: Yes. Indeed, one of the most obvious examples of indirect discrimination is present today. There is no ban on people who use wheelchairs from attending the debate and sitting in the Strangers' Gallery, but only four places are provided for them.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I apologise to my hon. Friend for interrupting, but there are serious problems. In the seminar for disabled civil servants, one pointed out to me that his promotion is limited by the fact that his wheelchair cannot get into the Box in the corner. There are problems in the House that must be addressed, and will be addressed by the Bill.

Mr. Berry: That is an appalling situation. It is clear that one does not need much wit and intelligence to get around that problem. I hope that that it is resolved quickly. If the powers that be have any difficulty in identifying individuals who can advise them on how to get around that problem, if they contact myself or the organisations to which I have referred, we can give some advice. My hon. Friend is right.

The staff of the Serjeant at Arms' Department have gone out of their way to be extremely helpful today. I thank them most warmly for that. But I have to say, with not a little sadness, indeed anger, that the lack of sufficient space in the Strangers' Gallery for people who use wheelchairs is one reason why members of the disability equalities advisory sub-committee of Avon county council—my local council—have had to cancel their visit here today. They were planning to attend the debate, but cannot do so because of inadequate access in this place.

On a personal note, that means that many of those who contributed to my own disability awareness—people associated with Avon county council's equal opportunities unit and the Avon coalition of disabled people, to whom I pay great credit—like many others, are excluded from the debate today.

As we all know, the problems of access at the Palace of Westminster were illustrated on Wednesday, when 3,000 people—mainly disabled people—attended one of the largest lobbies to be seen here in many a year. Despite the best ever efforts of the staff of the Serjeant at Arms' Department—I again pay tribute to them—the situation, to put it mildly, was extremely difficult. Access was inadequate.

It was a successful afternoon, but the quote of the afternoon was the announcement, "You have to use the toilet now—the contractors are taking it away." Can one imagine the situation if, after Prime Minister's Questions, Madam Speaker said that to the House? If hon. Members do not have to accept that nonsense in the House, why on earth should the people we represent, who pay our salaries, have to suffer that appalling situation? There are countless examples of discrimination that, no doubt, will be referred to this morning.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on presenting the Bill, particularly representing the constituency he does, and recalling what happened on an earlier Bill. We hope that it will not be talked out today.

On access, some people make a big meal of the fact that it will cost a lot of money over time to get it sorted out. Will he confirm that clause 8 enables everything to be brought on stream over five years, thus avoiding the possibility of not having a starting order, and having a coherent time frame in which to ensure reasonable access to buildings which the public have a right to enter—not only private buildings—and that those problems have now been faced constructively and should make the Bill acceptable to hon. Members in all parts of the House?

Mr. Berry: I very much welcome that comment. I shall refer to costs in a few moments.

[Mr. Berry]

Before I do, and perhaps at the risk of repeating some obvious examples of discrimination that we have encountered simply by reading the newspapers, I shall give one or two examples of matters that we should address, and which can by addressed only by supporting the Bill.

Examples are legion: a doctor who spent much of her life helping fellow blind people, arrived at Buckingham Palace to receive the MBE in recognition of her work and was ordered to leave her dog outside; students with hearing impairment achieved three straight As at A-level—I used to work in a university and do not know many people who achieved that—and were not given interviews for a university place because of their hearing impairment, except by Bristol university; children are refused places in mainstream schools because of difficulties in physical access or because, allegedly, it is cheaper to segregate them in special schools.

The official statistics speak for themselves and are worth repeating. Disabled people are three times more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled people. Employers are six times more likely to turn down for an interview a disabled person with identical qualifications and experience as they are a non-disabled applicant.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): The 1991 census shows that, in Blaenau Gwent, 41 per cent. of households had someone suffering from long-term illness or disability. That is one of the highest in England and Wales. Blaenau Gwent is also the second poorest borough in Wales. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, in attacking discrimination, we are also attacking poverty, because more often than not the disabled have the greatest problems in achieving employment?

Mr. Berry: That is right. The statistics fully support that position. The denial of basic rights is confining millions of people to low incomes and poverty. That is one of the things that follows from discrimination. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to that.

The evidence is irrefutable. Today in the United Kingdom there is no difficulty in discriminating against disabled people without breaking any law. Such discrimination is simply not illegal. Quite rightly, legislation outlaws discrimination on the grounds of gender and race, but no such protection exists for disabled people. The Bill seeks to put that right.

Before I outline the main provisions of the Bill and deal with the arguments against it, let me remind the House of its origins. Early in 1979, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe, who was then Minister for Disabled People, appointed a committee of inquiry to examine the matter, following extensive representations from disabled people and their organisations. The Committee on Restrictions Against Disabled People reported to the Government in 1982 and recommended comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. I refer briefly to three of its recommendations:

"There should be legislation to make discrimination on the grounds of disability illegal."

"The law should cover all areas where discrimination occurs".

"There should be a regulatory body or Commission with powers to investigate, conciliate and if necessary take legal action on individual complaints of discrimination".

This is not the first time that the House has been asked to implement the recommendations of that report. The matter has been discussed often in the past, most recently on 31 January 1992 and 26 February 1993, when we debated the Bill for a total of seven hours.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on introducing this Bill. Will he comment on the electoral consequences of previous attempts to bring forward the Bill and on how it was blocked? The hon. Gentleman has good cause to know that the person concerned not only ceased to be a Member of this House but failed to return after the Christchurch by-election.

As the Bill has such strong support in the south-west, including my area of Cornwall, does he think that the Government have understood the lessons of that experience? Has he received any assurances that, whatever happens in the House today, the Bill will not be emasculated in Committee? Many hon. Members on both sides who support the Bill are afraid that that might happen.

Mr. Berry: On the first part of that intervention, I have already said that many people are concerned with equal rights for disabled people. Each constituency has an average of 10,000 disabled people. I am convinced that people who elect representatives by an overwhelming majority want such a provision. I do not wish to intervene further in private grief. Of course, the issue came up in Kingswood during the last election, but the key point is that the vast majority of people, all disabled people and organisations representing disabled people, without exception, want the Bill. I shall therefore not be diverted further in that direction.

When the House last debated the Bill, it passed a motion in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), endorsing it. The Bill has been through all its stages in the other place. On the first day of this Session, together with other sponsors of the Bill, I tabled an early-day motion calling for anti-discrimination legislation and the Bill's early introduction. That early-day motion currently has the support of 310 hon. Members, which is more than any other early-day motion this Session.

Although, by convention, Front-Bench Members do not sign early-day motions—at least, some of them do not—I have 20 written statements from Front-Bench Members. So that makes a total of 330 Members who have supported the Bill in writing. I do not wish to be controversial this morning, so I am almost tempted not to mention that that is many more than the number of Members who voted for the Maastricht treaty. It is a clear majority of Members of this House, and we have never been in that position before. Parliamentary democracy requires that that be recognised with the speedy passage of the Bill.

The Bill seeks to be comprehensive. It outlaws discrimination in employment, housing, transport and the provision of goods and services of all kinds by public and private sectors. It also sets up a commission to pursue those objectives in line with the CORAD report, investigate complaints and assist disabled people to enforce their rights. The Bill provides that at least two thirds of the members of that commission should be disabled people. It also provides disabled people with new rights to equal treatment at every stage in the recruitment, promotion and dismissal process of employment.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Does my hon. Friend share the concern expressed by many people that, as the labour market is forced to become more

flexible and employers become more selective in their employment policies, unless the Bill is put on the statute book, discrimination in employment opportunities for people with disabilities is likely to get far worse?

Mr. Berry: I very much agree. The present position is clear and accepted by everybody: no-one can argue that discrimination does not take place, or that it is not serious. As the labour market becomes more difficult, unemployment and casual labour increase, and it becomes harder for people to enforce their rights. The Bill becomes even more important when people have more difficulty in securing employment because of high unemployment.

Not only does the Bill provide protection against direct discrimination, but employers are required to make reasonable accommodation for disabled people by adapting or modifying the work place. It makes unlawful direct and indirect discrimination in the provision of goods, services and facilities. Businesses and organisations that provide goods, services and facilities must provide reasonable accommodation for disabled people. Finally, the Bill establishes a commission to monitor the effectiveness of new legislation and assist in its enforcement.

There is nothing exceptional about those provisions. They are commonly found in anti-discrimination legislation dealing with sexism and racism in this country and in more comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in other countries, notably the United States' disability legislation of 1990.

Although the Bill has overwhelming support, a few opponents still raise objections to it. Opponents of anti-discrimination legislation cannot and do not deny that discrimination exists, but they argue, first, that discrimination can be eliminated by education and persuasion; secondly, that legislation is unworkable; and, thirdly, that its implementation would be too costly.

If education and persuasion were sufficient to guarantee disabled people equal rights, we would not need this debate today. The fact that discrimination still exists on such a scale exposes that argument for the nonsense it is. Even if we go back no further, we have had 12 years of education and persuasion since the CORAD report. We were told then that we did not need comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, because education and persuasion would work. Although those who believe that have been working hard to educate and persuade, 12 years later we still need to debate the matter.

I am in favour of educating and persuading people but discrimination against disabled people—or anybody else—is wrong. Anyone who thinks that it provides a credible alternative to legislating simply ignores the evidence before us. Without the proper legal framework, education and persuasion simply do not work. Those who used to oppose laws against sexism and racism said that education and persuasion would work. They were wrong for exactly the same reason that it is wrong to put that argument against this Bill.

The second argument is that legislation will not work. We are told that legislation cannot be used to promote equal opportunities for disabled people, because it would be unworkable.

It is important to remember at this point that the Bill has already had a Second Reading and been through all its stages in another place. There are probably more lawyers per square inch in another place than in the Old Bailey. If those lawyers say that legislation can work, they are sending out an important message: they say that it can work, and that it is absolutely essential.

Moreover, in its report of November 1992 entitled "Disability, Discrimination and Employment Law," the Law Society concluded:

"There is a need for the creation of a new statutory civil right to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities in the workplace."

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West) *rose—*

Mr. Berry: I shall give way in a moment.

The report went on to say:

"the employment provisions appearing in the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill indicate precisely the direction in which the law should move."

Yesterday, the Law Society took the trouble of writing to me to reiterate that it believes that the civil rights basis is the correct approach to extending the rights of people with disabilities, welcomes the Bill and hopes that the Government will agree to support it. In that spirit, I am delighted to give way to the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern).

Mr. Stern: I simply wanted to ask whether the hon. Gentleman could recollect a previous occasion on which the Law Society had argued for less work for lawyers?

Mr. Berry: I can indeed, because the Law Society has not always supported anti-discrimination legislation in this sphere. As always, I am extremely grateful to my colleague, the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West, because he has made my point for me.

I should not want anyone to think that the Law Society has always supported the Bill simply because it would create jobs for lawyers. I am not a lawyer, so I too can have that suspicion. The Law Society reached its conclusion after a careful study of the situation and, with its knowledge and professional expertise, arrived at the result to which I referred.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Is it not a confession that the Law Society and others recognise that there is wholesale discrimination and that they are frightened of being caught out? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the real purpose of legislation is to reflect the basic values and standards of the society in which we live? Surely there is something wrong if we are not allowed to discriminate against a black person but can discriminate against a black—or white—disabled person.

Mr. Berry: Quite so. Discrimination is wrong, and the law should be used to protect people against it, whatever its cause.

The United States passed the Americans with Disabilities Act 1990, which is probably the most comprehensive civil rights legislation for disabled people in the world. It provides the legal framework that establishes the right of all disabled people to participate equally in society. When President Bush signed the Act—this is probably the first time that I have complimented President Bush in public; I hope that my colleagues will not hold it against me or think that I am becoming more moderate in my old age—he said:

"Let the shame of the wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down."

All credit to him for that.

Since the introduction of that Act, all the evidence confirms that the quality of life of disabled people there has

[Mr. Berry]

been significantly enhanced. If legislation can be effective in tearing down the "wall of exclusion" that faced millions of disabled people in the United States, it can be effective in the United Kingdom. That view was shared by the Select Committee on Employment in its report of 1991, which also called for legislation of this type. As I said, similar legislation already exists to deal with sexism and racism.

The third argument is that of cost, although I hope that it will not be deployed for much longer. It is perhaps the issue on which there is the most genuine disagreement. Those who oppose the Bill tell us that we might be right about education and persuasion, and they take our point about legislation—they accept that it might be difficult to argue that the law cannot be used to prevent discrimination against disabled people, but can be used to fight against racism and sexism—but the problem is the cost. They say that it would cost too much to secure equal rights for disabled people.

That is the thrust of an anonymous document that appeared on the table in the Press Gallery on Monday afternoon. It is entitled "Background Brief: Eliminating Discrimination against Disabled People." I recognise some of the documentation, but there is no name attached and no Government Department is identified. However, I think that it is fair to say that it seeks to put across the Government's view. In any event, that is how journalists interpreted it.

The document states that the Bill

"would potentially result . . . in massive costs to the taxpayer, business and the consumer . . . it is estimated to run into many billions of pounds."

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the most despicable aspects of that argument is that no one has pointed out the cost to society of denying the many talents that the disabled can bring to our economy and all aspects of work?

Mr. Berry: Absolutely. There are two remarkable things about the document. The first, to which the hon. Lady referred, is the fact that there is no mention of the costs that disabled people face as a result of discrimination. There is no mention of the possible cost of not enacting legislation—not a word.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I have here a document signed by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People which makes none of the comments to which the hon. Gentleman refers. It gives his reflections on the situation and some facts about costs.

I know that my right hon. Friend supports anything that we can do for disabled people. I, too, support the Bill, but it is unfair of the hon. Gentleman to make such accusations unless he is sure that the document comes from my right hon. Friend, who, as evidenced from this document that bears his name, adopts a reasonable and helpful approach —although I do not necessarily accept it—and has nothing to hide.

Mr. Berry: I am prepared to make the document available in the Library, or whatever the proper procedure is. I have been very careful; I have no idea who provided the document to journalists on Monday afternoon, as there is no name on it although it begins with the words, "the Government".

Either it represents the Government's view, or it is a forgery. There is open and not-so-open government. I have mentioned how the document appeared and the fact that it bore no name, but I do not want to digress—the point is that it states specifically that it will cost billions of pounds if the Bill is passed. It fails to recognise the costs of discrimination faced by disabled people.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North) *rose—*

Mr. Berry: I was hoping not to speak for too long, but I shall give way for the last time.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I have here a copy of a letter from the Minister which states that the Bill would

"lead to litigation and unquantifiable costs for business and taxpayers."

Mr. Berry: I am about to deal with that point.

The document gives three examples of the costs involved: the cost of lifts at British Rail stations, the cost of improving access to schools and the cost of refurbishing a cinema. Each and every one of those costs would have to be incurred if education and persuasion worked. How is it possible to be told on the one hand that we do not need legislation, because education and persuasion will give disabled people what they are entitled to, and on the other hand that, if we do those things, it would cost money and that is why we should not pass the Bill?

The arguments of those who oppose anti-discrimination legislation have been mutually contradictory. I could give other examples, but I do not have time. On occasion, there is evidence that the arguments are made up as we go along.

Cost is the crucial issue that may still divide us, although I hope that it does not. I think that we are winning the argument, but it may be the issue that still concerns some. It is 12 years since the publication of that CORAD report, which first recommended anti-discrimination legislation. Those who have been concerned about costs have had 12 years in which to produce serious evidence that, considering the benefits and the costs, there was a case to say that we should do nothing.

Where is the serious evidence and analysis of the economic implications of anti-discrimination legislation which was recommended in that report to Government 12 years ago? I have never seen it.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman that a thorough cost-benefit analysis of anti-discrimination legislation is vital. It has struck me as strange that the Government did not commission one some time ago.

Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, at a meeting that I had with my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Employment on 1 February, I asked him whether the Government had such a cost-benefit analysis, and he said no? I asked him whether he would commission a cost-benefit analysis, and there and then he did so from his officials. However, in a question for written answer at the beginning of the week, I asked whether the Secretary of State for Employment could at least make available the preliminary findings of that analysis. The question was transferred to the Department of Social Security, and I was informed that there was no cost-benefit analysis.

Mr. Berry: The hon. Member is absolutely correct. As I recall, he and I attended a meeting of the all-party disablement group in the past week, where the Secretary of State for Employment and Lord Henley were asked for

evidence of the potential costs of the legislation. Lord Henley, with the candour of a man who really believes that Ministers should not mislead the House, said:

"We do not know how much it would cost".

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. When they are pressed, we are told that they do not know. There has been more than adequate time for those who believe that costs are prohibitive to produce some evidence. They have failed to do so. It is ironic that, even on this subject, prejudice rather than facts seems to hold sway.

Research in the United States shows that costs need not be a problem. Anti-discrimination legislation is cost-effective and enables more disabled people to become economically active and independent, rather than having to rely on benefits. Businesses are open to more customers and therefore derive economic benefit; the more that disabled people are able to work, the greater the tax revenues and less has to be spent on social security.

The Bill explicitly recognises the need for gradual implementation and for any changes to be reasonable. Clearly, not all trains can be made accessible overnight, but all new trains can, and a phased programme of improvements can be implemented on existing ones.

More important than anything else, I would argue that it is the very discrimination itself that costs too much. The costs falling on disabled people are ignored by opponents of the Bill in favour of alleged costs to the Treasury. Disabled people have to deal with their disability, the cost of being denied work and the basic human rights of choice, participation and independence—the cost of being denied the same rights as everyone else.

It is intolerable that the costs which discrimination impose on disabled people should be brushed aside, while unquantified, alleged costs to the Treasury should be presented as a reason to deny people their basic civil and human rights. If anyone were to support that scandalous proposition, one may well ask about their view of existing legislation on equal opportunities and race relations.

During his New Year interview for the BBC Radio 4 programme "The World This Weekend", the Prime Minister committed his Government to a classless society with the words:

"When I talk about a classless society I am talking about a society in which everybody, wherever they may come from, whatever they may start with, will have the same opportunities to progress as other people who perhaps start from quite different circumstances."

The Bill is about creating precisely such equal opportunities for disabled people. Anti-discrimination legislation is now supported by a majority of Members of Parliament. Such a Bill has now been through all its stages in the House of Lords.

Disabled people are rightly demanding their rights. They are demanding no more and no less than, to use the Prime Minister's words,

"the same opportunities . . . as other people".

The Bill, or something very like it, will eventually reach the statute book. I repeat that, in years to come, we shall look back and wonder why on earth it took so long. Why should we accept any further delay?

Discrimination against disabled people is simply unacceptable. There ought to be a law against it—if the Bill reaches the statute book, there will be.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Before I call the next hon. Member, may I point out that there is a long list of hon. Members who wish to speak, and that overlong speeches are not fair to other hon. Members?

10.27 am

Sir John Hannam (Exeter): This is an important and exciting day for the 6.5 million disabled people in our country. I am proud, as I am sure many hon. Members are, to be able to lend support to the anti-discrimination Bill of the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry). He follows in the footsteps of eminent parliamentarians and hon. Members who have endeavoured to promote similar Bills. Indeed, he is sitting next to the most consistent of those campaigners, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), whose efforts with all those who are active in the sphere of disablement are at last about to bear fruit.

We all congratulate the hon. Member on his excellent speech. It is hard to conceive of anyone, having listened to the arguments which he deployed, voting against the Second Reading. If there are opponents in the House, they only needed to be in Westminster Hall on Wednesday to meet the 1,000 or more disabled people who came to lobby their Members of Parliament. The deep and passionate feelings held by them were expressed most vividly to all of us and talking to some of those disabled to people produced some illustrative and interesting examples of the kinds of barriers that they face in their every day lives.

A person who came up to me as I was talking to Lord Ashley said that he was the organiser of the Horizon Adventure Club from Cornwall, which is a club for young adults with learning difficulties. It enables them to lead fruitful lives. He said that if I wanted an example of discrimination, he would tell me what had happened to that group in the past week. He said that they wanted to hire a meeting room in a publicly owned building that was operated by a voluntary organisation, but they were denied use of the hall on the ground that it could not be used by subnormal people.

When I asked other people on that rally on Wednesday whether they had individual examples of being denied their normal rights, every hand in the hall went up and a roar of support echoed around the vaulted heights of the Great Hall.

I admit that it was a very emotional afternoon. I know that, as legislators, we must be objective and put emotions on one side. However, it is only too easy for us here to become immersed in the technicalities of statutes and other legislation and we can forget what is going on in the world outside and in the lives of the millions of disabled people in the community. I refer to the hearing-impaired, the sight-impaired, the physically handicapped, those with learning difficulties, those with disabling diseases—which are not always visible—children and adults needing education, disabled people who want to work—and, as they so often tell us, to pay their taxes—and those needing accessible transport, housing and leisure. In other words, they are people who want to be able to live normal lives.

The removal of barriers and the ending of unfair discrimination is the background to today's debate. As the hon. Member for Kingswood pointed out, there was the same growing awareness in the United States of the need to legislate to remove the same barriers. In 1990, President

[Sir John Hannam]

Bush introduced the Americans with Disabilities Act. Like the hon. Gentleman, I shall quote the words of President Bush who said:

"Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down."

I suggest that in disability legislation, we are in the same position as regards the United States as we are in the economic growth cycle; we are following a little later along the same path.

Like the United States, we have a Government who have done all that is possible through the voluntary approach to good practice—through education and exhortation, and through dramatically improved financial support—to try to achieve a shared objective. We must accept that it is a shared objective, although approached by different avenues. The objective is the elimination of discrimination against disabled people and the achievement of their full participation in all aspects of life.

Through the use of our much more extensive voluntary sector, the British Government have provided far more help than was given in the United States. However, the end result is the same. Despite all our efforts, barriers remain as insurmountable as ever. The frustrations of the millions of disabled people have steadily mounted, reaching near breaking point as they see the remarkable turnaround in countries that have introduced anti-discrimination legislation.

I have been an officer of the all-party disablement group for 20 years. Like other Conservative Members, I originally held the view that the Government path was right and that there was no real need to legislate except in the various Departments, one by one—the piecemeal approach. Following that path throughout those years, the all-party group tried to help to improve various areas for disabled people. There were employers' incentive schemes to improve employment prospects and we considered the quota system. We attended all the "Fit for Work" presentations and the working breakfasts across the country. I came to enjoy eating fried eggs again—I do not normally eat them.

We secured amendments to various pieces of legislation. One example is the Companies Act 1985, which one would not imagine to be a vehicle for disablement legislation. We actually built in a requirement that in their annual reports, companies had to include a statement on what they had been doing for disabled employees. At the end of the day, what was achieved? Where are we now?

Official figures show that disabled people are three times more likely to be out of work—and unemployed for longer periods—than non-disabled people are. They are paid one quarter less, despite all the studies showing that they give better dedication, loyalty and effort to employers than do non-disabled workers.

I was a member of the Standing Committee that considered the Education Act 1981. The Act was intended to encourage integrated education, yet segregation is still the order of the day with less than a 1 per cent. drop since the Warnock committee reported in 1977. As the hon. Member for Kingswood said, disabled students make up only 0.3 per cent. of the entire student population in universities and polytechnics. Anyone who wants to know why that is need only go round our universities to see how many of the buildings have been adapted over the years to give access to disabled people and those in wheelchairs.

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): My hon. Friend rightly mentioned the Warnock report and the Education Act 1981. Does anything show more strongly the need for the Bill than the failure of that important Act in enabling more youngsters, especially at primary age, to have access to mainstream rather than segregated education? It is incredible that, 13 years on, many young people still have to go to special schools when they could be catered for properly in mainstream education.

Sir John Hannam: My hon. Friend is right. There are examples of local authorities that, in that time, have increased by 25 per cent. the number of pupils they send to special schools. In many areas, the position has deteriorated rather than improved.

There are 4 million disabled people with mobility difficulties. One per cent. of the total adult population use wheelchairs. Despite all the efforts by the Government and the House, most of Britain's public transport and public buildings remain basically inaccessible. Steps, heavy doors, impossible toilets, a lack of lifts and pedestrian areas created round shops effectively prevent disabled people from gaining access and carrying out daily tasks, such as shopping.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the basic rights on which we build our other rights is the right to vote? Disabled people have considerable problems in gaining access to polling stations and exercising their right to vote on the same basis as able-bodied people. I know that the hon. Gentleman is aware of that problem, because he sponsored a meeting of the Spastics Society following a report about the problems at the 1992 general election. The report showed that polling station after polling station lacked basic access facilities for disabled people.

Sir John Hannam: That is another of the many examples of discrimination. The hon. Gentleman has endeavoured to secure the passage of private Members' legislation to try to address the problem. The all-party group secured amendments to a Bill to try to step up the amount of financial help that was available to local authorities to provide more access. However, the sad fact remains that 60 per cent. of all polling station buildings are inaccessible to disabled people. The answer given is, "They will have to find somewhere else that is accessible." That is often impossible for them and is a valid illustration of the difficulties.

For me personally, all the problems built up to a point, four or five years ago, when I began to realise that, despite all our efforts, we were running fast to stay in the same place, or perhaps moving only marginally forward. At every meeting or seminar, organised by our excellent voluntary organisations, that I attended, I heard increasing evidence of the fact that we were preventing our fellow citizens from entering everyday life.

It was when I attended an "access to the arts" seminar which was held in a Committee Room here that I finally concluded that anti-discrimination legislation was the only answer. Evidence came to the fore from studies and reports. We knew that many pubs, restaurants and sports stadiums were inaccessible to disabled people. However, I

heard then of whole cinema chains that refused entry to disabled people and of concert halls that either did not admit disabled people or allowed them in only if they were accompanied. I heard of similar occurrences at art galleries, hotels and theatres. I heard of landlords saying, "We do not want you living here." I heard of employers saying, "No disabled people need apply." I heard of a transport system that continues to be inaccessible to a large percentage of the general public. I then knew what had to be done.

I have received today a letter from Dr. Stephen Duckworth who has produced, working in conjunction with one of our universities, a vast thesis on the problems. He says:

"To illustrate this: Last summer my wife and I were guests at the Queen's Garden Party. Afterwards on the spur of the moment, we decided to enjoy a West End show and selected one that was accessible. We bought the tickets and were about to enter the 'accessible' auditorium when I was told I had to leave because there was no place for me to sit whilst remaining in my wheelchair.

They argued that I was a fire hazard but I could get out of building as fast as any 'severely' able-bodied person and, to my knowledge, I have never spontaneously combusted.

Our big day was ruined by discrimination and I want the right to challenge this so that future generations of disabled British citizens enjoy the same opportunities as everyone else."

Like many other hon. Members, I took an even closer interest in what was being proposed in the United States, Australia, Sweden and Canada. We shall be able to consider the evidence from those countries in detail in Committee—an opportunity which we have been denied in previous years—and substantiate our belief in the legislation and answer the Government's reservations about cost and their belief that the Bill would provide a bonanza for lawyers. In previous years, the main argument focused not on costs but on the belief that such legislation would create a lawyers' bonanza and a legal nightmare. Lawyers argued consistently against the statutory approach until 1992, when a committee of the Law Society conducted a survey on employment and concluded in favour of an anti-discrimination Bill.

As the hon. Member for Kingswood said, at last week's meeting of the all-party group, the Employment Minister in the other place, Lord Henley, argued, in opposing the Bill, that in the United States there had been remarkably few references to the courts in the 18 months to two years since the Bill took effect. He tried to use that argument to show that the legislation was not working, but it positively proved the reverse. Since its enactment in 1990, massive improvements have been made in access, but no single business has been brought down by the cost of compliance or the implications of the legislation. Many have found great benefits in tapping a previously unknown market.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): My hon. Friend, like the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry), makes a persuasive case. I promised my constituents that I would listen to the debate and judge accordingly; so far, I am convinced by what has been said. Is my hon. Friend aware that the English tourist board, in conjunction with Glaxo Holdings, has produced a guide on access to tourism locations for disabled people this week? It has said that billions of pounds are being lost to tourist attractions of all types because of the lack of access.

Clause 6 of the Bill provides that it would be unlawful to discriminate by not providing access to small hotels and boarding houses. That would be play an important part in avoiding the loss of revenue to which the guide drew attention. On whom would the cost of bringing facilities up to the right level in small hotels and boarding houses fall? Facilities will have to be introduced if the terms of the Bill are to met and discrimination outlawed, but they will have to be upgraded only once.

Sir John Hannam: That is a key point and one with which the Americans had to deal. I received a letter from the United States Assistant Secretary about that matter. Compromises and costs had to be worked out. As my hon. Friend said, the tourist board has stated that a huge untapped resource exists. The issue is investment. When a company or business wants to invest, it does not come running to the Government or someone else to obtain the money—it decides whether the investment is worth while. The same will apply in this instance. There are huge potential gains, not losses, for the tourist industry.

Mr. Stern: I am not sure that my hon. Friend has appreciated the force of the comment made by my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs). We all agree that such facilities will have a beneficial effect in society terms, but the expected gain in income for small boarding houses could never cover the investment required. We must have an answer to the question of who will cover the cost.

Sir John Hannam: I take issue with my hon. Friend. The Bill provides for a period of time to allow changes to be made and for finance, which the Government already provide, to improve access. The letter that I received from Dr. Stephen Duckworth and which was addressed to the Secretary of State for Employment deals with the point. It states:

"Your concerns over litigation, bureaucracy and unquantifiable costs for business and tax payers are important concerns. However if you look at the experience of companies in the United States, this does not seem to have become the problem that was previously anticipated. Indeed, evidence suggest that 170,000 new businesses and products have been designed as a result of the 'Americans With Disabilities Act'. As I am sure you are only too aware, employment in the UK is entirely dependent on the growth of small to medium enterprises."

Evidence from the United States survey has shown that tourism companies and hotels that have quickly adapted their premises to remove discrimination have gained access to a new economic sector. In some cases, their turnover has increased by 15 to 20 per cent.

Under their departmental approach, the Government require the gradual implementation of such improvements. The financing of those improvements can be made in the most beneficial way.

Mr. Tyler: May I not only support what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but perhaps help him in one respect? The tourist industry in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland can still benefit from section 4 grants for improvements to facilities. Sadly, and most significantly, that is not so in England, especially in the west country, in which the hon. Gentleman and I have a special interest. If section 4 grants were specifically available for this purpose, it would help smaller businesses to get over the hump of initial investment.

Sir John Hannam: I strongly support the campaign to extend section 4 grants to tourist areas such as the south-west. I do not want to slide into the trap of rehearsing the same old argument about having to go to the Treasury

[Sir John Hannam]

for more money. Experience in other countries does not show that that would be necessary. Tourist boards, for some 15 years, have operated schemes and policies to encourage hotels and restaurants to provide access. We are talking not about huge sums but about a ramp to get people into a building. Most premises have ground floor accommodation or some form of lift. I do not believe that arguments on cost are an obstacle to the passage to the Bill.

I said that I had received a letter from the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. Its Assistant Secretary, Judith Heumann, wrote about this Bill and in her letter she states:

"In the short period of time that the ADA has been in effect, significant steps have been taken toward ending discrimination and enabling persons with disabilities to lead independent lives. According to a 1993 survey by the United States General Accounting Office, most features of the business and government facilities that were included in the study were accessible to persons with disabilities. The study also found that most owners and managers perceived barrier-removal efforts as beneficial and not burdensome.

The ADA is providing persons with disabilities and their families with opportunities to be actively involved in all aspects of their communities. The ADA is creating job opportunities and enabling persons with disabilities to take advantage of the recreational and social activities, assume civic duties, access popular public media, and join with their family, friends, and neighbors in the countless mundane activities that make up the better part of our daily lives.

The ADA is also reshaping our educational curriculums. Concepts of accessibility, universal design and accommodation are being integrated into teaching curriculums for designers, architects, educators, and administrators. As a result, a generation from now, persons with disabilities will be able to share the assumption of their non-disabled friends and neighbors that the stores, schools, and city services in their communities are accessible to them. The ADA requires society to acknowledge and accommodate the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. It empowers persons with disabilities and their families, and is making a positive difference in the economics and moral fibre of American society."

Those words can apply equally to this country.

The other factor that I believe influences the Government's position on the Bill is their worry about the expense. It would be unrealistic to expect such changes as we propose not to have financial implications, about which some of my hon. Friends have questioned me this morning. There will need to be alterations to buildings and vehicles, and workplaces will have to be provided with equipment. All this has been recognised in the American legislation. In another part of her letter, the Assistant Secretary of State said that a number of key compromises were necessary:

"Many of these compromises attempt to draw the proper balance between the financial resources of a covered entity and its obligations to comply."

That is the sort of thing that we shall have to look at carefully in Committee. In the United States, phasing-in periods were allowed for compliance, and monetary damages for non-compliance were limited.

The Americans took account of all the reservations that we might expect to hear expressed by companies, institutes of directors and others. This Bill recognises the need for gradual implementation and the idea of reasonable accommodation. In the United States, periods of up to 20 years have been allowed for implementation of some of the changes. We, too, will need some fairly long phasing-in periods—for instance, for changes in vehicle design and public transport. Imagine trying to adapt London Underground for disabled passengers within the next couple of years: it would be wholly unfeasible. We shall need to establish mechanisms for monitoring and promoting the changes and for checking the costs to employers of providing reasonable accommodation. Those costs will have to be met in some way.

It is important, however, to weigh the predicted costs against the potential savings in terms of benefits and the additional tax revenues that will flow if more disabled people gain employment. The Secretary of State for Employment has already recognised the need for such investment, in the access-to-work programme which we all welcomed during the past week.

As for the fear of an avalanche of legal cases, I believe that lawyers are doing a damn sight better out of the present piecemeal approach than they would from a comprehensive Bill which would in itself ensure far greater commitment to non-discriminatory measures in the private and public sectors. We seek only to outlaw unfair discrimination, not to force acceptance of things that disabled people cannot do.

We need to give the Bill a Second Reading today, not only to give hope to the millions of disabled people and the further millions who care for them but, just as importantly, to allow the Committee to thrash out in detail these vital issues. I believe that when we engage in detailed discussions we will allay the Government's fears and secure their support for our aim, as the Minister put it in his recent letter,

"to reduce and eventually eliminate discrimination against disabled people and enable them to participate fully in all aspects of life."

We all share that objective. Now we have to find the means to achieve it. We have not managed that in the past, but we can now—by implementing the Bill.

10.54 am

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam). Although we face each other across the Floor, we are, not for the first time, wholly at one in this debate.

All of us in the House represent disabled people who have looked forward to this debate with hope in their hearts. Their hope today is that the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill can win strong enough support to convince the Government that they must now assist the Bill's passage into law.

For the information of disabled people, I must explain that there are some Members of Parliament who very much want to see the Bill quickly become law, but who, for compelling reasons, are unable to be here today. That applies notably to my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), one of the few hon. Members significantly to have legislated as a private Member for disabled people. He was totally committed to visiting Africa this week, as shadow Minister for overseas development, and he could not cancel the commitment. Typically for him, his absence is due to a commitment to Africa's poor.

All disabled people felt cheated by the talking out of this Bill by Robert Hayward—having explicitly stated that he would not be talking it out—when I first presented it for Second Reading on 31 January 1992. Five days later, he apologised for what had happened in a personal statement which concluded:

"I now recognise that the effect of my words was to mislead hon. Members and that Members were entitled to assume that I

intended to resume my seat before 2.30 pm. I offer my unreserved apologies to you, Mr. Speaker, and to fellow hon. Members."—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1992; Vol. 203, c. 287.]

But those apologies in no way undid the damage that had been done five days previously. By use of a crude blocking tactic, the Bill's progress had been halted indefinitely; and I am most deeply grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) for agreeing to use his good fortune in last November's ballot for private Members' Bills to reintroduce the Bill. Since entering the House, my hon. Friend has worked long and hard and with skill, sincerity and success to help disabled people. It was his early-day motion that demonstrated the very wide all-party backing for the Bill and the fact that it now has clear majority support in this House.

My hon. Friend's motion helped to keep interest in the Bill alive, as did the initiatives of my hon. Friends the Members for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) and for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) who, last June, introduced versions of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill that would have secured its benefits for the disabled people of Scotland and Wales had the Government Whips not blocked their Bills on Second Reading.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood said, my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) also helped to sustain interest by carrying, on 25 February 1993, his motion calling for the Bill's enactment.

As the House has heard, my noble Friend Lord Ashley and the hon. Member for Exeter are co-chairmen of the all-party disablement group in the House and, like the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), the hon. Member for Exeter has been extremely and consistently helpful both at meetings of the group and in this Chamber. I am sure that they and many others on both sides of the House will join me in paying warm tribute as well to the immense help that we all receive from Vicky Scott, of the all-party disablement group, than whom no one has done more to promote the Bill. We are all in her debt. That could mean that we are, to some extent, also in the Minister's debt—but I must not pursue that implication in today's debate.

I have seen the suggestion in some recent statements from the Government that this Bill, as a private Member's measure, is almost by definition ill-drafted and incapable of becoming law without drastic change. That is not so. I suppose that, over the past 25 years, I have brought to this House more legislation about the problems and needs of disabled people than anyone else—most of it as a Minister from 1974 to 1979—including the mobility allowance, the invalid care allowance, the disabled housewives' allowance and the non-contributory invalidity pension, all of them entirely new benefits.

But none of that legislation, all of which has stood the test of time, was more carefully drafted than the Bill we are debating. The House should also note not only the Law Society's favourable comments on the Bill's viability and what some very distinguished legal authorities have said more recently about its drafting, but that it succeeded, with only some very minor amendments, in completing all its stages in the House of Lords. Of the employment provisions in the Bill, with which it was principally concerned, the Law Society goes as far as to say that they are

"precisely the direction in which the law should move".

As my hon. Friend recalled, it was 12 years ago that the Committee on Restrictions Against Disabled People—CORAD—the committee of inquiry I appointed, under the chairmanship of Sir Peter Large, when I was the Minister, reported to the Government on the urgent need for anti-discrimination legislation to protect the interests of people with disabilities. Since then, Ministers have insisted that education and persuasion, at nil cost to the Government, was the best way forward.

But more than simply time has passed. The social changes the Bill seeks are today all the more urgent and, as every new test of public opinion shows, massively supported by the electorate. Acts of discrimination against disabled people have increased, and the case for legislation is stronger now than ever before.

A young policewoman, badly injured when tackling a gunman, is turned away from a charity event because she is in a wheelchair. A soldier who lost both legs in the Falklands is banned from his local cinema because of his disability. A doctor who has devoted much of her life to helping fellow blind people is parted from her guide dog when entering Buckingham palace to receive the MBE. A disabled young man with a first-class degree is told by his employer that because he is disabled he will be paid less than other new employees for exactly the same work. A 21-year-old graduate, with the most brilliant degree of her year, spends over two years in the dole queue watching all her contemporaries secure jobs ahead of her simply because she is hearing-impaired.

These are but a few well publicised recent cases of blatant discrimination against disabled people. Too many more go unremarked. But that should not surprise us, because it is not illegal in Britain to discriminate on grounds of disability. No matter how unmerited and damaging the discriminatory act, there is no court that any of this country's 6.5 million disabled people can go to for redress. That is why today there is no more important issue for disabled people than that of civil rights.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South said, they are fed up with being "done unto" and weary of philanthropic gestures from on high. They want justice and they want rights. They insist that discrimination against them must be made illegal, and crave the right, enshrined in law, simply to be treated like other people when it comes to studying, working, travelling, enjoying their leisure or just plain living.

The Bill was drafted solely for that purpose and, I repeat, it has already been approved by the House of Lords. Its supporters in this House include all 17 of Northern Ireland's Members of Parliament—a parliamentary first if ever there was one—and some 90 per cent. of Scottish and Welsh Members of Parliament want its benefits for their disabled constituents from the only Parliament that can legislate for them.

The Bill does not argue for blind bus drivers or deaf piano tuners; nor does it pretend that all acts of discrimination can be ended overnight. It is about ending unfair discrimination, and we accept that it will take many years to turn legislative precept into social practice. Lord Renton, who preceded the Prime Minister as the Conservative Member for Huntingdon, speaking in the House of Lords, said of the Bill that he found it strange as well as wrong, extraordinary and not very creditable, that Parliament had not already legislated to outlaw unfair discrimination against people with disabilities.

He said also that, after all the thought given to the Bill in the House of Lords, he did not believe that many hours of discussion would be necessary in the House of

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

Commons. Since then, Government Whips, knowing that the Bill effectively has a majority in this House, have worked overtime to prevent a vote on its provisions. But now, thanks to my hon. Friend, they can no longer avoid a vote.

The Government's principal reason for blocking the Bill is cost. Any action to end discrimination, says the Prime Minister, must proceed "without cost implications". In other words, we can afford civil rights for everyone else but not for disabled people. They and their organisations find this deeply offensive, just as they resent the criticism that the Bill does not

"sit comfortably with the Government's policy on deregulation".

That argument must, of course, apply equally to the legislation on gender and race, and is an implied threat both to the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission on Racial Equality.

The Government's third main criticism of the Bill is that it takes "much too comprehensive" an approach to the problem. At an hour-long meeting I had with the Prime Minister to discuss the Bill, he accepted that discrimination against disabled people was "a very real problem" which he hoped education and persuasion and "piecemeal change" would remove. But the problems of discrimination against disabled people, not least in the employment field, cannot be solved ad hoc. As one employer put it to me recently,

"To end discrimination in the labour market, you must not only protect disabled people there, but also radically improve access for them to training and transport among other facilities and services."

In his view, "piecemeal change" would be an attempt to divide the indivisible and a total waste of time and money.

Britain used to lead the world in legislating to make life better for disabled people. We did so in 1970 by becoming the first country ever to legislate on access for disabled people to the built environment; and again in the mid-70s by introducing a whole range of new benefits to improve their quality and standard of life. Today, we lag behind other countries. The United States, Australia, Canada, France and Sweden have all long since legislated to give disabled people legal protection against unfair discrimination.

As my hon. Friend recalled, President Bush, when signing the American statute in 1990, told United States business men:

"You can now unlock a splendid resource of untapped human potential that will enrich us all . . . let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down."

There was no echo of that at my meeting with the Prime Minister. He said in mitigation that the American Act will not be fully operative for some years, which I accept. But at least the clock has started ticking there, and the sooner we legislate here, the sooner Britain's disabled people will achieve their undoubted right to full citizenship.

As of now, the "shameful wall of exclusion" stands as high as ever in this country. A recent survey found that employable disabled people here are six times more likely to be turned down for a job. With unemployment at 40 per cent., compared with 9 per cent. among non-disabled people, they are stuck at the back of the longest queue in Britain. Thousands of employers say openly that, whatever her or his qualifications are, they will never employ any disabled person "under any circumstances" and, indeed, will never interview a disabled job seeker.

That is not only totally outrageous, but a challenge to the House which legislated 50 years ago to require firms to give 3 per cent. of jobs to disabled people. We must not duck that challenge here today. The Government's record is worse than that of most other employers. In defiance of the 3 per cent. quota, the latest figures which I have seen show that the Department of Health have 0.7 per cent. registered disabled employees, and the Home Office has 0.3 per cent. The figures show not one disabled employee at No.10 Downing street.

With all that to explain, Ministers are told—not only by disabled people, but by employers—that it is not what they say that impresses those they lecture about education and persuasion, but what they do. What respect can we have for advocates of persuasion who cannot persuade themselves?

The issue today is about social decency. As Lord Renton said, it is wrong and not very creditable that the Bill has been obstructed for so long. Fully assured civil rights have become the defining principle of all enlightened policy-making on disabilities, for without civil rights, disabled people are doubly disabled. The handicapping effects of their disabilities are made even harder to bear by gratuitous social handicaps for which there is no moral justification—and what is morally unjustified ought no longer to be legally permissible in Britain.

11.13 am

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I would like to speak in support of the Bill. Looking around the Chamber, I see that I may be the only genuine disabled person here. I was born a spastic with cerebral palsy, which is an injury to the brain just before, during or after birth. It is an injury to the motor part of the brain, although some of my opponents would say that it has affected other parts of the brain. That is open to debate.

I have been very lucky, because the impact has been small. I do not want to put hon. Members off with the sheets of paper I am holding, but many of them are blank because I find it almost impossible to hold one sheet in my right hand on its own. That is one example of a minor disability, but it is a disability that I have had now for about 57 years.

I have been fortunate and there is nothing in the Bill which could help me, but I understand that people who are more severely disabled need the help that the Bill will provide. It is called the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, and we ought to touch on the difference and the link between rights and responsibilities.

I give the example of terrorists. People ask me why I am not concerned about their rights as individuals. I say that rights and responsibilities are two sides of the same coin. A person cannot expect society to recognise his rights if he does not accept his responsibility to society to act in a way which reflects the democratic process.

In the case of disabled persons, the exact opposite is the case. They accept their responsibilities as disabled persons every minute of every day of every week of every year. It is our duty and obligation—morally and otherwise—to accept our right to help them: there is no doubt about that. The point has been made that there is sex and racial discrimination legislation on the statute book. I cannot believe why legislation to protect disabled people has not been on the statue book long before now.

Mr. Stern: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dicks: No, with great respect. Many hon. Members want to speak, and I shall not be speaking for long. If we all gave way, other hon. Members would not get a chance to speak. I hope that my hon. Friend will please accept my decision.

There is a difference between lifetime disability and disability which comes later in life. People such as myself, and others who are much worse, have grown up with the disability and know no different. They must cope with the problems of life from birth. However, others who become disabled late in life have many more problems. They must cope with problems of adaptation, and problems of the mind and spirit. They must change their way of life, and see life in a completely different way.

One thinks of blindness which comes to some people later, losing one's legs or the capacity to use one's arms or losing the capacity to father or mother children. All those things may come later in life, and give a shock to the system and to the personality.

One organisation which I am fond of, which I do a little to help—perhaps not enough—and which I mentioned when we had a similar debate one year ago, is the Spinal Injuries Association. Many people belong to the association and are supported by it because their injuries have come later in life. It has recently produced a racegoers' guide for disabled people to enable those who enjoy the sport to get to racecourses where there are facilities for disabled people.

I said one year ago, and I repeat it now, that one of the people involved in the association keeps falling out of his wheelchair on certain racecourses because there is no facility to let him go smoothly over the ground to the appropriate place to watch the races. Organisations such as that need support, and they should get a good deal more.

Mention has been made of the Government's approach to financial resources and the lack thereof. It is strange that we have the money to build luxury prisons, and that two of the prisons built under the Government since 1979 have contained sports facilities worth £1 million each for thugs, rogues and wrongdoers—yet there is not enough money for the disabled. We give money to my old hobby-horse, the arts. Some £600 million a year is spent on the arts, and the Department of National Heritage budget is approaching £2 billion—but there is not enough to spend on the disabled.

We give money to immigrants. It is interesting that the Government's argument is that we should not go forward with the legislation because we do not know how much it costs. I have questioned my hon. Friend the Minister's boss —the Secretary of State for Social Security—on how much is spent on all the benefits which have been given to immigrants during the past few years. He replied that he was sorry, but he could not tell me as he did not know.

We have an open door. No matter how many people come in to this country, money is found to feed, clothe and house them and to give them benefits—but there is not enough money to give to the disabled, and we should not do anything because we do not know the cost. That is a silly argument, and I have proved that it does not apply elsewhere.

There is now to be a lottery. If ever there is a cause to which some, if not all, of the money should go, it is the disabled. But where is it going? It is going to the arts, which are looked after too well from the public purse and elsewhere, and to sport. Sport is good, and if money was going to disabled sport, I would not mind. However, it is going to sport in general, as far as I can see.

Here is a chance to raise money from the public domain. Have members of the public been asked where they want the money to be spent? The average guy in the street—certainly the average guy in Hayes and Harlington—would have said that it should be given to the disabled. The money is going to arty-farty people and sportsmen, some of whom are earning fortunes as so-called stars—but we do not have enough money to give to the disabled.

The Government have spent £1 billion in the past eight years on AIDS publicity. They have told heterosexual people who will never get AIDS in their life that they must be careful and wear a condom. God, what we could have done with £1 billion to improve facilities for the disabled up and down the country. Yet the money has gone on a completely unnecessary publicity campaign which helps no one and which will make no difference.

We can find money to give to service women who join the forces willingly and who become pregnant willingly. Those women must leave the job because they have become pregnant, and we give them hundreds of thousands of pounds in compensation. Why should we pay them? They have made their own free decisions. Why could not that money provide facilities for disabled people? It is a crazy, stupid idea, and it is a stupid approach by the Government and by the legal process which allows that to happen.

The European Community, or the European Union as it is now called, wastes more money in a day than it would cost the Government to provide facilities for the disabled during the next five years. Do we care? Do we hell. We ought to say that we do not care what the European Union claims that it needs to spend, and that we should start siphoning off some of that money. The best cause for some of that siphoned-off money would be to help disabled persons, and the sooner we do that the better.

We must recognise that disabled people are special. Most, if not all, of the predicament of disabled people is not caused by anything that they have done. Disabilities are often unavoidable. They are not always able to fend for themselves, which makes them special. They are willing to stand on their own with minimum support.

One of the minor disagreements that I had with my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) the last time we had a debate such as this was that I do not believe that disabled people are basically miserable and unhappy with their lot. They are resilient, and often their sense of humour is far better than that of some of us in the Chamber. We should not pretend that they need our help because they are dour, miserable and always whingeing—that is the last thing they are. We have to recognise their resilience and encourage them.

Disabled people do not wish to be a burden on the state, and most of them are not, although some of them have to be through no choice of their own. They make a contribution to society. As previous speakers have said, the opportunity for disabled people to make a vital contribution is often restricted through lack of facilities. Often they cannot gain access to study facilities, universities and theatres. We must change that.

Disabled people want to give their all, and to do things that the rest of us take for granted. They are willing to give up many things. I have not achieved much—I went to university and was elected to this place, if that is an achievement. I would give it all up to be able to take my wife into a bar and say, "Sit down there, darling"—I do call her that occasionally—pick up two drinks from the bar

[Mr. Dicks]

to take them back to where she is sitting. I cannot do that; she has to stand beside me and take the glass because I cannot pick up a pint or a glass with two hands. If we go to a restaurant and are served food on a platter, I cannot use it. My wife has to sit beside me and serve me carefully. I would give up everything I have to be able to do the things that most of my colleagues do normally.

Some people are much worse off than me and suffer far greater loss. Some people cannot walk—I walk with a limp. Some people cannot use both hands; some people cannot see the food and the sunshine. Some people cannot understand the things that I understand, even with all my weaknesses.

It is no excuse for people who are fit and able to say that the money is not available and there is a cost imperative. The first thing that I would do were it in my power would be to sack everyone in the Treasury. No other organisation in this country causes more harm and hurt across the board than the Treasury, and those who live and work there. I wonder how many of them ever go out into the real world to find out what it is all about.

Our duty is not to patronise disabled people, but to recognise them as our equals, respect their dignity as humans, help them to live a normal life as far as their disabilities allow and provide the resources to allow disabled civil rights to become a reality. If anyone in the House today does not have the guts to put the case for people with disabilities, they must be out of their mind. It is an excellent cause to support.

It was suggested that the Department of Social Security might be distributing leaflets suggesting why the measure should not be supported. I have never known a Minister with responsibility for disabled people who has been as helpful and understanding as my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People. I told him earlier this week that I would speak in favour of the Bill and he said that he understood my view. But, unfortunately, my right hon. Friend is governed by the mandarins in the Treasury, which has the smallest group of civil servants in the country and the highest paid permanent secretary. How they do it, I do not know. My right hon. Friend is governed by idiots who do not understand the real world. Therefore, before people criticise my right hon. Friend, they should bear that in mind. Things could be a damn sight worse if anyone else were doing the job.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), who is not present, had a set-to the last time that we debated this subject. I had a go at him because I thought that his speech was unfair, and had become political. In the same way, the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), who is no longer present, made a silly remark about one of my colleagues. It is not a political issue, but one that involves honour, decency, justice and respect for our fellow citizens who are not as well off as the rest of us.

11.24 am

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I understand that we are today debating the 12th Bill aiming to confer civil rights on people with disabilities. Naturally, my party and I welcome the Bill, but I do not welcome the fact that such an important measure has so far failed to be enacted. I hope that this is the last time that we have to debate such a Bill and that the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) will successfully steer the current Bill through the House.

For too long debates on disability issues have been dominated by arguments about health, social security and community care. I hope that today's debate will redress that imbalance and put the issue into the realm of human rights. Society's suspicion of what is different has led to the marginalisation of people with disabilities. Restrictions on their legal and social rights, access to buildings, information, employment and leisure have led to the exclusion, by default or design, of people with disabilities from the mainstream of society.

For example, the current law allows an employer lawfully to refuse even to consider a job applicant who uses a wheelchair or who has controlled epilepsy, no matter how well equipped the applicant is to do the job. The current law allows someone selling a house to refuse to sell it to a health authority that intends to use it as a home for former psychiatric hospital patients. The current law condones a holiday camp that bans a group with cerebral palsy from booking a week's holiday in high summer.

Those examples—hon. Members have mentioned many others today—show that people with disabilities are discriminated against daily in almost every aspect of their lives. Disabled people are six times more likely to be refused a job interview and two and a half times more likely to be unemployed. Therefore, it is not surprising that two thirds of people with disabilities live below the poverty line. It would be a mistake to say that the only people calling for the Bill are a vocal and politically motivated minority of the disabled population. There is a groundswell of support for the Bill precisely because disability does not affect a small minority.

The number of people with disabilities is thought to be about 6.5 million. However, the Royal National Institute for the Deaf estimates that 7.5 million people have some form of hearing loss. According to a poll conducted during the International Year of Disabled People in 1981, 29 per cent. of the people of this country—nearly one third of the population—are affected directly, or through a family tie, by disability.

It is not surprising that support for a civil rights Bill has grown across the country and commands the support of half the Members of Parliament. The only opposition to the measure seems to come from Ministers who argue that the best way forward is through education and persuasion. The evidence thus far shows that that approach simply does not work. Let us consider the failure to include in the Railways Bill when it was first published a provision for groups representing people with disabilities to be consulted. The Government's programme of education and persuasion does not seem even to have made the distance from Caxton house to Marsham street, let alone covered the rest of the country. The Government's piecemeal approach lacks the moral force that would be given by the clear statement of rights in the Bill.

The Government's further argument is that the implementation of a civil rights Bill would lead to extensive and unwelcome demands on public finances. However, the evidence from the United States, following the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, shows that that need not necessarily be the case, and the burden on business should not be excessive. Companies in America that have begun to improve access say that the cost arguments have been exaggerated. That

opinion is supported by studies by the federal authorities that have found that, when access features are incorporated in new buildings or new construction work, they add less than 1 per cent. to the total cost.

Surely the fundamental question is, should the rights of any of us be limited by considerations of cost? To my mind, the answer to that is a resounding no. Why should people with disabilities have fewer rights than the rest of the population, and why should people with disabilities in this country have fewer rights than people with disabilities in America?

Rather than regarding the civil rights bill for disabled persons as a potential burden, the people of America and their Government responded positively to the challenges and opportunities afforded by the Americans with Disabilities Act. *The New York Times* heralded that Act as

"the most sweeping piece of anti-discrimination law to be approved since the Civil Rights Act 1964".

That comparison with the civil rights campaign by African Americans is significant for, as Stephen Hawking reminded us in his letter to *The Times* on Monday, if black people or women were discriminated against to the extent that people with disabilities are, there would be a public outcry. As a result of the problems of access and the lack of wheelchair places, many people with disabilities are effectively barred from theatres, cinemas and restaurants as black people were in the southern United States before the Civil Rights Act.

For too long, Governments in this country have preferred to regard the people of Britain—all the people of Britain—as passive subjects, not active citizens. As was evident from the lobby of Parliament on Wednesday, one group of people, at least, is not prepared to accept that position any longer.

The Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill is a great liberating measure, comparable to the Civil Rights Act in America, that will unlock the potential of thousands, if not millions, of our fellow citizens. As many hon. Members have mentioned, President Bush declared to American business leaders on signing the American Act,

"You can now unlock a splendid resource of untapped potential that will enrich us all . . . let the shameful walls of exclusion finally come tumbling down."

The Bill is the battering ram that will help to bring down the shameful walls of exclusion in this country. I urge all hon. Members to support this vital measure.

11.31 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry), not only on his good fortune in the ballot and his decision to choose this subject for his Bill, but on the excellent way in which he spoke. He set a good tone for the debate. Reasonableness is evident in the Bill itself and was very evident in the manner in which he spoke. One hopes that it augurs well for the progress of the Bill from the Chamber into Committee.

As the hon. Member for Kingswood said, the Bill has a long pedigree, and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) played a major part in its earlier progress.

The treatment of minorities is a hallmark of our society. Ignorance and prejudice lead to the disasters of wars, but through wars, to some extent, we have been able to dispel of some of that ignorance and prejudice towards disabled people. The Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Act 1944 came in towards the end of the second world war, undoubtedly as a reaction to public feelings about the war wounded. The same thing must have happened in America after the Vietnam war—people changed their attitudes to people with disabilities, which led to the Americans with Disabilities Act. One of the big questions that confronts us today is whether the US legislation is the model for us.

I have already referred to the Institute of Directors. I was a little disappointed with the letter that I received from the institute yesterday. It described the Americans with Disabilities Act as proving to be one of the costliest regulations in recent American history and felt that the Bill before the House today should be opposed on that ground.

Mr. Sheerman: As many Opposition Members will not have seen that letter from the Institute of Directors, will the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether the institute quotes its authorities in the United States for making that allegation? Some of us who have been to the United States to speak to business and political leaders do not believe that that is the case.

Mr. Thurnham: I shall be glad to make a copy of the letter available to the hon. Gentleman, but I do not believe that the Institute of Directors has come up with sufficient evidence on cost fully to justify that argument.

The issue of costs has emphasised the doubts about the Bill. The hon. Member for Kingswood attacked the Government for not having come up with a cost-benefit analysis, but perhaps he is open to the same criticism; he did not present us with a detailed analysis. Perhaps that is one aspect on which the Bill will be open to more examination in Committee.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) has left after his spirited attack on the Treasury. It was slightly unfair that he should have singled out the permanent secretary for his greatest ire, because the Treasury's record is amazingly good. The amount of spending on long-term sick and disabled people has trebled under the Government to a current figure of

"£16.5 billion—an increase of 225 per cent."

in real terms. Also,

"two million people now receive help with the costs of their care or mobility needs—compared with only 360,000 when"

the Labour party was in government. I do not think that it is entirely fair to criticise the Treasury in the way that my hon. Friend did.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend will also be aware that the Treasury is rather anxious to reduce its spending on long-term sick and disabled people. That is a rather important part of the background to the introduction of the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill. Does he agree that a proper cost-benefit analysis might persuade Treasury officials, and all of us, that the economy would benefit so substantially as a result of anti-discrimination legislation that such legislation would be the most effective way for it to reduce expenditure, about which it is worried?

Mr. Thurnham: I agree with my hon. Friend that we want to see the cost-benefit analysis, but I think that he is a little unfair about the Treasury. The Treasury's anxiety is to reduce the increase in costs rather than to impose any cuts, as I understand it, because there has been the considerable increase that I have already quoted. Our anxieties relate to the extent to which we can fund continued increases in all the welfare provisions.

[Mr. Thurnham]

Before leaving the subject of the Americans with Disabilities Act, I strongly commend to Members of the House the report prepared by Victoria Scott on her Winston Churchill fellowship, entitled "Lessons from America." She goes a long way to dispelling the fears which exist but which have not been properly quantified.

I believe that in this country discrimination is reducing and people are becoming more aware of the contribution that people with disabilities can make. In my family we have been able to adopt a handicapped child—something which was not commonly possible for many years in the past. Stephen has made a great contribution to our family and friends and, I would like to feel, to society. This year, for the first time, he will be able to go to Buckingham palace for the garden party. I do not think that that is a result of the anti-discrimination legislation on disabilities —it is more likely to be owing to the lack of sex discrimination—but we shall be delighted to take him for the first time.

I was struck by the comment of my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) in his excellent speech about Dr. Duckworth, at Buckingham palace last year, being unable to go on to, I think, a theatre afterwards. That type of restriction makes me feel that the Bill is necessary, because it is wrong that people should be discriminated against in that way.

I have spoken about the Government's record on spending overall. A considerable amount is spent on employment of people with disabilities, both through Remploy, at a cost of more than £10,000 per person employed, and through sheltered placement schemes such as Shaw Trust, at a cost of half as much as that. The question that confronts us today is, how much further should the Government go? My preference is that we should perhaps all lead by example more than by legislation. There is so much that we can do. All of us can do more. I do not think that we in this House do enough.

Perhaps I could comment on the other place, because there was an advertisement this week in the *Evening Standard* for a vacancy for a senior clerical officer, headed "House of Lords", and nowhere in the advertisement is there any mention of encouraging suitable people with disabilities to apply. As the code of practice makes provision for that, how is it that the Houses of Parliament can authorise it but fail to observe it?

We must lead by example before telling others what to do. The code of practice has on its cover a symbol comprising two ticks and two dots, making two eyes, with the words "Be positive about disabled people". One extraordinary anomaly is that Government Departments are not allowed to display that symbol. The Government tell everyone else to display it, but Departments are not permitted to do so because the Privy Council feels that that would be to discriminate against able-bodied people.

I hope that the hon. Member for Kingswood will forgive me if I hesitate about legislating, but it is my belief that it is wrong to tell others to do something that one does not do oneself. The Government must do more, as we all must, to set a better example before legislating.

A document published by the Trades Union Congress, "Disabled People Working in the Public Sector", estimates that there could be an extra 100,000 jobs in that sector if it were to set a better example. We know that not everyone wants to register as disabled, so that the known number of registered employed disabled does not tell the whole story. However, that document reveals that 30 health authorities and 12 local authorities do not employ any registered disabled people. A nationalised concern such as the BBC employs only some 70 registered disabled from a total of about 25,000 employees—0.3 per cent., or only one tenth, of the quota figure.

The public sector must set an example without legislation. A general directive should be sent to all Departments to employ more disabled people. If the Department of Employment can meet the quota, why not other Departments?

Figures show that the civil service does better than the public sector generally, but comparisons between the private sector and public sector show that in every year to 1992 the private sector employed proportionately more registered disabled than the public sector. We should not need to pass laws to make the public sector do what it should do anyway. I would prefer public sector organisations to set an example before telling the rest of the country what to do.

In my constituency, private companies such as Vernacare Ltd. and Indispension Ltd. have an excellent record of employing people with disabilities, yet I was told by the local Employment Service that it had a poor response from town halls and health authorities when they were asked to employ disabled people. The Government must do more to improve matters without legislation, but if necessary with legislation. My preference is to lead by example, but if that cannot be done, we must legislate.

Many of the Bill's provisions are for the Government, so it should be a Government Bill. However, I commend the hon. Member for Kingswood for introducing it and for giving the House an opportunity to examine the Bill closely in Committee to see which parts of it can be adopted by the Government.

11.44 am

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): As many other hon. Members want to speak, I shall not repeat the points so excellently made by others. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) on using his luck to promote the Bill. We were all delighted the day that that result was announced, because, when my hon. Friend's name was drawn seventh, we all knew which Bill he would present—he has supported it consistently.

I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who piloted the Bill on previous occasions and helped to keep up the pressure. It would not be right to speak about anti-discrimination legislation without giving an honourable mention to the joint chairs of the all-party disablement group, who have worked so hard over the years to achieve success.

The last occasion on which I spoke on this subject was when the Bill last received a Second Reading, on 31 January 1992, when it was blocked. I will not relate the circumstances, but I concluded my speech by saying of the Bill:

"If this is not its day, its day will come."—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1992; Vol. 202, c. 1258.]

Its day has come—today.

Anyone who witnessed the lobby in Westminster hall on Wednesday will be aware that the will of disabled people throughout the United Kingdom is such that the Bill

cannot be rejected again. If it is—as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood said—there is no doubt that a similar Bill will be on the statute book one day soon.

The Bill is about the fundamental human rights of disabled people to be full and equal citizens. Although I try to be careful, I noticed that in my last speech I referred to treating disabled people as full and equal citizens, which perhaps displayed an attitude that I now regret. We must change attitudes, stop underestimating disabled people, and provide them with equal rights.

A Bill is not about reflecting basic values that are important to us, or about charity, paternalism or philanthropic gestures. It is about just rights for disabled people. That message came across loud and clear in Westminster hall, where I met a group from Strathclyde disability forum. People travelled from all over the country to attend that lobby, including from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams).

One of them, Irene Galloway, had to leave her wheelchair at the front of the bus, crawl to the back of the bus, climb on a seat and travel overnight to be one of the thousands of people at that lobby. That is how strongly Irene Galloway, who has experienced being both able-bodied and disabled, feels about the Bill.

She was accompanied by Gary Struthers. It was an emotional moment when I recognised him, which I did not at first. When I was an apprentice gardener, Gary was my journeyman. He was a fit, able-bodied person who enjoyed life, but then discovered that, through illness, he would become progressively disabled. Gary has also seen life from both sides in that way. He said that, when he became disabled, he could not believe how many doors were shut and how much discrimination existed. The Bill is all about changing attitudes and stopping some of the things that happen to disabled people.

I listened to some of the opponents of the Bill—for they were that—who spoke in Westminster hall. They said that they agreed with the Bill in principle, but that it needed amending. I would like to know what they meant by that. If one accepts the principle of the Bill—the Bill is about a principle—why amend it, except to improve it?

If right hon. and hon. Members mean that they want to amend the principle of the Bill, quite frankly they are not on. They are trying to con disabled people into believing that they support it when they do not. I must make it clear that many of us in the all-party disablement group—on both sides of the House—are determined that the principle of the Bill will not be destroyed in any of its stages. That does not mean that we are unwilling to listen to amendments that improve it, but its principle is sacrosanct.

If we agree with the Bill, it must be supported through all its stages. I hope that that happens today. We can no longer take a piecemeal approach to disabled people in providing small pieces of legislation. The Government's approach to the Bill was effectively destroyed this morning by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood, when he said that, if one really believes that education and persuasion can work, all the costs associated with the legislation are inevitable, because one will arrive at the same place.

It is a contradictory argument to say that, on the hand, we cannot afford it, but on the other to say that we disagree only about tactics and that we both want to get to the same place. My hon. Friend made a brilliant point when he highlighted that.

We must also look at the record of successive Governments, but I shall focus on the current Government's record on providing for disabled people. Inevitably, it leads to the conclusion that any legislation must be comprehensive. The piecemeal approach has simply not worked, for several reasons.

Let us take a few examples. We heard this morning that overall spending on personal services has increased—quite rightly. That must be seen in relation to the fact that the number of elderly disabled people has increased. We heard that, even taking that into account, benefits have increased in real terms; I accept that.

Then why do the Government see that as a problem rather than an achievement? The thrust of many of the Government policies at the moment, including the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, is to say that it is costing too much and that we must move away from that. Much legislation has been enacted by the House but is never enforced.

We know about the quota system, to which the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) referred, and the fact that even Government Departments are not achieving anywhere near the quota. I tell this story every time, but it is worth repeating.

When I was leader of Renfrew district council, it achieved 1 per cent. of the quota—not the 3 per cent. required in law—and the Department of Employment gave us a "fit for work" award. It gave us an award for breaking the law by only two thirds, because that was better than was being achieved elsewhere in the community.

The Government have a record of enacting legislation but not enforcing it. Words are now not enough. The legislation must be comprehensive, and include a disablement commission that can ensure that the law is enforced. The importance of the disablement commission is not only practical and about enforcement: it is about sending out the right messages that will change attitudes in society by saying that if people, discriminate against disabled people, there will be a commissioner to deal with it. That is another important aspect.

Hon. Members have made the point that there are 6.5 million disabled people in Britain. There are 651 Members of the House. It therefore follows that there are some 10,000 disabled people in every constituency. We are all here to represent our constituents. We cannot properly represent them if we do not support—I suspect unanimously—the Bill today.

We must get rid of the situation in which, in Britain today, I can advertise a job for a secretary and cannot say to a female, black, disabled candidate that I am not giving her the job because she is female, or because she is black, but can say that I am not giving her the job because she is disabled. That is wrong in society in 1994.

The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East asked how far the Government should go. I think that he would agree that the Government should go just as far as equality. We do not want disabled people to be given preferential treatment; they are not asking for that. They ask simply for equality. They have a right to be full and equal citizens. I think that the Bill's day has come.

11.55 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Mr. Deputy Speaker, you made a plea earlier for short speeches. I shall do my very best to comply with that. We have had two and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

[Mr. Michael Stern]

a quarter hours of debate. I shall be the first Member to speak today to express considerable doubts about the Bill. I hope that you will forgive me, therefore, if, while not in any way wishing to talk for too long—there are no tactics involved—I take a little while to express those doubts in as much detail as necessary.

Several references have been made to events on the two previous occasions, particularly by the hon. Member for Caernarvon (Mr. Wigley) and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who introduced the Bill on 31 January 1992. I shall come back to that shortly. The hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Tyler) made a particularly small-minded reference. I am sorry that he is not in his place, as he deserves all the obloquy that has been—and will be—heaped on him for his comments on this occasion.

The first occasion on which I was present in the House for a debate on a Bill of this nature was when the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) introduced a similar Bill on 18 November 1983. On that occasion, the hon. Gentleman, quite rightly—like the hon. Member for Kingswood on this occasion—took the opportunity of coming high in the ballot for private Members' Bills to introduce a Bill that had been the subject of considerable discussion.

On that occasion, because it was high in the ballot, the Bill had a full day's debate. The hon. Gentleman introduced the Bill—I thought very well on that occasion. According to *Hansard*, he spoke for about 49 minutes, with some 10 interventions. He did not speak at any great length. That example was quite rightly followed by the hon. Member for Kingswood today, who spoke for about three quarters of an hour.

Despite that moderate introduction to the debate, the House decided, after about five hours, that there had not been sufficient debate. There were various reasons for that, and there may have been various tactics behind that, but nevertheless that was the decision of the House.

The situation when the Bill was next debated on 31 January 1992 was different. The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe had not come that high in the ballot. The Bill therefore was the second Bill on that day. For those who do not regularly follow parliamentary procedure, it is worth making the point that a second Bill on a private Members' day has virtually no chance of proceeding further unless it is unanimously accepted by the House, and only then if considerable restraint is exercised by those who wish to contribute to what will necessarily be a brief debate.

I remember, because I was in the House that day, the expressions of horror and disbelief that gradually spread over colleagues' faces when the right hon. Gentleman, in a debate that could last a maximum of 1 hour and 55 minutes, spoke for 27 minutes without the excuse of a single intervention. Indeed, he spoke for longer than the Minister on that occasion.

It was not surprising, therefore, that, at 10 minutes past 2, an Opposition Front-Bench Member noted that at least two other Members of the Opposition wished to speak in the debate. I recollect that at least six Conservative Members still hoped to contribute to what was recognisably, by then, a hopeless debate.

Mr. Alfred Morris: It may help the hon. Gentleman to know why I chose 31 January 1992 for Second Reading. I had drawn eighth in the ballot and was advised that the debate on the previous Bill would be short and one on which total unanimity would rule. It is no surprise that hon. Members were disconcerted. Many hon. Members said that the debate on the first Bill could have been much shorter. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman spoke in excess of 20 minutes.

A Conservative Member told me that that was the date to go for, especially in view of the fact that Lord Renton had said in the House of Lords that there was scant need, after all the debate there, for much more discussion here. But I took it on the basis of advice given to me from the Conservative party.

Mr. Stern: I do not dispute the right hon. Gentleman's decision to go for that date, and accept what he says about the advice that he was given. I am simply saying that the pressure on that day was such that, when the right hon. Gentleman rose to speak, the Bill had virtually no chance. But it was effectively killed by the length of his speech.

Mr. McMaster: I am not sure exactly what point the hon. Gentleman is trying to make, but if he is trying to make the ridiculous proposition that the Bill's author, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), tried to kill his own Bill, no one on this side of the House, hardly anyone on that side, and no one in the country believes him.

Mr. Stern: On that day, my hon. Friend the former Member for Kingswood suffered the same sort of barracking as I am getting. I was going on to make the point that, in what was intended to be a brief speech, he suffered not only barracking but an average of one intervention in less than every two minutes of his speech.

Mr. Howarth: Does my hon. Friend intend to come to the arguments against the Bill on the merits of the case that he wishes to make?

Mr. Stern: I certainly intend to come to the arguments against the Bill. I am also concerned that a former Member of this House who had a distinguished career while he was here has been traduced by Opposition Members, and that no one has yet been prepared to defend him. I therefore reject the comments that have been made about his speech —for example, by the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe, who said that it was a "crude blocking tactic".

Mr. McMaster: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stern: As I have just been criticised for not getting on with my arguments, I am not sure whether I wish to give way further in my opening remarks. I shall give way for the last time on this subject.

Mr. McMaster: If all that the hon. Gentleman is saying is correct, why did the former Member for Kingswood feel that he had to make a personal statement to the House the following week?

Mr. Stern: I shall answer that, despite the fact that I may then be criticised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) for taking the time to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are on Second Reading of a specific Bill. While it is perfectly proper to allude to the history of the Bill, I urge the hon. Gentleman now to move on to his comments on the Bill.

Mr. Stern: I should be delighted to do so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while accepting that it means that I cannot answer the point made by the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster).

There is considerable agreement on the circumstances behind the Bill and what might be seen as the need for it. I wish to say nothing against the central proposition that there is considerable discrimination against disabled people. A great deal can be done to eliminate, or at least ease, that discrimination. But I have doubts about the Bill because, unlike many hon. Members who have spoken, I am not sure whether the Bill's approach in terms of setting up a disablement commission and establishing a legal definition of discrimination is necessarily right.

May I give one or two examples of why the piecemeal approach, which is adopted by not just the Government but many public bodies and institutions, is more appropriate? The hon. Member for Kingswood and I both represent parts of Bristol. We recently attended a reception, which I sponsored, in this House designed to publicise an initiative by the university of Bristol for access for deaf students. We were both rightly proud to be there and wanted to give publicity to the special effort that Bristol university has made over many years to provide the maximum and widest possible range of initiatives, particularly for access, so that deaf students can attend the university and play a full part in its activities and courses.

I applaud the university for that initiative. I hope that many other universities will follow its example and do the same, not just for deaf students but for students with other handicaps. However, it would be foolish and wholly impractical for us to assume that every university or major institution could provide the same range of aids and initiatives. It would be a gross waste of public resources for them to do so.

Mr. Berry: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of any individual concerned with the access for deaf students initiative at Bristol university who is other than fully supportive of the Bill?

Mr. Stern: I am not, because I have not bothered to inquire.

Mr. Berry: May I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that he should do so?

Mr. Stern: May I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that I am fully aware that most, if not all, organisations associated with disabled groups welcome the Bill? I do not dispute that, but it does not stop me pointing out that the Bill may not be the best way to proceed for the benefit of members of those organisations. This is a debating forum, not just a forum for acceptance of pressures from outside.

Mr. Congdon: I would find the hon. Gentleman's arguments more convincing if there were more evidence that the piecemeal approach, which we have had for many years, had succeeded in reducing discrimination. Apart from one or two exceptions, it is virtually impossible for disabled students to gain access to higher education. Surely that demonstrates beyond doubt the failure of the piecemeal approach, and makes it necessary to introduce legislation along the lines proposed.

Mr. Stern: I shall happily try to show, in my subsequent remarks, that, although I accept the hon. Gentleman's strictures about the piecemeal approach—I accept that a great deal remains to be done—I still doubt whether the alternative approach proposed by the Bill would be more effective.

I mentioned the access for deaf students initiative as an example of a piecemeal approach that has worked in a limited way.

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stern: Of course I shall give way to my Bristol colleague, but I am conscious that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have asked for short speeches. So far, I have given way eight times. At the present rate, I shall be giving way about 40 times in the next 10 minutes.

Ms Corston: I thank my fellow Bristol Member of Parliament for giving way. Is aware that a member of staff at Bristol university, who I gather is one of his constituents and who came to lobby Parliament earlier this week about the Bill, spoke to me through a signer about the access for deaf students initiative? He said that it was all very well as far as it went, but that a statutory duty should be placed on organisations such as universities to provide such a scheme, and that the piecemeal approach was not appropriate.

Mr. Stern: That student is entitled to his opinion but, as I was saying, the depth and breadth of the work done by Bristol university on the initiative is such that it will undoubtedly act as a model for many other universities; however, to suggest that every university should be required by law to provide exactly the same facilities is wholly impractical and would indeed discourage other universities from adopting similar initiatives for other aspects of disability.

The Government have in the past favoured the piecemeal approach. A great deal has been said this morning about the failures of that approach. If we are to debate what are basically two alternative ways of proceeding, it is not fair to let that claim pass unchallenged.

Instead of trying to give a complete rundown of what the Government have achieved, I shall pick on one aspect, almost at random, in which I happen to be particularly interested—further education—and list what has been possible under the piecemeal approach backed by legislation. I am not denying that there is a role for legislation.

The Government have placed a statutory duty on further education authorities to reflect the fact that disability should not be regarded as a bar to access. Indeed, the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 strengthens that duty. It contains an explicit duty in relation to adult students, including those with learning difficulties. It applies to local education authorities and to the Further Education Funding Council, and does not allow the needs of disabled students to be disregarded.

The funding council has set up a specialist committee to review the range and type of further education available to disabled students and recommend how the council may best fulfil its statutory duties towards them under the Act.

[Mr. Stern]

Further education provision for disabled students has increased considerably in recent years. There are now more students in mainstream courses, and many institutions have developed link courses with day centres, adult training or social education centres and long-stay hospitals. In addition, there are special outreach classes for students who cannot be catered for on college premises. There are discretionary awards from some local education authorities, often paid at an increased rate in line with the grant supplements available. There is also a scheme to support building and equipment projects at independent FE colleges which cater for students with disabilities.

Like the records of all those dealing with disability, I accept that our record could be improved. However, our record shows that the cold water poured on the piecemeal approach today does not take into account the advances that have been made in this and many related spheres.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): The needs of the disabled have also been considered in care in the community. In that instance, we have moved away from the piecemeal approach and decided that we need to analyse the needs of the individual—I stress the word "individual". Having analysed the needs of the individual, we no longer say that we shall provide whatever we happen to have available, however inappropriate it may be.

Care in the community now demands that a package must be developed based on individual needs. Therefore, does my hon. Friend agree that, in care in the community, which also affects disabled people, our approach is quite different from that which he advocates?

Mr. Stern: There are many different approaches. My doubts about the Bill are not to do with whether legislation or Government action can be used to back the improvement of facilities for people with all sorts of disability. I doubt whether the over-arching approach of a legal definition of disability, the establishment of a disability commission and its power to decide that there is a need for further legislation is necessarily the best. I happen to think that it is not.

I cite a further example of a case in which the piecemeal approach will continue to be necessary whatever the law says. It arises from this morning's newspaper.

I understand that the disability organisation Artsline has accused Buckingham palace of discrimination, because the palace asks disabled sightseers to book their trip in advance. It is an example of plain discrimination where I am entirely on the side of the organisers of visits to Buckingham palace, because Buckingham palace, which is only newly opened to the public, has not yet been able to make the adaptations that will be necessary in due course to allow full access to disabled sightseers.

I have no doubt that the palace will eventually do what is necessary but, in the meantime, Artsline is claiming that the disabled are being discriminated against.

Mr. Sheerman: If there were a commission on the rights of the disabled and a complaint was made about Buckingham palace's treatment of disabled people, the commission would evaluate the complaint. I should expect that its decision would be reasonable.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that Bristol Radio recently advertised for a researcher. The advertisement stated that Bristol Radio was an equal opportunities employer, but that the researcher had to have a full driving licence. That case would also go to the commission and, we hope, a sensible decision would be reached.

Mr. Stern: I accept that that might happen, but the intervention of a disability commission is introducing a wild card which seems unnecessary in the example that I am citing. Buckingham palace is quite willing to allow the disabled full access, but it needs time. That time will be provided, whether or not there is a commission.

I deal now with one of my principal objections to the Bill. The Bill would require the establishment of a quango —a commission—with full powers to intervene and perhaps to promote legislation. However effective it was in increasing access and rights for the disabled, the Bill would automatically introduce an overlay of costs and employment opportunities on the commission at public expense. Such costs are unnecessary, when the alternative piecemeal approach is also available.

Mr. Berry: Does the hon. Gentleman therefore advocate the abolition of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality?

Mr. Stern: The two commissions to which the hon. Gentleman refers have been in existence for some time. I do not advocate their abolition, but I ask the hon. Gentleman a sincere question. Like me, he represents part of a city in which there is considerable social stress. Does he honestly believe, as I do not, that, after 30 or 40 years of work by the Commission for Racial Equality—work done by a long-standing and sincere commission established by legislation—acts of racial discrimination, while they may have changed in appearance, are scarcer now than they were before the Commission existed? I do not believe so, and I say that from experience in my constituency.

For the legislation to be effective, it has to be practical and enforceable. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have proved that it would be. I accept that they have proved the need for a fresh look at the legislation available to ensure the maximum possible speed and the maximum availability of facilities for the disabled. That is why, despite the fact that I am opposed to the central core of his Bill, I am undecided whether to call for a vote today. However, if the Bill is to go into Committee, the hon. Gentleman who introduced it must recognise that, in Committee or on Report, he will need to meet arguments about the wording of individual clauses—those will be important.

For example, I notice that, on a matter which was discussed earlier, clause 6(3) provides for a number of exemptions in relation to the provision of services in small boarding houses. I cannot see any reason for an exemption on the grounds that we are discussing—cost.

Mr. Berry: Would the hon. Gentleman like to advise the House which provisions in clause 7 do not deal with his objection?

Mr. Stern: On the face of the Bill, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that clause 7 may well deal with that objection. I am not sure, because the two items are in separate clauses, and one would need legal advice on the linkage. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that that matter needs to be discussed in Committee.

Mr. Berry: I hope that you have read the Bill.

Mr. Stern: I have read the Bill, as I have just demonstrated to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Austin-Walker *rose—*

Mr. Stern: I am conscious of the time, and the fact that other hon. Members wish to speak. I am sure that the myth will grow about my speech, that I spoke for far too long, but it is because of the number of interventions that I have taken.

The hon. Gentleman, as I was saying, has introduced a Bill whose thrust is that the obligation to provide better facilities for the disabled should be by means of a disability commission and a legal definition of disablement. I am saying that many of us, while we accept the obligation under the Bill, do not accept that that is the direction in which the Bill should go to achieve the objectives that he seeks.

Therefore, in Committee or on Report, we shall be arguing, not that we disagree with the Bill or the need for it, but that the central thrust of it is in entirely the wrong direction. It may be that, in Committee or on Report, we shall be able to achieve a compromise which will enable the legislation in some form to go ahead. I do not know.

Unless the hon. Gentleman is prepared to accommodate the cost—to many of us the unnecessary cost—of the whole idea of a disability commission, and unless he is prepared to accommodate the doubts that many of us feel about the legal definition of disability, as set out in the Bill, I forecast many interesting discussions ahead.

I end my remarks as I began, by wishing the hon. Gentleman well in his endeavours, while doubting the means that he has chosen to bring them forward.

12.22 pm

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): I join other hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Kingwood (Mr. Berry) on introducing the Bill and especially congratulate, as have other hon. Members, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on his determination over many years. I hope that today he will see his efforts come to fruition.

It is 15 years since my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe appointed Peter Large as chair of the Committee on Restrictions Against Disabled People—CORAD. The Government's response to the recommendations of that committee were that, rather than go down the legislative route, they preferred to rely on education and persuasion. At that time, the Government said that they were benevolently neutral. Some hon. Members felt that at that time the Government were malevolently hostile.

I would not wish to heap all the scorn on the former Member for Kingswood, Mr. Hayward. It was clearly a Government tactic to talk the Bill out by allowing the previous debate to go on until 12.35 pm, so that there was not an opportunity to vote on my right hon. Friend's Bill. To leave that aside, I believe that there is a change in mood and I hope that the Government, if they are not to support the Bill, will at least be benevolently neutral and allow it to proceed to Committee.

There is a necessity for a Government programme of campaigning for education and persuasion, but that must be reinforced and underpinned by a legislative framework. There were arguments that legislation on gender and race discrimination was inappropriate and that in those areas one should rely on persuasion. I shall quote from Martin Luther King, when he dismissed the case for relying on education and persuasion only to end racial prejudice. He said:

"Morality cannot be legislated, but behaviour can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless."

The Bill seeks to regulate behaviour to ensure that disabled people enjoy their full, basic human and civil rights.

In framing a law, we need to ensure that we are getting the right law. The Bill offers us that. We already have some laws in respect of disability, such as the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, which many Members in the Chamber and many disabled people will think is perhaps the wrong legislation and is, in many senses, unworkable. It is the law of the land and has been since 1944, yet only 20 per cent. of employers comply with that legislation.

To fail to comply is a criminal offence. I question whether the criminal law should be brought in or whether it should be under civil law, but it is significant to note that, despite the fact that employers flagrantly flout that law, the party of law and order has not been involved in any prosecution since it came into power. I am not suggesting that prosecution is the right road to go down, but, clearly, that law is failing disabled people in the country and we need to have a law that provides for some redress and change.

The hon. Member for Bolton, North (Mr. Thurnham) suggested that it was not the job of the Government to lecture other employers on what they do, when they are not doing so well themselves. I take issue with that argument. It is clear that central Government, local government and public bodies generally fail to meet their requirements under the Race Relations Act 1976, under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and fail to meet the needs of disabled people.

However, the fact that public bodies are failing does not mean that we should not have legislation for the private sector and other bodies as well. Other areas of legislation such as gender discrimination and race discrimination provide a right of redress for the person who is discriminated against, whether by a private employer, a private company, public bodies, central Government or local government. At present, disabled people have no rights of redress in law when they are discriminated against, whether by a public or by a private concern.

There is a need for education and persuasion, but that is not all. Some years ago, I was on a course with, among others, a man who used a wheelchair. As part of the course, we visited the local magistrates court in Greenwich. My colleague was unable to go into the magistrates court in his wheelchair because the clerk of the court told him that he was a fire risk. At that moment, he did not need education and persuasion, although he may have needed that over a longer period. At that moment, he needed legislation that gave him the right to enter that court. The person who is denied a job, when he or she has the capacity to do it, on the basis of some disability does not need education and persuasion at that moment. That person needs the law to guarantee basic civil rights.

The Minister said on 28 March 1991:

"some employers' recruitment practices discriminate unfairly against people with disabilities."—[*Official Report*, 28 March 1991; Vol. 188, c. 1148.]

Other hon. Members have told us that a survey has shown that 6 per cent. of employers say that they would never, "under any circumstances", employ a person with a

[Mr. John Austin-Walker]

disability. To change that, we need legislation now. We do not need to wait for those employers to be educated and persuaded.

I appreciate that there are difficulties in legislation. There were difficulties in the race discrimination legislation. There have been some difficulties in the implementation of the gender discrimination legislation, but the fact that there are difficulties in implementing legislation is not an argument for inaction. It is an argument for introducing legislation, giving due and careful consideration to it in Committee and being prepared at a subsequent stage to amend, strengthen or enhance it if it proves necessary to do so.

There are other important aspects of anti-discrimination legislation. It is, for example, possible for someone in a restaurant or a cafe to refuse to allow disabled people to come in, on the ground that it might upset other users of the restaurant. It is possible for an employer in a shop, for example, to say that the customers might be upset if a disabled person served them. Employers can say, "I do not wish to discriminate. I am not prejudiced. I am doing this because there is pressure from my customers." Under the race discrimination legislation, pressure to discriminate is not allowed as an excuse and would not be tolerated. We need to ensure that the Bill contains provisions to ensure the rights of disabled people so that employers and providers of services cannot use such excuses for denying disabled people their basic rights.

Most references in the debate have been to people with physical disabilities or with learning difficulties. Before I came to the House, I was actively involved with my local MIND—National Association for Mental Health—group. With mental illness, disability is often far less visible. However, once an employer knows that someone has had some psychiatric history or episode, there is often a closed door to employment. Thousands of people are thrown on to the scrap heap because of discrimination and prejudice about mental illness. I hope that the Bill will become law and that it will end for all time the stigma associated with mental illness in employment.

There have been suggestions that the Bill runs counter to the Government's current philosophy in terms of their desire for deregulation. The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) has some doubts about the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976. I hope that he does not reflect the Government's view of deregulation policy and that those equality measures are not under threat.

I hope that hon. Members agree that the benefits of the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act have been clearly demonstrated in terms of opening up opportunities for women and for black people. I believe that, in many ways, that legislation needs to be strengthened, as I believe that the Bill may need to be strengthened. The fair employment legislation in Northern Ireland provides a far better framework for ensuring equality of opportunity in employment and I should like such legislation to be introduced for disability as well.

The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West demonstrated the old adage of knowing the cost of everything and the value of nothing, as most of his speech was dedicated to cost. There have been many red herrings about cost. I should like there to be a real analysis of the cost benefits of freeing the system so that disabled people can enjoy full civil rights. Many disabled people are denied their civil rights—the right to work and the right to pay their taxes—because there is no legislative framework to back up those rights. Why do hon. Members who mention cost never talk about the financial cost to disabled people of discrimination in the labour market? What price do we put on human rights?

My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) mentioned the role of the commission proposed in the Bill. It will have an important function. Individuals should have the right to seek redress if they feel that they have suffered discrimination, but the commission has an important monitoring role to play to ensure that disabled people's rights are upheld.

It was clear that the hon. Member for Bristol North-West had not read the Bill. He said that clause 7 was separate from clause 6 in terms of the provision of goods, facilities and services, but I suggest that he reads clause 7(1), which states:

"In determining for the purpose of section 6 above the reasonableness of any modification."

It is clearly related to clause 6. Clause 7(2) makes it clear that in determining reasonableness,

"The factors to be considered in determining whether such actions could be undertaken without undue hardship shall include—

(a) the nature and cost of the actions in question;

(b) the overall financial resources of the person or body concerned and the effect on expenses and resources or the impact of such actions upon the operations of the person or body;"

Mr. Stern: I do not wish to make a major point of this, because the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr Berry) may be able to give the necessary assurance in Committee that would make everyone happy. I merely made the point that putting the proposal on cost in a separate section gave rise to some doubt about its applicability to the previous section, where it could have been included. It is not a major point; I am sure that we shall discuss it in Committee.

Mr. Austin-Walker: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman now agrees. I refer him and other hon. Members to subsections (3) and (4) of clause 3, which make the same points.

Other legislation includes provisions on determining reasonableness. It is enforced every day of the week by industrial tribunals. Their view of what is reasonable for Shell, BP or British Gas will differ from what they regard as reasonable for small businesses employing 20 or 30 people. To try to suggest that the Bill departs from basic principles on reasonableness that operate day in, day out in courts, industrial tribunals and elsewhere is a red herring.

The Government advanced their arguments on why the Bill should not proceed to the Committee stage on a previous occasion. I cannot anticipate what the Minister will say today, but I can comment on what he said about the matter in an earlier debate. He said:

"There is still too much unjustified discrimination against disabled people. We know that that is wrong and often has a cruel impact on the quality of life of disabled people."

I doubt whether any hon. Member would disagree with that statement. He continued:

"I have noticed attitudes towards disabled people changing, as well as changes in the attitude of disabled people towards their situation."

I agree that attitudes are changing and that they may have improved, but it was clear in the Lobby last week that attitudes are not changing fast enough.

The Minister went on:

"Disabled people do not just want sympathy. They do not want to be patronised or to be looked-after people or people who are told what is good for them."

No, they do not: what they want are their basic human rights. In the Chamber today we have an opportunity to give them those rights.

The Minister added:

"nor is there by any means unanimity in the disabled community . . . that legislation is necessarily the right way".

None of us has ever suggested that there was unanimity, but the overwhelming feeling of disabled people is that the legislative route is the right one.

The other reason that the Minister gave for not wanting the Bill to proceed in the previous Parliament was this:

"I am in[illegible]ed . . . by the fact of the prospective life left to this Parliament . . . a good long Committee stage might sort out some of those difficulties."—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1992; Vol. 202, c. 1251-52.]

Well, we have an opportunity now for a good long Committee stage to sort out any difficulties of the sort that the hon. Members for Bolton, North-East and for Bristol, North-West mentioned. Those difficulties can be resolved in Committee; that is where the Bill should go.

I share the reluctance expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood about quoting President Bush, but what he said has been quoted only in part and sometimes inaccurately. He spoke not only of

"the shameful wall of exclusion"

finally coming tumbling down. What he said in full was:

"you have in your hands the key to the success of this Act for you can unlock a splendid resource of untapped human potential that, when freed, will enrich us all."

There is some argument about what terminology to use in this debate. I use the phrase "disabled people" because I believe that, by its attitudes, society disables them. We have the chance today to enable and empower them, which is why I hope that the Bill will be given a Second Reading.

12.41 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I will speak more briefly than I had originally intended, because I am conscious that there are still several hon Members who want to speak in the debate, as well as the Opposition spokesman. I also believe that there will be further opportunities later to discuss in more detail aspects of this Bill.

I add my congratulations to those of others who have paid tribute to the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry)—congratulations on his good fortune in the ballot and, although this might not be particularly convenient for me, on his judgment in choosing this legislation to bring before the House again. I also congratulate other right hon. and hon. Members who have contributed so constructively to the debate.

The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) reminded us of the fact that all too often when we use the description "disabled people" we automatically bring to mind wheelchair users and forget the range of others with physical disabilities, sensory handicaps, learning difficulties and various forms of mental illness. We have, therefore, to look at disability in the round. No one who takes an interest in this subject can fail to be conscious of the strength of feeling and passion behind the campaign to eliminate discrimination against disabled people—but for that strength of feeling and commitment we would not be debating the Bill again today.

I am also conscious of the all-party opinion recorded by those who signed early-day motion 2, and of the feelings expressed by the many people who attended the impressive lobby of Parliament on Wednesday. It vividly showed the strength of feeling on this issue among disabled people. I know from the numbers of letters to which I have responded that a great many hon. Members know the weight of that concern from their mailbags of recent weeks.

My discussions with the all-party disablement group and with its secretary and researcher have also reinforced my knowledge of the strength of feeling on this matter. There is no argument about the fact that discrimination exists and disfigures in many ways the attitude that we as a society have towards disabled people.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in the House earlier this week, the Government share the aim of eliminating discrimination against disabled people. We recognise that the aspirations and expectations of disabled people in our society are now firmly part of the political agenda. It is impossible for us to ignore them, even if we wished, and it would not be right to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) spoke of the emotion that is behind much of the campaigning on this issue. It is an emotion which I share. However, I do not think that that should prevent us from focusing our minds on the practicalities, and deciding the best way in which we can set about achieving the aim of eliminating discrimination against disabled people.

The sponsors of the Bill believe that its approach is the right way forward. I say this only in the mildest terms, but in a sense I am disappointed that the Bill has returned to the House in precisely the same form that it appeared hitherto. I understand that that was a conscious decision by the Bill's sponsors.

As we discussed the matter on previous occasions, I had hoped that there might be some attempt by the sponsors to respond to the concerns expressed by Ministers, business and other interests about this approach to what is undoubtedly an important issue. However, I make no great complaint about that. It might have been a more sensible way forward if it had been possible to adopt a slightly different approach. If we go into Committee, we will have an opportunity to discuss and reflect on that.

Much has been said about education and persuasion. I simply want to address that briefly. The Government have been doing their best to achieve progress by using targeted legislation where necessary, but by using education and persuasion as a sustained way of altering attitudes towards disability in our society. That has led to significant progress recently in altering attitudes, and it will continue to play an essential part. There is more to be done in this area, and more will be done.

Even if we had the Bill on the statute book, there would still be a need for education and persuasion. No one doubts that in areas of race relations and discrimination against women, the simple passage of legislation did not at a stroke, as it were, alter attitudes in society; a great deal had to be done. As one who voted in favour of race relations discrimination legislation when it was perhaps not the most appropriate thing in my party, I well understand the importance of education and persuasion on these matters, but it would be right for us to recognise that there has been progress in this area.

There are some matters that are entirely in need of legislation, whether it is targeted or over-arching, and I shall address that issue in a moment. What I call the

[Mr. Nicholas Scott]

gratuitous discrimination against people who are denied access to restaurants, cinemas or other public places simply because of their disability, the inconvenience of their being in a wheelchair, perhaps a facial disfigurement or a learning difficulty which leads to a speech impediment of one sort or another, is more likely to be addressed by education and persuasion, and making it clear that that is an unacceptable way forward, than by legislation that may not be able to address that sort of gratuitous discrimination, which is too often a feature of the experience of disabled people in our society.

I hope that the House will recognise that attitudes are changing and progress is being made on a number of fronts. Of course, we all wish that the pace of that change would accelerate.

At the outset, I must say that the Government will ensure that the Bill is examined carefully. We are aware that questions have been raised about it by employers and by industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) addressed a number of those issues. A series of press releases from the CBI have suggested that it would prefer a code of practice in that area rather than legislation, and the Forum of Private Business is concerned about the impact of the legislation on business. The Institute of Directors' initiative has already been mentioned today, and I will not return to it. The Federation of Small Businesses has expressed concern about the impact on small business.

Those fears have been expressed, and it is right and sensible that we should address them as we discuss the Bill in detail in Committee. If we are to have legislation, it is important that it is comprehensive or targeted to carry employers and other providers with us in our efforts to eliminate discrimination. It is right that the Bill should be examined carefully to see which aspects are consistent with the aims that the Government share with many who have spoken during the debate.

I have stated some of the reservations in terms of the concerns expressed by business, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West also stated significant reservations. However, it is important that those matters should now be discussed in a calm, sensible and constructive manner. I believe that a Standing Committee would help us in that regard.

Whatever the outcome of that consideration, it is right for me to set out some of the advances that have been made to open up avenues of opportunity for people with disabilities and, what is more, the way in which we hope to extend those boundaries.

Mention has been made of education. There is a recognition that, although much needs to be done, there has been significant recent progress in the arrangements for children with special educational needs, including those with disabilities. The Education Act 1993 builds on the principles of the 1981 Act and signals a significant advance in this area.

The Government will be shortly laying before the House a code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs. It will be a comprehensive document, and it has already been widely welcomed in consultation. At the same time, the Government are taking action to improve access for disabled children to our educational establishments.

In further and higher education, attention is also being given to improving the position of students with disabilities, and the Higher Education Funding Council for England has now allocated some £3 million to some 38 projects which are designed to improve access for those students to institutions of higher education. The aim of improving access for students with learning difficulties or disabilities is also reflected in the further and higher education charters which education departments issued last year.

I am conscious that students with disabilities frequently find that they do not receive co-ordinated service in the transition from school to further or higher education, or into employment. There is sometimes a conflict between educational, social services and employment training funding. We must seek to ensure that there is increasing co-ordination in that area, leading to increased job opportunities for people with disabilities.

Obviously, our aim—it is also the aim of the sponsors of the Bill—is that people with disabilities are recognised as people with abilities who can contribute to wider society as well as to a range of enterprises in our economic pattern. They wish to contribute their skills and talents fully in a job, in the same way as anyone else in society. With that aim in mind, a programme has been developed to raise employers' awareness, to encourage them to concentrate on people's abilities and help them achieve success by releasing individual potential and initiative.

The programme includes a code of good practice and the disability symbol which has also been mentioned during the debate. The Employment Service recently enhanced the symbol. It carries the clear message, "Positive About Disabled People". The service asks employers who use it to make five specific commitments to good practice. In the past six months, the number of employers who have opted to use the new strengthened symbol has doubled.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) mentioned the role of the civil service and its use of the symbol. I am advised that there is a legal difficulty with it, but am assured that it is being urgently addressed. I hope that I may have better news for my hon. Friend in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Thurnham: I think that I was told a year ago that the matter was being urgently addressed.

Mr. Scott: In response to the pressure that I am receiving from my hon. Friend, perhaps I can seek to ensure that it is even more urgently addressed. I accept that there are no grounds for complacency in either the public or the private sector. We have had a code of practice in place in general terms for 10 years, and we all recognise that there is still a long way to go.

Inside the civil service, which has a code of practice that will be upgraded to a programme of action in the near future, we have made substantial progress in recent years. Within the private sector, about 0.7 per cent. of employees are registered disabled people. The corresponding figure in the civil service is 1.5 per cent.—about double the level achieved in the private sector—and even that is, in a sense, an understatement of the number of disabled people employed in the public sector.

In the Department for Social Security and its agencies —the DSS family—the percentage of employees who are registered disabled people is 1.8 per cent. But 5 per cent.

of our work force identify themselves as having disabilities of one sort or another. A significant number of our employees with disabilities do not choose to register themselves as disabled, and it is important to recognise that distinction.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that performance within local government varies considerably? Some local authorities, including my own in Arfon, have a good record, but some have appallingly bad records. Can anything be done to encourage the bad ones to do better?

Mr. Scott: That may be one of the issues that we want to consider when we discuss the subject in more detail. It may be no bad thing for local government if central Government set an example.

Last week, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment announced the final details of the access to work scheme, with extra funding. Most important, the plans for that scheme will no longer contain a requirement for employers to make a contribution. I understand the widespread concern that was expressed about that. I am particularly pleased that my right hon. Friend felt able to progress with the scheme without that provision.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I warmly welcome the access to work scheme, but is my right hon. Friend aware that we need to work much harder to encourage the disabled to apply for that scheme, because they are totally lacking in confidence? We need to identify their skills so that we can make maximum use of them and propose them for the scheme.

Mr. Scott: I think that my hon. Friend may be understating the confidence of many disabled people and their wish to gain employment. There is a range of incentives and opportunities for disabled people to find employment—in the benefits system, through employment training, through the work of the placement and assessment counselling teams, and training and enterprise councils around the country.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is clearly determined to carry forward that programme, and to build on the confidence and ambitions that are increasingly evinced by people with disabilities. They are anxious to find employment and to contribute, both to society and to the particular enterprise in which they are seeking work. As recently as this week, changes have been announced to the funding arrangements for the sheltered employment programme, which should improve its effectiveness and help severely disabled people to increase their employment opportunities.

We recognise that education, employment and living arrangements are important, but transport is also vital to disabled people. It is no good having job opportunities if disabled people cannot get to work. They need also to be able to engage in the social activities—visiting family and friends and shopping—that the rest of us are able to enjoy. In that aspect, too, I believe that real progress is being made.

The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee has recently updated a specification for local bus services, which will be a big step in the right direction. The Department of Transport has recently made widely available a training videotape teaching bus drivers and conductors how to be sensitive to the needs of disabled people, and that is being incorporated in the formal national vocational qualification training that is now required by many bus companies.

The next stage in improving physical access is to eliminate steps at entrances and exits of buses. The first route to be equipped with those vehicles went into service at the end of January in London, and by summer 70 low-floor buses will operate on five routes throughout London. Some hon. Members visited the bus that was brought into New Palace Yard just before Christmas last year. The designs of bus stops and bus stations are also being tackled.

Even the railways are now making significant progress in terms of accessibility. The hon. Member for Kingswood acknowledged that it will take time to transform the whole of the rolling stock on the railway system in this country to make it fully accessible for disabled people, but he urged on us the importance of ensuring that all new rolling stock was so accessible.

All rolling stock that is now being built is wheelchair accessible and incorporates other features to make rail travel easier for anyone with a mobility problem. All InterCity services are already wheelchair accessible and all new rolling stock on InterCity incorporates a wheelchair-accessible lavatory. In the privatising of the railways, the needs of passengers with disabilities will be safeguarded.

Railway providers have to tackle another problem—the difficulty posed by unstaffed stations. That problem was mentioned to me more than once at the reception that I gave for organisations of and for disabled people last evening. We must also tackle the issue of access facilities at stations, such as stair lifts, information systems, warning and guidance for those with visual impairments, and so on. All those are being actively pursued.

Mr. Austin-Walker: I welcome the Minister's comments in relation to British Rail. Will similar considerations apply to the London underground, which is perhaps the most inaccessible place for disabled people?

Mr. Scott: I was about to move on. The hon. Gentleman anticipated my next remarks.

My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter said that it might take 20 years to make the London underground—the oldest, and probably the deepest, underground transit system in the world—accessible to passengers with disabilities. London Underground has changed its attitude—there is no doubt about that. When I speak to other audiences, I frequently quote the spokesman for London Underground who said, when he was announcing its first steps in opening up the system to wheelchair users:

"From now on we shall be finding reasons to say yes rather than excuses to say no."

If only that attitude could be transported elsewhere in our society, many of the difficulties that confront disabled people in our society might be overcome more quickly.

London Underground has provided a free access guide to each station. It recognises that it is still a long way from creating a fully accessible system, but it aims to give wheelchair users especially the right to make their own choices about where and when they travel by tube and to provide them with information to enable them to make that choice.

Freedom to travel is important in many other ways, and I am pleased that many service providers in the leisure and tourism business are giving the needs of disabled people greater priority.

[Mr. Scott]

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) emphasised that the Railways Bill did not originally make provision for consultation with disabled people, but it does now place a duty on the regulator to prepare a code of practice in consultation with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee—ADAPT—to protect the interests of disabled people. That is an important step in the right direction.

Mention was made of the Museums and Galleries Commission. It recently published guidelines to be used as the basis for developing a policy on admitting and giving help to people with disabilities. Considerable work has been inspired by ADAPT, under the guidance of Geoffrey Lord, to enable proper access for the disabled to a wide range of arts venues, concert halls, museums and galleries.

We still have a problem with many cinemas. When I addressed the annual conference of cinematograph owners and managers, I urged them to change their attitudes. There are signs that they are changing. The introduction of multiscreen cinemas all at ground level, allowing easier access, is making a difference. It is more difficult to adapt older cinemas, but I hope that it will be increasingly possible for proper provision to be made for disabled customers in those cinemas as well.

We are weakest in the provision of auditory aids for the deaf and hard of hearing, but cinema owners are beginning to examine ways in which they can improve that provision. I am looking for further improvements from cinema and club owners in their attitude to many disabled people who seek to use their facilities. I know that if I fail to honour that obligation, Lord Snowdon, who sits on the Cross Benches in another place, will vigorously remind me of my duties in that regard.

I return to the recurrent theme of the importance of better education and awareness of the needs and potential of disabled people. I pay particular tribute to the work of the Employers Forum on Disability. That national organisation represents some of the most important high street names in business—including Sainsbury, Abbey National, London Electricity, the Post Office and Marks and Spencer. The forum's guides on best practice in attracting disabled people as customers and employees are to be warmly applauded.

I was particularly glad two weeks ago to launch a new scheme to ensure that disabled people who need the assistance of dogs—whether guide dogs or dogs trained to help those whose hearing is impaired—and others who need the support of four-legged animals will be admitted to the food departments of Sainsbury, Marks and Spencer and other large organisations. That was a difficult barrier to overcome and many factors had to be taken into account.

The fact that a number of large providers in the retail sector found it possible to take that step will, I hope, set an example to others and, on a wider scale, persuade more retailers to acknowledge not just the social responsibility but financial advantage of attracting support from the large number of people in society who have disabilities of one sort or another.

Sainsbury, Tesco and Safeway have installed wider automatic doors and checkouts, adapted trolleys for wheelchair users and provided better signposting of goods. Progress is being made and we should recognise that, whatever view we may take of the Bill.

Access is immensely important. Building regulations require access and facilities for disabled people to and within new and extended non-domestic buildings. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is currently assessing whether it will be practicable to extend the scope of those requirements to non-domestic buildings subject to alteration or to change of use.

I draw the attention of the hon. Members for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) to the fact that funds have now been given to Disability Action in Northern Ireland for the employment of three access officers to promote and improve access to the built environment. I hope that that will be of significant importance in Northern Ireland.

I now address the problem of facilities within our place of work, which has been mentioned. Many of us are conscious of the lack of facilities here for disabled people. Many people may well say that it is not before time that we should address that problem. An audit of the Palace of Westminster and its facilities for disabled people has been carried out by Mr. Wycliffe Noble, who has considerable expertise in that area. A series of proposals for the improvement of access for disabled people have been drawn up and are now being considered by the Accommodation and Works Committee.

Some progress has been made. I understand that £250,000 has been allocated in the immediate future for improvements to the Palace to meet the needs of disabled people. I hope that that will be only the beginning of a process that will ensure that, as soon as possible, this place —the heart of our democracy—is properly accessible to disabled people.

I pay the warmest possible tribute to the all-party group for its hard work, co-operation, energy and advice that it consistently and energetically gives me on this important matter. I have had a number of meetings with the group during the past year. It is fair to say that we have all learnt a great deal from our discussions and can whole-heartedly agree that a change in public attitudes is crucial if we are eventually to eliminate discrimination against disabled people.

I have set out to the House some of the areas where we have taken action since we debated the matter last year. I have made it clear that we will continue to examine what more needs to be done to ensure that disabled people are able to enjoy their full rights in our society. There is more to be done, and more will be done, but the House needs to look carefully at the detail of the proposed legislation to see whether it is the right way forward.

There are practical questions, some of which I have addressed, that we should not ignore. I have made it clear that the Government fully share the aim of the Bill: to eliminate discrimination against disabled people. There is no dispute about that. Our concerns are about the practicalities. My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) talked about compliance cost assessments. Once the Bill has received a Second Reading —as I expect that it will—they will be provided as soon as possible.

I have tried today to give the flavour of the progress that is being made in the United Kingdom. I am not complacent about that progress. There is still a great deal of work to be done. I believe that we are getting there and I know that we can and will increasingly create a climate in which people with disabilities can share the opportunities that we freely accept, and enjoy the life that the rest of us can take for granted.

In closing, I repeat once more our commitment to ensuring that there is no discrimination against disabled people. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said at Question Time earlier this week:

"I hope that the Bill will go into Committee for detailed examination of its provisions."—[*Official Report*, 8 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. 148.]

I look forward to that process.

1.13 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): The Labour party unequivocally welcomes this historic civil rights initiative. I add my congratulations and those of my hon. Friends on the Front Bench to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry). The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), who chided me in his speech—the only one that I had left the Chamber for, but not because of that reason—thought that I was too party political the last time we discussed this issue.

I feel a lot better about today than the last time we discussed this matter. I hope that he will find me in a different mode. After all, the Government hope to see the Bill proceed into Committee, which we very much welcome. I take it that there will not be a Whip shouting "Object", or that anyone will talk the Bill out today. Today's atmosphere is one of liberation, so I hope that I can respond to the change.

The measure has had the Labour party's full support for a considerable time. I can think of hardly a Labour Member who has not signed early-day motion No. 2 supporting the Bill. The Leader of the Opposition is an enthusiastic supporter of the rights which the measure would give disabled people. He only regrets that the Scottish Labour party conference prevents him from being here today.

It is not only Labour Members who have supported the Bill. Some of us who have joined this debate a little later than others feel a sense of humility when we look around the Chamber and see the number of dedicated Members who have tried to make the Bill happen year after year. They have never given up, but have always returned to have another go. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have worked tirelessly through the all-party disablement group. I pay due credit to the many Conservative Back-Bench Members have risked their easy life on those Benches by trying to persuade the Government to change their mind and accept the principle of the Bill.

Today, the strong measure of cross-party support is demonstrated by the increased number of people who have signed the early-day motion and the almost unanimous—just one speech prevents me from saying unanimous—support of the Bill. I am therefore optimistic that we shall succeed this time, because there has been a transformation in the mood not only of this House but of people outside. We are merely reflecting the change in public mood, not leading it; the public mood is dictating to us.

There has been an uplifting of consciousness and political leadership among disabled people and their organisations. I pay tribute to them, because they are responsible for the change in public mood. We follow that; we do not lead it. Disabled people have become increasingly aware of their political power and the part that they can play not only in the national political arena but by using their sheer power, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) referred time and again.

He pointed out that, in the average constituency, there are 10,000 disabled people, not to mention their families and carers, who are rightly learning to flex their muscles. We politicians would be foolish indeed to ignore that power, the new mood of leadership and that heightened consciousness.

As an historian, I cannot resist the temptation to outline a little of the history of the struggle for civil rights for disabled people, and to put it into context. We are all aware of the history of the Bill from the early 1980s and the brave attempts since then to bring it into law. We also know of the fine efforts which so many hon. Members have made to introduce measures that would benefit, and have benefited, disabled people. The Opposition do not say that no progress has been made. Considerable progress has been made, but we cannot get past a certain level of achievement without a legislative structure.

During the months in which I have shadowed the Secretary of State, our basic disagreement has been on how far we can get by education and persuasion. When I first came to the House in the early 1980s, I spent many Fridays in the Chamber. My first private Member's Bill was the Safety of Children in Cars Bill, which led to the seatbelt legislation. In those days, we found that we could reach 30 per cent. by persuasion—Jimmy Saville doing his "clunk-click" publicity—but we could not go further. But once we had the legislation, we zoomed up to 95 per cent. That did not mean that we did not need to continue education and persuasion in terms of transport safety but the two—education and persuasion, and legislation—went hand in hand. That is the lesson that the Government have to learn. We need both to work together to form a successful combination.

I must mention noble Lord Ashley, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam), who have especially remarkable track records. I also mention my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), who not only introduced his own Bill—which went somewhat wider than the Bill that we are debating because it had a double side to it—but tabled an amendment to the employment legislation some years ago, which was one of the first occasions on which the House voted on such a measure. I pay tribute to all those right hon. and hon. Members and to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood.

Is it not strange that the history of the struggle for civil rights for disabled people is comparatively short? It was initiated to a large extent by a growing awareness of the issue and some far-sighted initiatives. In this context, I again refer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe, who introduced the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1972, which, as it were, lies almost halfway between the present and the other great landmark—the sometimes underrated 1943 Second Reading of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944. There was, of course, a coalition Government during the war.

That Act was passed 50 years ago and the "Wythenshawe Act", if I may call it that, was passed about 27 years later, halfway between the great landmark and the present day. In other words, there have not been many landmarks in terms of initiatives and progress.

The 1944 landmark was underrated but it has been rightly criticised today. By golly, why should it not have been uprated, brushed off and modified? I think that we all

[Mr. Barry Sheerman]

support the principle of the 1944 Act, but no one would claim that nothing could be done to upgrade and improve it, and make it more workable in new circumstances.

In a sense, the struggle for civil rights for disabled people had failed, certainly in the 1960s—a crucial period—to match the momentum of civil rights for women and ethnic minorities to which many hon. Members eloquently referred. That is surprising, because discrimination against disabled people is evident throughout recorded history.

For those who are so minded, it can be traced through literature, theatre, novels and medical treatises. Discrimination against this minority has an ancient and shameful pedigree. There is a catalogue of discrimination, neglect and hardship endured by many men and women, with just the few bright interludes to which I referred.

So much territory has been covered today that I shall concentrate on one or two aspects of the Bill—what it could achieve and the criticism that, if it became law, it would somehow cost the taxpayer, the private sector and the country dear. If my colleagues will allow me, it is to those aspects that I shall direct most of my remarks.

Dear old Ernest Bevin got it right in the famous debate in 1943 on what was then the Disabled Persons (Employment) Bill. He was answering critics who said that the Bill would be costly and was being introduced only as a reflection of the "poignancy of war"—what a lovely expression. His language is a little archaic, but it is good none the less. In winding up the debate, he said:

"No, it has not been the poignancy of war which has led to this; it has been the terrible cost to the nation and to the individual that has forced this matter upon our minds. I saw the other day a note in one of our papers to the effect that this Bill was going to cost £3 million. It will add to the national income by many hundred of millions. It is an investment. It may be a charge on the Exchequer, but . . . the thing that influences my mind in all these problems is how many man-hours of production I can get to add to the total national wealth".—[*Official Report*; Vol.395, c.1345.]

That was especially important, as we were at the height of hostilities.

Those remarks, that the Bill will cost, could be directly addressed to the Bill's critics 50 years later, but the other side of that argument is that the Bill will liberate talent, resources and energies which will repay a thousandfold the cost of which anyone is speaking in the House.

Civil rights for disabled people are an investment in lives, in hopes and in opportunities. If we liberate disabled people and enable them to use their abilities, talents and labour, as a country we shall reap a rich reward. Yes, there will be an initial charge on the Exchequer, but we shall enrich our nation in every way.

That brings me to the heart of matter, which we cannot evade and which many of us have mentioned. Does discrimination exist? I do not want to tell the House that discrimination exists. The experts in the House know that it exists. I not sure whether all hon. Members realise that it exists. We only have to listen to the disabled lobby and to disabled people.

We have all the methods by which to do that and they have all been tried—opinion polls, personal interviews and so on. The message is loud and clear, as it was at the lobby in the past week, that people are discriminated against, they feel that discrimination bitterly and they want an end to it. That is why the Bill is before the House, and that is why we must get it into Committee and on to the statute book.

We all have poignant feelings about the lobby in the past week. The most poignant moment for me, which I must share with the House, was when two young deaf girls talked to me through a signer. There is a crisis over signers, because of the terrible dearth of them in the courts and everywhere one goes. Even if one can use an interpreter, there is a crisis in their availability to enable deaf people to participate and to converse.

One of the wonderful things that the all-party disablement group and Victoria Scott have done is to enable days when one can go to constituents who are deaf, have interpretation provided and have a proper political debate and discussion. One does not get an easy time, whatever the political party.

I asked the young girl why she did not get into politics, because we needed more women in Parliament and we needed more people with a disability as representatives in the House, which is evident if one looks around the Chamber today. The girl asked: "How do I start?" She said that she could not even go to a political meeting or to a ward meeting to have a discourse, because there was no signer.

It suddenly came to me that that young girl of 17 or 18 years old, at the beginning of her life, was totally inhibited from doing what we all did—become politicians and get involved in the political discourse—because they have no ability to do so. We must do something about that situation, whether through Emily's List or the 300 Group. We need a new initiative to enable access for people with disability, not only to the House—that is important, as the Minister and so many other people have said—but to political discourse. I hope that we can do something for that young woman.

Yes, there is discrimination; and no, the path of education and persuasion on its own will not do. Perhaps attitudes have changed. Language has changed. We have had the debate on political correctness, and if one goes to the far extreme of that concept in this sphere, one is frightened of saying anything. A lot of gross and vile language has disappeared, is no longer acceptable, and if people use it, they are frozen out of conversation and are disapproved of.

I approve of that. If that is politically correct, "right on", as we used to say. There have been changes and no one would say otherwise, but in fighting so many years of great prejudice and discrimination, it is not enough to educate and to persuade. We need the legislation, because so many hundreds of years of prejudice lie behind the issue.

Consider the record of achievement of disabled people through the eyes of one leading campaigner, Richard Wood at the British Council of Disabled. I hope that the Minister is listening, because he knows Richard well. When I talked to Richard only yesterday, he said:

"Education and persuasion has achieved 60 per cent. unemployment, 50 per cent. of children in segregated schools, 80 per cent. dependence on social security, no coherent policy on transport or housing all against a background of pervasive unfair discrimination."

That is how one disabled person thinks about the matter and describes it. I believe that he is right; we need the legislation.

The momentum towards securing civil rights legislation is unstoppable. Thank goodness the Minister and the Prime Minister have said that the Bill will be considered in Committee. I warn the Minister that we shall go for all-party agreement as far as we can get it, but that, if the

Government try to stifle the Bill in Committee, there will be a row to end all rows. The truth is that the legislation is unstoppable. We and disabled people themselves will not let it be stopped.

I repeat Ernest Bevin's words. In that famous debate, he said:

"I know that this is a subject which has been boiling in the body politic for some time."

That is the politician's job. He meant that he did not invent the subject and that other politicians had not invented it, but that they could recognise—I love the language—that it was

"a subject which has been boiling in the body politic for some time. All that has fallen from my hon. Friends and myself to-day has been with the object of crystallising the desire for action and putting it fully before hon. Members in a Bill which will, I hope, remove forever a blot from our national life."—[*Official Report*, 10 December 1943; Vol. 395, c. 1346.]

That is precisely what we are about today. We are trying to remove a blot from our public life.

Our role in the House today is to crystallise the desire for action, felt by the electorate, by disabled people and by their leaders, to remove a blot from our national life and to introduce a liberating, comprehensive civil rights bill for disabled people.

1.31 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I am sure that the House is indebted to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) for his historic digest of the matters before us today. I associate myself and my fellow Members with his tributes to those who have fought long and hard to come to this day. I congratulate the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) on introducing the Bill in the House today. All of us who have been in the House and who have witnessed the strong and courageous stand taken on these matters by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) salute him today and pay tribute to his courage, persistence and patience.

I am probably the only Northern Irish Member who will have an opportunity to address the House today. As such, I tell the House that we are grateful and indebted to the hon. Member for Kingswood and to the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe because, when they have sponsored such legislation, they have added the words:

"This Act extends to Northern Ireland."

I put on record today the indebtedness of the people of Northern Ireland, and especially the disabled people of Northern Ireland, for that. Those words are deeply appreciated.

The debate today is not about privilege; it is about rights. I have done pastoral work for a long time and I know that people with a disability do not want preference, pity or patronage; they want equality. The debate today concerns the belief that they should have equality and that they should be on a level with the rest of the community. People with a disability could have a tremendous input in our communities. I trust that today we shall enable them to go about their business normally and to have the privileges that others enjoy.

A few weeks ago a woman from Belfast went to the rates collection agency to pay her rates bill. One would think that the authorities would be glad when people were prepared to pay their rate bills. She arrived at the office with her four-year-old disabled son. She was told that she could not gain access to the building unless she agreed to take her child from his wheelchair and carry him up two flights of steps. When she reached the ground floor, she saw a lift and asked whether she could use it. She was told that it was for staff only.

That is discrimination against a disabled person and the person who takes care of him. We are discussing such cases rather belatedly.

Some hon. Members have spoken of money. Take it or leave it, money will have to be spent. From a financial point of view, it would be better for money to be spent now because costs are always increasing, just as it would be better to replace transport now rather than later. Now is the time to be getting on with the job of looking after disabled people.

Many issues spring to mind. The first is public buildings. The vast majority of public buildings in Northern Ireland do not have the facilities that they should have. Disabled citizens cannot even attend a public meeting in their town hall because there is no wheelchair access. They are excluded from restaurants and cinemas because owners regard them as a fire hazard—or that is the excuse that is given.

We should face the issue realistically. I hope that the Minister is not sweeping the matter under the carpet. I was surprised when I received a copy of the Minister's letter —it may have been sent to me by mistake because I sit on these Benches. The third paragraph says:

"Whilst the Government share the overall aims of supporters of anti-discrimination legislation, we believe that the best approach to eliminating discrimination is through a vigorous programme of increasing awareness, education and persuasion, backed up by targeted legislation, where necessary. Comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation would present practical difficulties, lead to increased litigation and unquantifiable costs for business and tax-payers."

The Minister has visited Northern Ireland, where he stepped into a minefield of controversy with regard to employment in Northern Ireland and religious discrimination. It is interesting to note that a Protestant, not a Roman Catholic, received the largest sum of money ever paid to an employee through the Fair Employment Agency, so there is discrimination. The Minister was all for a commission when he was on the other side of the Irish sea, but now he tells us that the commission will present difficulties.

Without a commission, the legislation will not be applied effectively. I am delighted that it is envisaged that the commission will include a large majority of disabled people, who will be able to monitor properly the application of every law passed by the House.

There will be costs, but it is a tall order to say that costs cannot be quantified. For the Minister to say today that he will quantify them and announce what he thinks they will be shows that at least we have made some progress.

As I heard the Minister speaking so ably at the Dispatch Box today, I was reminded of what was said in our old Stormont Parliament about one of the Ministers there: he had the perfect bedside manner. I only hope that the Minister does not intend to bury this Bill or to give it a lethal injection. The Bill needs to survive and to go into Committee. The principle must not be tampered with in Committee. It needs to remain intact, because it is only by building on that principle that we can give disabled people their rights and their equality.

I trust that today a blow will be struck in this House towards those ends, and that this great goal will be achieved.

1.39 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I am pleased to be in the House today to be able warmly to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) on his success in the ballot and on his selection of this subject for debate. Ten years ago, when I had just been elected to the House, I managed to come second in the ballot for private Members' Bills—within my first fortnight here. Perhaps that will serve as a warning to new Members that they may not be so lucky again. I certainly have not been, but I keep longing for the day when I am.

The Minister talked of attitudes changing. I am pleased to note that they are changing markedly among Conservative Members. Sitting here today I have noted down the names of five Conservative Members, including the Minister, who, on 18 November 1983, voted against my Bill on this subject. I also noted the reaction to the speech—it was the only one of its kind today—by the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern). That reaction, on both sides of the House, was almost wholly hostile.

Conservative Members' speeches made in the debate on 18 November 1983, however, were almost all like the one made today by the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West. Lord Merlyn-Rees. who was then in this House, described the speech made that day by the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) as the worst he had heard in 20 years in the House of Commons. Perhaps making such speeches denotes the first rung on the ladder to running the Home Department—I do not know.

What a difference in the atmosphere today. The change has come about because the political consciousness of disabled people has been awakened in the intervening years. They have campaigned and campaigned, and they have become a political power. No longer are they willing to be the Cinderella of minorities. I do not intend to be facetious when I say that I will never be a woman or a black person, but we could all become disabled people in time, so we are acting in the interests not only of those who are disabled already but of all who are able-bodied and healthy.

At the risk of aggravating hon. Members, I must remind the House that, in 1983, 210 Conservative Members, including all but eight Ministers, cancelled their engagements to make sure that my Bill did not get through. Last week, when I heard the Prime Minister say that this Bill would go to a Committee, I breathed a sigh of relief and said to myself, "Here is the breakthrough. There is now the opportunity to get this Bill on the statute book."

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): One of the biggest problems is that we need the Government to provide parliamentary time for this Bill to go through all its stages. Today is only a hurdle. We need the Minister, or someone like him, to say that the Government will provide the necessary time to carry it through.

Mr. Wareing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend because his intervention brings me to a major point. As my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) said, there has been an Act on the statute book for nearly 50 years this year. However, it has been enforced or, indeed, come anywhere near to being considered by the courts on only 10 occasions. Of the 10 cases which were heard by the courts between 1944 and 1975—there has not been one case before the courts since 1975—two were dismissed. In one case, the employer involved received an admonition; in the other seven cases, fines totalling only £434 were levied on the wrongdoers.

That is why we must be willing to ensure not only that this Bill reaches the statute book but that it is fully implemented, and we have a will to implement it. The Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke)—unfortunately, he is overseas carrying out his shadow Cabinet responsibilities—became a statute. In Committee, the Government made sure that they had the power to decide when certain clauses of that Bill would be implemented. To this day—eight years later—sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 have not been implemented.

I warn my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood to be careful because there are still snares on the way to legislation which will fully assist the 6.5 million disabled people and, indeed, their families in ensuring that discrimination against them is outlawed. That is why it is necessary to have added assistance. I hope that my hon. Friend will insist that the disablement commission continues to be a part of the Bill because it is necessary to have a body outside the Executive which will represent disabled people. Indeed, the commission will be composed partly of disabled people who will bring to light any discrepancies and issues which have contravened the spirit and the letter of the law.

This is a cause for which many have fought for so long. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who is now a legend as far as fighting for disabled people is concerned, and my noble Friend Lord Ashley will be overjoyed if the Bill goes through Committee unemasculated. This is a cause for which so many have been fighting over the years, and it is a cause for which—at long last—the time has come. Shortly we will have the opportunity to eradicate all the bad memories of the past 10 years when, on about eight occasions, in either this House or the other place, we have rejected legislation for disabled people.

Mr. Skinner: We have not.

Mr. Wareing: My hon. Friend is right—the Labour party did not reject it. But the Houses of Parliament rejected consideration of the rights of disabled people as full citizens of our country.

1.50 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): It is a great honour to follow so many eminent speakers, who obviously have a long-standing reputation in this area. I pay tribute to the hon. Members who have worked hard on a subject that is close to many of our hearts. I congratulate the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) on choosing the subject following his success in the ballot.

Last February, I was pleased to take part in a similar debate and I do not intend to go through the same things as I said last year. Although I accept many of the advances which my hon. Friend the Minister reiterated from the Dispatch Box, in essence things have not changed that much. Many hon. Members today have made the point that education and awareness are important, but that in themselves they will never solve the problem because it is so diverse. Every 20 years, a new generation comes along which must be educated, or re-educated, about the difficulties faced by people with disabilities.

If that discrimination is part of their culture or their thinking—if they have grown up with it—it means that another wave of people must be made aware of this important subject. We all feel that there is a difficulty in giving people choice or the opportunity to make changes, when in fact the subject needs reinforcing with something more substantial.

Progress has been slow and that is the essence of the debate. We are all frustrated that progress has been too slow. The hon. Member for Kingswood said in his excellent opening speech that we need action, and I believe that that is what we are looking for.

In the debates last year and today, many speeches addressed the needs of people with physical disabilities. There has been much awareness in the speeches from hon. Members of the right to access, mobility and public transport, as well as housing. Those are all legitimate candidates in the debate.

However, with the indulgence of the House and in the limited time that is available to me today, I will concentrate on one section of people with disabilities. It is a section in which the House will be aware that I have a particular interest, as I am a special counsellor for the National Autistic Society. People with learning disabilities suffer no less discrimination and are often unable to articulate the difficulties and pain that they suffer as a result of that discrimination.

I welcome many of the programmes that have been announced and discussed in the House today. Access to work certainly will be a more flexible programme in future for that group of people. I said in an intervention that care in the community is now expected to address the needs of the individual so that a package can be put together which is adapted to that individual's needs.

There is a particular problem for the group of people who would come within the category of autism. There are estimated to be some 115,000 people in the United Kingdom with autism, and it is a condition which covers a wide spectrum. At one end of the spectrum there are adults and children who self-mutilate and require 52-week a year care for life, probably in an institution. Care in the domestic home is out of the question for them because of the nature of their difficulties.

At the other end of the spectrum is a group of people who are not necessarily intellectually impaired. Many of them, through education, enter higher education. Some of them obtain university degrees, but they are still fundamentally impaired by autism, which makes it difficult for them to communicate, particularly social communication and awareness of their social relationship with other people. That makes life especially difficult for them. Such difficulties affect their employment as well as their integration into social activities.

Today we have discussed the difficulties facing people with physical disabilities, but autistic people have problems over and above those that have been mentioned. They face the problem of diagnosis and assessment. Many of the 115,000 autistic people do not receive proper diagnosis until they are quite old—some are even adults. That means that their civil rights and their other essential needs in terms of education, further education if appropriate, and employment, are not considered.

We are talking about the civil rights of people, but some of them do not even receive a diagnosis. Even when they are diagnosed, the lack of awareness among professionals and other carers means that, not only are they denied access to the civil rights that the Bill seeks to introduce, but they lose and do not even receive the fundamental requirements of people with disabilities, in education, training, housing and other areas.

People with autism often experience problems using public transport. Their inability to relate to other people and their lack of communication skills create difficulties. Organisations such as the National Autistic Society place great emphasis on equipping people in its establishments with the necessary skills to use public transport.

One young adult man was taught how to get on a bus, pay the fare and get off at the right stop—a big step forward even for some autistic people with academic qualifications. He was told to board the bus and sit in his seat. He was a little concerned about looking at other people and was told to take something with him to occupy himself on the bus, pay his fare when asked and get off at the right stop. He managed to do that, but, on his first trip alone, he sat in his seat and occupied himself by spreading out a set of water colours. He put them over not only his lap, but that of the person next to him—[*Laughter.*] It is amusing to us, but imagine the horror of the passengers around him. They found that behaviour, coming from a young adult, difficult to understand. There is much progress to be made, particularly with autistic people, in relation to access to civil rights and raising awareness.

Carers have been mentioned in today's debate. I should also like to flag up the fact that the burden of trying to gain access to information, rights, and civil liberties is also borne by the carers, particularly parents. Parents often feel that they are constantly having to battle with the establishment to obtain rights for their children and for other carers with responsibilities.

I am often invited to talk to groups of people about what it is like to be the parent of someone with autism. I usually begin my speech by saying that I am a pushy mother. I make no excuse for that, but I am critically aware of the fact that I should not have to be a pushy mother in order to gain access to services, facilities and civil rights. Many parents and carers are unable, for one reason or another, to be pushy.

As Members of Parliament, we are all familiar with the situation in which constituents—usually parents—are trying to challenge a statement for a child in education. Whereas one is quite prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with them and to give them support, all too often one hears the parents say, "I do not want to cause any trouble at the school." So that is one group of people who will back off from being pushy parents because they are rather intimidated and worried about the possible consequences. In other words, they do not access their rights; they feel intimidated; they need those rights to be clarified and they need someone to be alongside them to help them obtain them.

That applies throughout the services. It can be social services and—if I may return to my group of people with autism—it can also be the medical profession. If we cannot even convince certain groups of professionals—who are also important in the debate—to recognise the rights and needs of people with disabilities, especially people with learning disabilities, how much harder it is to rely on public awareness and education in the wider population.

I have had great pleasure in making what I hope has been a short speech in response to the speech of the hon. Member for Kingswood. His Bill commands cross-party support and the support of a wide audience in the country.

[Mrs. Angela Browning]

I hope that the Bill will pass to Committee, that we shall be able to consider the detail and that something will come out of it that is positive and—in the words of the hon. Member for Kingswood—that that produces some action.

Mr. Alfred Morris *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 231, Noes 0

Division No. 162] **[2 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Congdon, David
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crain, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dewar, Donald
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hannam, Sir John
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Khabra, Piara S.
Kirkwood, Archy
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Sir Michael
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pawsey, James
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Waller, Gary
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and Mr. Alfred Morris.

NOES

Nil

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and Mr. Paul Flynn.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. At the commencement of business this morning, a number of Members, from both sides of the House, asked whether the Chair had been given notice of any intention to make a statement about the second bombing incident at Heathrow. During those exchanges, a Minister from the Home Office was present on the Treasury Bench. I wonder whether you have had any

indication that a statement will now be made, as during the morning we have heard that the Queen flew into Heathrow overnight. We do not know whether the runway used was close to the incident, but in view of the Home Office's clear responsibilities, not just for the security of all passengers going through Heathrow, but obviously for one or two, I wonder whether you have now been given an indication that the Home Secretary intends to make any statement to the House, having obviously briefed the media on the matter during the morning?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I have received no such indication.

Racial Hatred and Violence Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

2.8 pm

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

A cement holds this nation together. Although we have in the Chamber representative division in the nation, nevertheless three ingredients in the nation hold our people together: first, the spirit and fairness of our people; secondly, the rule of law; and, thirdly, the liberties and freedoms that have come out of the Chamber and the House. All three are challenged by racial dispute, hatred and violence. That is what the Bill seeks to address.

There are serious problems in our nation, the first of which is the lack of awareness of the problem. Some 140,000 complaints of racial abuse were lodged last year and a similar number has been lodged each year for some years, yet the legislation in place has yielded only five prosecutions over the past few years. We cannot say that the law is adequate; we must look at it again.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I thank my hon. Friend and close political neighbour for giving way. Is he willing to join me in condemning some of the vicious, nasty, hateful anti-semitic literature that is circulated in north London, much of which is never prosecuted?

Mr. Booth: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention. He is well versed in many racial issues, particularly anti-semitism. I have evidence of the rise of anti-semitic literature. Reports to the Board of Deputies of British Jews have risen by 120 per cent. over 10 years. That worrying element of abuse can be set alongside the 14 racist murders in the past two years and the fact that an act of racist violence is reported every 28 minutes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva), who had difficulty getting into the previous debate, told me earlier this week that a constituent came up to him recently and rudely said that he should go back to the jungle. My hon. Friend illustrated the fundamental point when he told the constituent that 700,000 Indians gave their lives in the past two world wars, including two of his great-uncles, so that that constituent could stand there and say that.

People are not aware of the depth of the problem, which has even reached hon. Members. We need to act.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his initiative, which is fully supported by the Opposition. Is it not terrifying that on an estate in east London, just a few miles from here, racial terror is the order of the day? It is promoted by all the racist, fascist gangs like the British National party. Is it not essential that the Government give positive support to the hon. Gentleman's Bill?

Mr. Booth: Yes, of course. Among Conservative Members there is a well of support to fight racism in all its ghastly guises. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) says that the Opposition support the Bill. I am grateful for that and for the Liberal Democrats' support. I am also grateful for the support given by the chairman of the Bar Council, the president of the Law Society, the Churches Commission for Racial Justice, the Society of Black Lawyers, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and groups throughout the nation. The Bill has had almost

[Mr. Booth]

unprecedented support. I anticipate some form of welcome from the Government, but I know that they have difficulties with the report of a Select Committee and various other problems.

The Conservative party has a long tradition of standing for the whole nation, which is why we are repelled by racism.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): As a co-sponsor of the Bill, may I say that the Bill is needed because of the growing tide of fascism in Europe and the world. It is time that we identified some of the problems that we wish to avoid in this country.

Mr. Booth: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention. As time is limited, I shall concentrate on the five main provisions in the 14-clause Bill. I cite them in chronological order: the first deals with arrest; the second is intended to improve the case for the prosecution and make the hurdles easier to jump; the third covers sentencing and appeal; the fourth introduces a new civil offence; and the fifth will establish a much-needed register of what has been done about the 140,000 racial incidents reported each year.

The first provision covering arrest has been requested by the police themselves. At present, there is no power to arrest publishers and distributors of the ghastly literature that comes through letter boxes, including mine and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall). We also need a power of arrest for racial harassment. The Bill attempts to rectify the extraordinary situation in which a vile but ordinary crime—ordinary in the sense that it is so common, ghastly though it is—is dealt with by the Attorney-General. How can he deal with 140,000 cases a year? It is beyond his Department to do so, and the cases should be dealt with by the Crown Prosecution Service, as suggested in the Bill.

The Bill also changes a definition which has hitherto hindered the prosecution. The prosecution has to prove hatred, which in many cases is far too high a hurdle for prosecutors to jump. Unlike other aspects of criminal law, the prosecution in this case has to prove that not only an individual but a group of people has been hurt. Is the prosecution to bring hundreds of people to court? Of course not. The same rules should apply in this respect as in others. I believe that only one witness who has been hurt by a racist attack should be enough to spark the prosecution into action.

Many of my Conservative colleagues have made the case for the charge of racial violence. We considered the issue with colleagues from the Opposition parties and decided that there was a battery of offences of violence already on the statute book. We concluded that the power of the judge should be restricted and that he should be constrained always to consider the evidence of racism when he or she passed sentence so that the element of race was an aggravating factor.

Finally, the Bill introduces the offence of group defamation. If I or any of my hon. Friends are accused of theft, we can sue for libel or defamation, but if a group of Asians, Africans or any other racial minority were accused of being thieves they would feel offended, hurt and wounded, but they would have no redress in law. The proposal for group defamation would deal with that hurt. It must be regarded as a crime; one would not expect a group of individuals to bring a case if it were not.

I deal now with appeals. At the moment, we have the extraordinary situation where, if a person publishing obscene racist material is found guilty in a lower court, that material can still be published pending his appeal. That must be wrong and the Bill puts it right.

In the limited time available, may I quickly paraphrase what I would otherwise have said about the other areas of the Bill? The Bill contains a new proposition that we should have a civil remedy for racial abuse or harassment. Since the domestic violence civil provisions were introduced in 1976, it has been obvious that it has been of vast use to married couples who have had disputes. The ability to apply for a civil injunction has been very useful. We need that in cases of racism, too.

There is also a proposal for a register and alongside it is the requirement that everyone who makes an entry should record what is done about each allegation.

Ms Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Front Bench. I simply wish to put it on the record that Labour Front-Bench Members support every measure—

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) And the Back Benchers.

Ms Ruddock: Indeed, together with my Back-Bench colleagues, we support everything that the hon. Gentleman has outlined to the House and we are delighted that he has introduced the Bill. However, we fear that he is running out of time.

Mr. Booth: I am most grateful for that. I have been mauled before by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), but I do not mind at this stage because his hon. Friends have supported what I have been saying.

In the light of the unprecedented support, of the compelling arguments which all of us know are right and because of the overwhelming need that we all know is there, I urge the Government to back the proposals either today, or in the near future if they find it administratively difficult at the moment with Select Committees and other areas of business. I press the case for all our people and commend the Bill to the House.

2.27 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): First, may I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) on the trouble that he has taken to put together his comprehensive Bill and on his tenacity in securing the debate, albeit a short one. Since the Bill was No. 14 in the draw, it is a considerable achievement.

As we do not have very long, I shall make a few brief remarks. I would have liked to say what I think of each part of the Bill, but there will not be time for that. However, if I had, it would have shown why the Government feel that it would not be right for that Bill to go forward at this time. *[Interruption.]* However, I am certain that hon. Members on both sides of the House share my hon. Friend's abhorrence of racial prejudice, especially when it is manifested in racist propaganda, discrimination, violence and harassment. I have a great—

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West) *rose*—

Mr. Lloyd: No, I will not give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

There are a great many things that I would like to say about the Bill. I certainly agree with my hon. Friend's purpose in many respects, especially his assertion that we need to consider the part of the Public Order Act 1986 which deals with harassment. However, I do not believe that he has chosen the right route, or that his section 10 would do much to help racial minorities or to promote good race relations by making some forms or harassment unlawful when racially motivated. If a nuisance can be committed by ill-disposed people on a family of the same colour—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister is entitled to be heard. When I am unable to hear because of sedentary interventions, I take strong objection to it.

Mr. Lloyd: I regret that I am unable to deploy a proper case in the couple of minutes that I have left. However, I am quite certain that it would be a mistake to try to legislate before the House and the country at large have had the benefit of the serious and thorough investigations of the Select Committee, of the racial attacks group, which consists of the police, the Commission for Racial Equality and the relevant Government Departments, and of the special investigation into the workings of the Public Order Act that we have set in motion.

My hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of those matters. They involve the safety of a minority of our fellow citizens, the peace of mind and confidence of many more and the quality of community relations for virtually everyone.

I am glad that, with the Bill, my hon. Friend has sounded a note of urgency; I feel that note of urgency myself. However, I hope that he will forgive me if I say that a close reading of the Bill also underlines how complex an area this is and how difficult it is to devise amendments to the law which are clear and effective in dealing with the practices that we all deplore. Having read the Bill carefully, I do not think that it fits that requirement.

2.29 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam) *rose—*

Hon. Members: Shame.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is a cardinal principle of the House that an hon. Member be heard.

Lady Olga Maitland: May I give a warm welcome to the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth)—*[Interruption.]* It is appalling that Labour Members should be shouting when we are debating the important issue of racial harassment, which is a subject that we all take very—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 6 May.

Remaining Private Members' Bills

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Second Reading what day? No day named.

REGULATION OF POLITICAL FUNDING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 April.

NEW TOWNS (AMENDMENT) BILL [*LORDS*]

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. —[*Mr. Cummings.*]

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

REFERENDUM (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 29 April.

MARRIAGE (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 April.

MENTAL HEALTH (AMENDMENT) BILL [*LORDS*]

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. —[*Mr. Cohen.*]

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

SEVERN BRIDGES ACT 1992 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 May.

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION (SPECIAL EVENTS) BILL

Considered in Committee.

Clause 1

PROHIBITION OR RESTRICTION ON ROADS IN CONNECTION WITH CERTAIN EVENTS

Amendments made: No. 1, page 1, line 22, at end insert—

'(2A) Before making an order under this section the authority shall satisfy themselves that it is not reasonably practicable for the event to be held otherwise than on a road.'.

No. 3, in page 2, line 26, leave out 'existence' and insert 'safety and convenience'.—*[Mr. Peter Atkinson.]*

Clause 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 2 and 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments; as amended, considered; read the Third time, and passed.

WOMEN INTO PARLIAMENT BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [4 March].

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

REGISTRATION OF SMALL CHILDREN'S HOMES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

BRITISH NATIONALITY (HONG KONG) BILL [*LORDS*]

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

WATER (DOMESTIC DISCONNECTIONS) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [25 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 22 April.

NURSERY EDUCATION (ASSESSMENT OF NEED) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [18 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 18 March.

PROTECTION OF DOGS BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [4 February].

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Committee of the whole House.—[Mr. Malone.]

Committee on Friday 15 April.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 16th March—

(1) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall not later than Seven o'clock put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Ways and Means Motions and the Motions in the names of Mr. Secretary Brooke relating to Ecclesiastical Law, Mr. Secretary Heseltine relating to Atomic Energy and Radioactive Substances, Mr. Secretary Lang and Mr. Secretary Gummer relating to Rating and Valuation and Mr. Secretary Lang relating to Legal Aid and Advice (Scotland); and

(2) the Speaker shall put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Tony Newton relating to Local Government (Wales) Bill [Lords] not later than Ten o'clock, if the proceedings commence before Ten o'clock, or forthwith, if the proceedings commence at or after Ten o'clock;

and the above proceedings may be entered upon or continued, though opposed, after Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

M11 Link Road

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

2.39 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the M11 link road, and I am pleased to see the Minister for Transport in London here to reply. I enjoy my annual rambles with him and the Friends of Epping Forest—but this is no time to ramble on, so I will get straight to the point.

The Department of Transport's pig-headed approach to the M11 link road has been a shambles, and a costly one at that. There have been years of neglect and of mean inflexibility, during which the Department has insisted on the cheapest possible option, whatever constructive alternatives have been suggested and regardless of the cost to the community. There has been political chicanery, too: a bribe in the shape of a tunnel for Tory Wanstead, but maximum damage has been thought good enough for Labour Leyton. The Department has sabotaged sensible community proposals—for instance, in the 1980s, when it was suggested that we should have a tunnelled road with homes and a park on top of it.

Now the Department is reaping what it has sown. There have been bitter and protracted protests about the road, involving high costs and even a possible risk to life. The costs for the Government are not only financial but political. On a recent edition of "Any Questions?" on which the Secretary of State for Transport appeared, no one had a good word to say about the Government's road programme. Even the chairman of the radio programme said that the balance of views had been accurately reflected because no one had phoned in to "Any Answers?" to offer any support for the roads programme.

If the Department gets its way, it will have inflicted a social and environmental disaster on my part of east London, yet it is ploughing on regardless. It has just authorised two contracts amounting to £110 million for two miles of road. In Wanstead, the project has cost £500,000 in police time alone, to take over and demolish a 250-year-old chestnut tree and half a dozen houses. There are security guards on every corner at all hours of the day and night—the whole thing is like a private police state, a miniature equivalent of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. In this case, the Department is using a private army to occupy the self-declared free state of Wanstonia. The protests have only just begun; there are many more to come.

The total length of the road is about four and a half miles, about one and a half miles of dual carriageway and three miles of three-lane motorway. In my constituency, much of the road will pass through built-up areas and it will involve building two and a half miles of three-lane dual carriageway, a mile of new local roads, tunnelling under Epping forest, a new roundabout, 13 new bridges and five subways. Mainly, the road will run through shallow cuttings; the part around Temple Mills will be on an embankment and will be about two fifths of a mile wide.

In Leyton, the result will be 21 acres of tarmac for the main road and two and a half acres for local roads. A total of 1,380 houses and flats, with about 4,000 people living in them, will be within 100 m of the road. Part of Leytonstone House hospital will be lost, as will 25 commercial and industrial premises which would otherwise have created 100 jobs—important in an area with 20 per cent. unemployment. We also face the loss of part of Eastway sports centre, and the project will involve, over the years, the demolition of 250 houses and flats.

Since 1952, the project has caused blight, often because of Government neglect. Even at the beginning of this year, about 200 houses and flats on the route were still suffering from blight. I do not blame the Minister for the history of the road and its associated blight—he is new to his job—but I should explain some of the history of double-dealing and betrayal of commitments by the Minister's predecessors at the Department of Transport.

The Minister will say that there have been three public inquiries, and that that should be enough to be able to get on with the project. But public opinion was ignored. A mere handful of people supported the Department's scheme, but thousands of local people opposed it, and that fact has been ignored.

In 1983, the inspector said that the tunnelled solution was

"visionary and innovative. It should be a model for future motorways".

It has been a model for some motorways, such as those in Hatfield and some other areas. However, the Department refused to countenance it in Leyton. It reneged on its proclaimed policy of getting private finance to achieve road improvements. That was loudly proclaimed. When I went to the Department with a scheme from the private company Beazers with a council for 278 homes on a tunnelled scheme, the Department demanded that it make a huge profit; it set out deliberately to scupper that scheme.

Even without protests, there will be major disruption to the community. That has been the case with some of the advance projects already; I shall give a couple of examples. In 1992-93, London Underground carried out extensive work on the Central line tunnels at Green Man. That meant lowering the roof of the tunnels to allow the link road to pass over the top. Those works had a major effect on service frequency and reliability of the railway. British Rail contractors are currently carrying out enabling works at Temple Mills. On several occasions, Ruckholt close in my constituency has been totally blocked by construction traffic and residents have been told by the police to move their cars to allow extra-wide loads through.

Over the next five years, there will be considerable disturbance and increased congestion, with awkward diversions and construction vehicles blocking the local road network. We had examples of that with the recent north circular road improvements in Waltham Forest where there was considerable construction noise, vibration and dust, and the lives of the people in the vicinity were made a misery. The significant point is that the assurances given by the Department of Transport at a public inquiry amounted to very little when it came to trim the works to meet the budget. I suspect that it will be the same with the M11 link road.

It has been Department of Transport meanness every step of the way. There has been very little for tree planting and landscaping at Leytonstone station—only lame excuses why the Department would not do anything or put up anything. There have been hardly any off-site improvements, even to the local roads that it has damaged. That goes against the Department's good roads guide—perhaps the reason is that the M11 is not a good road.

The M11 road is an appalling venture in terms of the environment. It upsets the standards of the 1960s and 1970s, made worse by the Government's penny-pinching

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

policies. I have asked regularly for a re-evaluation of the environmental standards, and the answer regularly has been no.

In September 1991, the EC Environmental Commissioner declared the road to be environmentally unsound and initiated proceedings against the United Kingdom Department. The Department's response was to drown the Commissioner in a sea of paper until a wider EC deal could be done, which included not having to make the environmental improvements at all—and the EC backed down.

As a result of this road, there will be new bottlenecks at Hackney Wick and throughout Hackney.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cohen: I shall give way in a moment.

The official link road newsletter this month said:

"The design of the Lea interchange will restrict traffic flow into Hackney."

There will be bottlenecks throughout Hackney.

Mr. Sedgemore: My hon. Friend made an important point about the effect of the road on the whole of south Hackney. I congratulate him on the poignant and lucid way in which he is advancing his arguments.

Mr. Cohen: I thank my hon. Friend for his support.

The bottlenecks will also occur between the Green Man and Redbridge roundabout where the road will have two lanes. That is a built-in bottleneck. It will create more congestion and, as a result, in a few years' time the Department of Transport and the road lobby will demand new roads to deal with the congestion.

Environmentally, the road means homes destroyed, hundreds of trees cut down, communities divided by a car-roaring equivalent of the Berlin wall, perpetual noise and unusable back gardens. It will mean more cars and, with them, more pollution, more congestion, more asthma and more road deaths. It contravenes the Department's pledges to reduce CO_2 emissions and not to encourage further car commuting into London.

The Department has predicted a rise of between 84 and 142 per cent. in the volume of traffic by the year 2025. The road will contribute to that prediction coming true. Three hundred and fifty homes will be lost, and 1,000 people displaced. There is no money for rehousing those people. The housing investment allocation was cut by huge amounts for my borough during the 1980s. More significantly, there is no rehousing money now when it is needed.

The London borough of Waltham Forest tells me that it is concerned that many households will become homeless as demolition work proceeds. I am already hearing at my surgery of the intimidation of people who live on the line of route to get out, and they are having accommodation offered to them which is worse than what they are living in currently.

The policing costs are not included in the estimates for the road, and those costs are already over £500,000 for a little area in Wanstead. There are also the costs of the private security guards, and those are bound to exceed the contract levels—whatever they are. The Department of Transport has not said what the costs are in detail, but it claims that the cost will be in the region of £230 million for the road. The National Audit Office reported recently:

"road projects typically far exceed their budgets regularly by as much as 100 per cent., and in some cases by 400 per cent."

The Department is immensely cagey about the cost benefit, and there has been no cost-benefit analysis since 1987. The Department allegedly used 7 per cent. benefit criteria, when the Treasury demands 8 per cent. for such roads.

The adverse environmental effects of the scheme have not been taken into account in any cost-benefit analysis. I have letters from the Minister in which he says that cost-benefit analysis is not the whole story, and that it is all a matter of judgment. That is not the way to spend hundreds of millions of pounds on a road. I challenge the Minister to release all the Department's papers and all costings for the road for public scrutiny, so we can see whether there is the so-called value for money.

There are peaceful protests going on in a Gandhi-like tradition, and I welcome that. That is the democratic right of those people. There has been violence and thuggish behaviour by some of the security men. I have a letter from Mr. Hugh Jones of Wanstead, who talked about the invasion of a legal squat by three Squibb and Davis demolition men with sledgehammers and pickaxes. Mr. Jones said that protesters were threatened with

"pickaxe blows aimed between their legs".

The police are in danger of being discredited and placed in an invidious position. They will have a partial role of facilitating the security men, and the large presence of the police on several occasions should not have occurred when they could have been concentrating on fighting crime.

In one case, the police themselves behaved abysmally. Lollipop lady Jean Gosling was sacked for wearing her uniform when she took her children to a "dress the tree" ceremony. She faced a kangaroo court and disciplinary action.

There have been construction dubieties, and Wanstead station on the Central line could be closed by some of the construction work, as excavation is taking place just 12 ft from the tube tunnel. It could also mean the realignment of the platform.

There has also been a suggestion that, due to line-of-sight difficulties, the centre line of the road may deviate from orders made in relation to it. If that were the case, it would be illegal, and I ask the Minister to respond.

The purpose of the road has gone. It is a 1950s scheme which is now out of date. Last June, I went with a delegation of Labour Members representing London constituencies to meet the Minister about public transport. The Minister said that the Government's roads programme affecting London was mostly "orbital rather than radial". He added that the M11 was one of only two "inflows" into London schemes, and that the Government would not, in years to come, add schemes of that sort.

The road is no longer relevant to modern transport thinking, yet the Government are pushing ahead with it and wasting hundreds of millions of pounds. They do not even know what they are doing with red routes. Leytonstone high road is set to be a red route. Will that be scrapped when the M11 link is built? The traffic director for London says no. But the Department of Transport and local Conservatives in the district have claimed the potential pedestrianisation of the high road as a benefit of the M11 link road.

There is no coherence in the Government's thinking; they have no coherent transport policy. It is no wonder that the Department of the Environment has expressed concern and is trying to bring the Department of Transport to heel.

The emphasis should be on the improvement of public transport. We could do much to improve public transport with just a fraction of the hundreds of millions of pounds that the Government plan to spend on the road. It is ironic that the Government are pressing ahead with the road while deliberately dragging their feet on the Hackney to Chelsea line, which could have a link to Leytonstone. The Government are holding back public transport and putting all their eggs in the basket of a road scheme.

There has been much news recently about the house of horror—we are talking about a road of horror. It is not the fault of the Minister for Transport in London, but he can get the Government out of the guano and save some public money in the process. He should suspend work on the road pending a thorough and open reassessment of its environmental and economic costs. That would result in the red pencil being put through the road scheme, and the money could be allocated to reinstate good housing, open space and improvements to the local road network. That would be much cheaper and a great deal more beneficial.

2.56 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I congratulate the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on obtaining today's Adjournment debate. His opposition to the road scheme is well known, but he has never allowed that opposition to disrupt the cordiality with which he has voiced his concerns—he gave evidence of that again today in his pungent speech. I am grateful for the cordiality that he has shown.

I also note the presence of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), who has also been assiduous in his attention. My hon. Fried the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot), through whose constituency the scheme passes, is also present. By convention, he cannot speak during the deliberations of the House, except occasionally to move proceedings along, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) did earlier today. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford would want the many representations about the road that he has made on behalf of his constituents to be mentioned in today's debate.

The hon. Member for Leyton is well known for his opposition to the scheme. He made a huge number of assertions during his speech and has generously left me some time to respond. He has perhaps not left me enough time to rebut the many assertions with which I fear I disagree. I shall mention some of those assertions, but if there are others that cause him concern when he reads the record I shall be happy to write to him about all the factual assertions that he made to try to set the record straight.

I shall clarify the scheme's purpose. It will run from the A102(M) at Hackney Wick to the Redbridge roundabout on the A12, a distance of about 3.75 miles. It will provide a much-needed link between docklands and the motorway network via the M11, removing congestion on the existing routes and improving the environment for local residents. Construction started on the first section between Eastern avenue and Selsdon road last September. The letting of the remaining three contracts will be phased so that all the contracts finish at the same time in 1997.

At present, a considerable amount of traffic diverts on to local residential streets to avoid congestion in the Leytonstone road and elsewhere—the hon. Gentleman and I know the district well. That traffic diversion is not only dangerous, but extremely unpleasant and offensive for those who live in that district. The function of the link road is to channel that strategic and commuter traffic away from local roads and, once the link is built, to allow the local authority to consider ways of making the local roads safer and more attractive for the local community. The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the wish of the local community to benefit from improvements such as traffic calming, pedestrian precincts, cycle lanes. All that can be made possible—the Department has said that it is prepared to advance funds for that purpose. All that will very much improve the quality of life for people who live in that district.

The function of the red route programme is to organise traffic so that it flows to its optimum, and to use whatever space on the road is generated by that organisation, not to suck more traffic into the strategic route network, but to allow for bus priority to allow buses to reach their destination more quickly, and thus to be part of the process of persuading people out of private cars and on to public transport.

The hon. Member for Leyton asserted that the scheme was outdated and costly and he claimed that I said that we would not have promoted it today. Let me make it quite clear that I cannot agree with that assertion. Just going over the history of its consideration, it was, as he says, debated at length in 1983 at the public inquiry, and again in 1987. I am grateful to him for pointing out that a number of arguments that were made in the 1983 inquiry were taken on board in the scheme that was eventually taken forward. That was also true in 1987, although not all the options proposed by protesters during that time were capable of being taken on board.

Mr. Cohen: I am not sure that I made one point clear. When they said that it was an innovatory and visionary scheme, they were referring to the tunnel option, not to the Department of Transport's option in 1983.

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because that is exactly what he said. As he knows, I was referring to the fact that, during the public inquiries, a number of the environmental improvements in terms of screening, tunnelling, cutting and so on that now form part of the scheme were suggested by those people who objected to the scheme, and were taken on board.

The hon. Gentleman said that no one approved of the scheme and according to him it had no support, but he knows, and I know, that the two independent inspectors agreed that there was a definite need for the road. Frankly, six years later, one has only to consider the pressure on the local road network to appreciate what that need was. At a current cost of £200 million, which is the latest figure that we have, it will continue to offer a very positive economic return, and it will bring many more community benefits by relieving those local roads of traffic.

On the subject of drawing traffic into the area by the existence of the scheme and thus making things worse than they are today, traffic will continue to increase whether the

[Mr. Norris]

link road is built or not. We ought to emphasise constantly that it is the function of canalising the traffic into a single route and away from all the local roads that is the virtue of the scheme. The constraints of the trunk road network will limit any significant increase in traffic in the corridor. As the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch knows, the Lea interchange has been specifically designed to restrict traffic flow into Hackney.

It has been suggested by some people that the link road is no longer required because of the A406 Barking relief road and the A13 as an alternative, but, as the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch and I also know—we both live in that part of the world and we know it well—congestion still exists on the roads in his constituency in spite of the existence of the Barking relief road and the A13. The suggestion that that obviates the need for the road is not proven. Indeed, that was taken into account in the public inquiries.

There has obviously been great worry in the neighbourhood about the intrusion of the scheme. For the record, let me say that a great deal of thought went into ways of reducing the scheme's impact. Much of the scheme will be below ground, reducing noise and visual impact. Three tunnels will be constructed, acoustic and screen walls will be softened with planting, there is a generous exchange land arrangement which will provide for open space unavoidably needed for the road, and there will be more open space than before for the public.

The hon. Member for Leyton said that there was—I think that I have his words correctly—very little, indeed hardly anything, for planting. More than 1,400 trees of 5 ft or more in height will be planted, together with thousands of smaller trees and shrubs. Landscaping alone will cost well over £1 million. That cannot, by any definition, be described as "hardly anything". I have said before that 100 new trees are planted for every one taken by the scheme.

We are concerned about air pollution, and the hon. Gentleman will know the steps taken against vehicle emissions which are designed to improve air quality. The link with asthma in children is clearly important. There is no evidence at present to suggest that transport pollution causes asthma in non-asthmatics—that it acts as the trigger—but we are prepared to continue research and investigations into that important issue. The Department of Health's independent expert committee on the medical effects of air pollutants has formed a sub-group to investigate possible links between the increase in traffic and asthma, and its report is due this year.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Gandhi-like protest at the site. The majority of people associated with that process have conducted themselves honourably. They have, in a democratic society, a perfect right to express their views. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not go so far as to suggest that all the protesters' actions are white and that the actions of those responsible for enforcing security—as they are entitled to do—in respect of the Department's assets and work and the police are black. To characterise the issue in that way would be grossly unfair.

In my view, the action of the police on George green and later in Cambridge road was correct. The number and seriousness of injuries to the police, security guards and protesters was small. However, I bitterly regret any individual—be it a policeman, security guard or citizen—being injured by the protest action. None of those injuries need have occurred had the protesters left the site voluntarily when asked.

I deplore those who illegally occupy a property ignoring and defying court orders to leave the property. If the protest is to be Gandhi-like, let me place on the record my view that those who undertake that form of protest should bear in mind that a point is reached at which it is not possible to justify the imposition that they willingly make on the local community and the obligation that they place on security staff and police.

Those people who protest against the road, some of whom live locally—many, particularly those who are most active in the protest, do not—claim to be acting on behalf of the local community. I take it for granted that no such scheme is possible without some disruption to the life of the local community. It is the one phase in any construction scheme that is to be regretted. It imposes dirt, dust and other environmental pollution, which anyone in his right mind wants ended as quickly as possible so that the scheme can begin to confer benefits on the local community.

It is utterly irresponsible and totally contrary to the interests of the local community to delay the scheme's completion, which would add to the length of the environmental intrusion on the people of Wanstead and Leyton.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Norris: The more that Opposition Front-Bench Members attempt to diminish that statement, the more they show themselves unfit for government. The hon. Gentleman should know better.

Those protests make matters worse for all those who live in the area, who will be subjected to dust and dirt even longer, and the scheme's benefits—

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at nine minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 14 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Rail Links (West Wales)

1. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will seek urgent talks with the EC Transport Commissioner with a view to improving rail links between west Wales and the continent of Europe.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to meet the Transport Commissioner. Rail links with west Wales are already included in the proposed trans-European conventional rail network.

Mr. Davies: With due respect, that does not amount to very much. Do not the Secretary of State and the Minister realise that, with an increasing amount of British trade locked into the European Union and as west Wales is on the periphery of the Brussels empire, there is a real problem in trade and investment? Is the Minister aware that there are many ideas to improve the situation, such as upgrading the ports and providing ferry links with Poole and rail links through the north downs? Will he sit down with the Transport Commissioner and with representatives of Dyfed county council and the local authorities to try to solve that serious problem?

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I are most anxious to ensure that the whole of Wales, including west Wales, has first-class links with the continent for trading purposes. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that there will be three inter-city trains a day running from south Wales to Waterloo, the international terminal, and one of those trains will serve Milford Haven. I am told that, certainly, the others will start from Swansea.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Minister agree that there is an urgent need for the north downs railway line from Reading to Redhill to be upgraded to provide a direct rail link between the channel tunnel and south Wales? Since such a route would avoid congested lines through inner London, provide a direct passenger train service to Europe from Wales and put Cardiff within only four hours of Paris, will he undertake to press the case with British Rail?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend and I will ensure that that matter is given every consideration.

Development Agencies

2. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to reorganise the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Welsh Development Agency.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): The chairman of the Welsh Development Agency has recently announced the terms of his internal reorganisation of that agency and I have recently announced the new guidelines, which I have issued. The future of the Development Board for Rural Wales is under review.

Mr. Shersby: Is my right hon. Friend aware that those announcements are most welcome? Will he give the House an assurance that the standards followed by the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales in future will be those that the Committee of Public Accounts and Parliament have the right to expect?

Mr. Redwood: I strongly hope that that will be the case. I have asked the chairmen and chief executives of those agencies to take full account of the strong views of the PAC and the House of Commons and of my views. We want the highest standards. I wish to see the agencies uphold them and I trust that they will do so.

Mr. Flynn: What is the point if all the work of those two bodies is negated by the actions of privatised companies, especially British Gas, where, we are told, the number of jobs in Wales is about to be reduced from 2,903 to, probably, less than 1,000 because it is pursuing a policy which is profit first and in which safety and the regional need for jobs in Wales come nowhere?

Mr. Redwood: I have written to the chairman of British Gas saying that Wales offers a great deal and have urged the company to make full use of Wales for the location of its business activities. I have received a reply in which he admits that Wales is a good place in which to locate and assures me that there will still be a strong presence there. I am afraid that Wales cannot be exempt from the efficiency gains that British Gas will be making, any more than the rest of the United Kingdom can.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the concern expressed to me at the weekend by tenants of the Development Board for Rural Wales on the Ffrwgrech estate in Brecon? He will know that the development board must pursue a policy of maximising its assets, but the tenants are concerned that the whole of the estate is to be sold to an outside investor. Will my right hon. Friend tell the House that he will encourage the Development Board for Rural Wales to look first to its own tenants so that we build in rural Wales an economy in which, very often, local businesses own their own factories?

Mr. Redwood: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is better if tenants buy their own freehold premises. I wish to see the development board offer those premises to the tenants, but, of course, the tenants must make a fair offer in return. We wish to raise money by selling existing assets so that we have more money to spend on new assets to create new investment and new jobs for Wales. However, I will ensure that the chairman of the DBRW is aware of my hon. Friend's remarks. Like my hon. Friend, I want tenants to be given a fair opportunity.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the Secretary of State give his unequivocal backing to the public statement made today by the chairman of the DBRW that the interests of economic development in rural Wales are best served by having a separate organisation, the DBRW?

Mr. Redwood: I am reviewing the best way to deliver those services, so I wish to complete that review before answering that question.

Mr. Llwyd: Although I agree entirely with what the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) said about the British Gas situation and would very much like to associate myself with his comments, if there is to be a reorganisation of the DBRW will the Secretary of State consider the rent reviews? That has been a matter of grave concern, especially in my constituency where one third or more of the units are empty simply because the rack rents asked may be reasonable in Birmingham but are not in rural Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I quite agree that rents must be related to market circumstances. I have asked all the agencies with empty property to put at the top of their list the need to find tenants for those properties and, therefore, to find a market-clearing level of rent that enables those tenants to come forward. I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. If hon. Members have other points that they would like to be taken into account in my review of the DBRW, they have a good opportunity to do that now or in writing this week.

Mr. Morgan: Notwithstanding the public admonition from the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) to the Secretary of State in his supplementary question earlier, as the senior-ranking Tory member of the Public Accounts Committee, does the Secretary of State agree that the executive reorganisation at the top of the Welsh Development Agency to which he referred in his answer is in clear breach of the undertakings given by him to the House on 19 October when he introduced the report by Sir John Caines and said that those recommendations would be accepted in full by the top management of the WDA? Does he also agree that, until the mess of that reorganisation is sorted out, it is unlikely that the WDA and the DBRW will be able to repeat the amazing sporting achievements of Colin Jackson and Steve Robinson over the past weekend?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman did not say how he thought that was out of line with the Caines report. Of course, I will consider any allegation that the hon. Gentleman wishes to make specifically on that point. The chairman has announced his reorganisation. I believe that it will deliver more service for less administrative cost, which is something I should have thought that hon. Members would welcome.

Unemployment

3. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current level of unemployment in Clwyd.

Mr. Redwood: The level in January 1994 was 16,739 unadjusted out of work or 9.1 per cent.

Mr. Hanson: Is the Secretary of State aware that, in the past two weeks, 80 potential jobs have been lost from Clwyd to Merseyside and a similar number have been placed under threat by the deliberate actions of the Welsh Office in respect of the mishandling of a planning application at Mostyn in Clwyd? Will the Secretary of State please explain to the House why he took those actions and why he allowed that to happen, despite repeated warnings to the contrary?

Mr. Redwood: I should be delighted to have this opportunity to put the record straight. The hon. Gentleman well knows why I took the action that I did. I had wanted the local authority to settle the issue. I thought that that was the best way forward. I thought that it would be able to take full account of the environmental objections, the jobs and the economic case.

I then received legal advice that stated that, because the application impinged on a European special protection area, I had to call it in. I had no choice. Had the local authority gone ahead and made the decision, it would have been subject to legal challenge and might not have stood up. I acted as I did because of that legal advice. It would have been better if the local authority had been asked to determine the matter. I cannot comment now on the substance of the application because I have to approach it with an open mind.

Mr. Heald: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the policies of the Government, and especially the Welsh Office, have led to a huge increase in the number of new jobs in Clwyd replacing the jobs lost in traditional industries? Would he care to pay a tribute to the work of Chwarae Teg in getting women into the work force in Clwyd, and especially in helping them with training?

Mr. Redwood: I should, indeed, like to echo my hon. Friend's comments: there has been a massive expansion in investment and job opportunities.

Dr. Howells: The right hon. Gentleman wrote those comments.

Mr. Redwood: No. My hon. Friend speaks for himself. He seems to know better than Labour Members what is good news in Clwyd and how much has been arrived at because of the Government's policies and the agencies that have been assisting. I hope that Labour Members will also welcome that news because, although there are still too many people out of work, there have been many major new projects, particularly in the energy field in that part of Wales, and there is much more good news to come.

Mr. Ron Davies: It is a truly appalling figure for Clwyd, as indeed it is for the whole of Wales. We now have 10 per cent. unemployment in Wales, and under this Government we have seen the loss of 113,000 manufacturing jobs. What action does the Secretary of State advocate to tackle those critical weaknesses in British industry, which were identified in a recent Royal Society of Arts report as

"chronic underinvestment, a lack of commitment, inflexibility and the failure to focus on long term goals"?

Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that he has any responsibility at all for what is happening to the Welsh economy?

Mr. Redwood: Unemployment is falling and I look forward to further falls in the months ahead because of the economic policies that we are pursuing. It is a bit rich for Labour Members to come up with that criticism, because they have no ideas, no new money to offer and only one gag—the gag from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East

(Mr. Brown), who stops them saying anything that they want to say. What is the point of being a socialist if one cannot spend more of other people's money, or offer to spend more of other people's money? Our policies are based on labour market flexibility, encouragement for investment, low inflation and sound economic fundamentals.

4. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: In January 1994, the seasonally adjusted unemployment figure was 127,500—a fall of 6,500 since January 1993 or an average fall of 500 a month.

Mr. Coombs: What assessment has my right hon. Friend made of the impact of a high-spending, high-taxing Welsh assembly and the European social chapter on unemployment in Wales? Would not the Labour party's policies and those of their European cronies be disastrous for Wales and lead to a reversal of the trend in unemployment which my right hon. Friend so warmly welcomes, as I do?

Mr. Redwood: I am afraid that my hon. Friend is right. An assembly that taxed more and regulated more would put businesses off going to Wales and drive out some of those already there. I understand that Labour Members are getting worried about that. They think that maybe the assembly should not have taxing powers. But surely it would have spending powers; that means that it would end up taxing more, which would be bad news for business and bad news for jobs.

Mr. Roy Hughes: With reference to the question on the Order Paper, are not the figures far too high, especially in the male sector? Does the Secretary of State recognise that part-time jobs for women will never replace the thousands of jobs lost in coal and steel? Will the Government and the Welsh Development Agency step up their efforts to bring new enterprises to Wales?

Mr. Redwood: That is exactly what we are doing. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the news today, which I just heard, of up to 600 new jobs over a three-year period from the Goodings satellite television receiver venture in Mid Glamorgan. That is extremely welcome news and means that there are likely to be further falls in unemployment which I, like Labour Members, sincerely wish to see. Of course, one in 10 out of work is far too many, but our policies of low inflation, good economic growth and attraction of investment will deliver jobs.

Mr. John Marshall: Has my right hon. Friend estimated the impact of inward investment on unemployment in Wales? Does he believe that inward investment would be encouraged by a national minimum wage, the adoption of the social chapter and the nonsenses from Brussels which are advocated by the Opposition?

Mr. Redwood: I have, indeed, looked at the figures. More than 11,000 new and safeguarded jobs in the first 10 months of this year have been attracted, as recorded by Welsh Development International, and there may have been more. Those jobs are extremely beneficial. The worry is that if the policies of the Opposition were followed, Wales would no longer be attractive for many of those companies that come, they say, because they want to benefit from being in the EC and have the added benefit of not having the same social arrangements as are enjoyed by some continental countries.

Mr. Wigley: I welcome those 600 new jobs and any other new jobs which come. Does the Secretary of State realise that 2,000 jobs are about to be lost in the gas industry, and that 400 or 500 of those are in Clwyd? On the point made by the Secretary of State a moment ago with regard to Mostyn docks, does he realise that the loss of that infrastructure project will affect not only Clwyd but my county of Gwynedd? Why was it not possible for the Welsh Office to turn that around within five weeks, as in the case of Cardiff? If that had been done, would not the project be alive and would not we be looking forward to the jobs that came with it?

Mr. Redwood: I should like to turn it around as quickly as possible and come to a fair decision, but I must take legal advice. There is no point in acting illegally, because the decision would be overturned in a court of law. A proper environmental assessment is needed so that a proper judgment can be reached, given the special European designation in that area. That is the problem, and why progress takes time. It must be done carefully so that people can see that it is done fairly.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome other good news, such as that from Amcor Packaging, where there will be 150 new jobs during the next three years, from Control Techniques in Newtown and from Stevens and George in Merthyr Tydfil, which recently announced new jobs.

Energy and Transport Strategy

5. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for a co-ordinated strategy for (a) energy and (b) transport for Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): Plans are set out in "Sustainable Development—The UK Strategy", "This Common Inheritance", annual progress reports, the 1994 Welsh Office departmental report and various policy planning guidance notes and in my right hon. Friend's announcement to the House on 3 March on strategic road plans.

Mr. Hughes: May I encourage Ministers to make sure that there is a clearly separate energy and transport strategy for the Principality that fits in with the UK and European framework? Given that one of the things that would benefit both would be the transfer of freight from road to rail in Wales, will Ministers consider whether there can be an increase in subsidy for that purpose? Would not that take traffic away from the roads, increase the use of the railways, save energy, reduce pollution and reduce congestion at the same time?

Mr. Jones: I assure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend and I will make sure that the interests of Wales are fully safeguarded in the UK's consideration of the matter. It is not possible for Wales to be considered in isolation because of the obvious relativity involved.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about freight traffic on the railway, I think that the principle is absolutely sound.

I look forward to the opportunities that I am sure the channel tunnel will bring for an increase in freight traffic in Wales carried on the railways.

Mr. Roger Evans: Will my hon. Friend join me in being careful of the phrase—the cant, humbug phrase—"co-ordinated strategy" when used by the Opposition? Is that not normally a code for more state interference, more bossiness from Whitehall and less listening to what the people of Wales really want? Does he agree that, these days, proposals to build new railway lines would be open to considerable environmental objections?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. There are enough examples in the past of left-wing and Labour Governments—including those supported by the Liberal party—trotting out plan after plan. We know full well that the one thing centralised planning is sure to do is fail.

Mr. Llew Smith: On energy, will the Minister inform me as to what proportion of the non-fossil fuel levy goes to renewables and what proportion to nuclear?

Mr. Jones: That is a rather detailed question for which I had better provide the hon. Gentleman with a detailed answer.

Deregulation

6. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his plans for extending the deregulation initiative to the work of his Department.

Mr. Redwood: The deregulation initiative runs across Whitehall. The Welsh Office is co-operating fully.

Mr. Evans: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that he includes in his review of the regulations the appalling complexity that now seems to pervade every aspect of agricultural administration, which supposedly requires every farmer to have a double first in legal interpretation and accountancy?

Mr. Redwood: I agree with the sentiments that my hon. Friend expresses. Of course, we shall work with our European partners and urge simplification and a more accessible system. Where we have powers ourselves, I shall make sure that they are properly used, as I have done in simplifying the integrated administration and control system forms recently.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Secretary of State agree that, in view of what has happened in the past six to nine months in Wales, what we have is not deregulation in the Welsh Office but the Welsh Office out of control? Rather than accepting the proposals suggested by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), it is about time that the Secretary of State got to grips with the unelected bodies in Wales and the corruption that pervades right through the system.

Mr. Redwood: It is a grotesque calumny to say that there is corruption right through the system. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will think again before saying that and realise that such serious allegations require evidence to back them. Of course, I wish to see the high standards that he desires; I have made no secret of that. I have also set out guidelines and guidance to ensure that high standards are observed.

Hospitals

7. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has made to take Welsh hospitals into the next century; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Since 1979, £1.4 billion has been spent on improving the national health service estate in Wales: 60 major hospital schemes have been completed or are under way. I am to announce shortly details of the new capital programme. My right hon. Friend and I regularly visit hospitals throughout Wales. I look forward this coming Wednesday to launching the new magnetic resonance imaging scanner in Cardiff at the University hospital of Wales.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: I hope that the Minister is aware that there is an increasing fashion among hospital administrators to locate all the facilities that they possibly can under one roof, regardless of the convenience or feelings of the local community or of the use that it makes of those facilities. Does he have any sympathy with older hospitals, much loved by their patients, which face closure as a result of that misguided policy? I should like an answer, particularly on Cardiff royal infirmary.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The interests of the community clearly ought to be considered on every occasion. The movement towards trust status, whose popularity in Wales is increasing rapidly, emphasises exactly that point. That is what we look for in every application for trust status. There must be greater benefits to the local community that the hospitals serve.

On the point about Cardiff royal infirmary, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already placed it firmly on the record, and I fully subscribe to his view, that the closest consideration must be given to any question of closing a hospital in Wales. The case must be fully proved before such action can be justified.

Mr. Richards: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the proposed cancer treatment centre at Glan Clwyd NHS trust hospital, which will benefit cancer sufferers throughout north Wales and beyond, will go ahead as planned, despite attempts by Opposition Members to stop the plan?

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I know that my hon. Friend has been stalwart in campaigning for the new facility at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd. It is absolutely right that we should have that new cancer treatment facility in north Wales. It has been most carefully researched and the decision has been given the go-ahead. I look forward to the centre being set up as soon as possible.

Local Government Reorganisation

8. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick to discuss his proposals for local government reorganisation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Minister realise that my constituents in Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick will be angry and disappointed with that reply because they believe that the continuing failure of the Welsh Office to single out that one area—where, in an Electoral Reform Society ballot with a 75 per cent. turnout, almost 90 per

cent. voted in favour of staying with Bridgend—will bring democracy into disrepute and turn to ashes anything that the Government have ever said about respecting the will of the people?

Mr. Jones: I am disappointed to realise that my presence is so sorely missed in Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick. We have already carefully considered the matter in the proposals that we are putting to the House. There will be the fullest opportunity to debate it in the Second Reading debate tomorrow afternoon on the Local Government (Wales) Bill. I am sure that in Committee we shall give the most careful consideration to where the three communities should be located. I must say that they appear to be much more rural in character and more appropriate to the Vale of Glamorgan.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the Under-Secretary of State realise that there is widespread concern throughout the length and breadth of Wales, and not only in the Vale of Glamorgan, the heads of the valleys, Meirionnydd and Montgomery, at the boundaries contained in the Local Government (Wales) Bill? The Minister referred to the Bill, which will receive its Second Reading tomorrow. May I take it from the reply that he has just given that he is prepared to be flexible? If so, will he tell us the extent to which the Government are prepared to be flexible on boundaries, should the Bill receive a Second Reading?

Mr. Jones: It is, of course, for Parliament to consider that.

EC Commission

9. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last visited Brussels; and when he next intends to visit Brussels to discuss with the Commissioner matters relating to his departmental responsibilities.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There has been no occasion for my right hon. Friend to visit Brussels since his appointment. He has, however, renewed invitations to key Commissioners to visit Wales and we hope that they will be able to do so.

Mr. Rowlands: I suggest to the right hon. Gentleman that that is a neglect of duty, considering that so many decisions taken in Brussels affect our communities. For example, is he aware that, during the past five years, all four pits in my constituency have closed and more than 2,000 miners' jobs have been lost? Will there be a repeat performance of the charade and farce that accompanied the first RECHAR programme, when the second programme is introduced? How much money is available under the second phase of RECHAR and will it go directly to those communities affected directly by pit closures, such as mine?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman acknowledges that his constituency did especially well under the RECHAR programme. Merthyr has had about 10 projects with a value of £1.3 million and Wales has had about 170 projects, valued at £21 million. I am glad to be able to tell him that the RECHAR programme is one of the initiatives that will be continued and that 0.4 billion ecu will be devoted to it.

On the hon. Gentleman's more general point, United Kingdom interests are well represented by my right hon. Friends and the Welsh Office is very much in touch with the Commission through its officials and through Ministers when necessary. I had the privilege of attending an informal council in Liège just before Christmas.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the 600 jobs that the Secretary of State announced earlier have been created to produce transceivers for the satellite industry, which are destined for the Dutch and German market? When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State visits Brussels, will he resist all the trans-European, pan-socialist dogma which has driven business out of Germany and Holland and brought it to south Wales?

Sir Wyn Roberts: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is no doubt about it—many companies in south Wales are operating with machinery that was once in Europe and has been drawn back to Wales because it is more productive there.

On our relationships with Europe, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has been leading an export mission to Europe and this evening I am going to Barcelona to lead another export mission. My hon. Friend is right—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members simply do not realise how much progress Wales has made as a gateway into Europe.

Public Bodies

10. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many appointments to unelected bodies in Wales are his responsibility.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend is currently responsible for 798 appointments to public bodies in Wales. The quarterly list updating the details to 1 March will be available in the Library of the House shortly.

Mr. Powell: I wonder whether the Minister will give us some information. He is aware of the fight that the Conservative party put up against quangos and unelected bodies. Why have the Conservatives changed their minds? Can he give details of the political affiliations of those appointed? Can he also give due consideration to ensuring that when the chairman of Mid-Glamorgan health authority is appointed, he or she will have the political affiliation that is shared by all the Members of Parliament who represent Mid-Glamorgan?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman must realise that we do not know the political affiliations of a great many of those appointees. They are not asked that question, although they are given an opportunity to instance a position that they have held in a political party. I am sure that there a great many members of the Labour party, the Liberal party and Plaid Cymru among those 798 appointees to whom I referred in the answer.

Barry-Rhoose Railway Line

11. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans there are for the opening of the railway line between Barry and Rhoose for passenger traffic.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I understand that South Glamorgan county council is in the lead with Regional Railways in an investigation into the feasibility of introducing a limited passenger rail service on the Vale of Glamorgan line with a stop at Rhoose.

Mr. Sweeney: Will my right hon. Friend note the warm welcome that has been given in the Vale of Glamorgan to the announcement by the Welsh Office that grant aid is likely to be available for an improved road link between Culverhouse Cross and Cardiff Wales? Will he join me in urging the highway authority, South Glamorgan county council, to take up that offer of help? Is any grant aid likely to be available for the rail link to which my right hon. Friend alluded?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I very much appreciate my hon. Friend's kind remarks about my right hon. Friend's announcement about the road link to the airport at Rhoose. With regard to the rail link, it is possible for us to assist such a scheme if it is submitted to us as part of the strategic development scheme.

Welsh Elected Body

12. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now make it his policy to ensure an elected body for Wales.

Mr. Redwood: We do not need another elected body in Wales.

Mr. Jones: We have had 15 years of Conservative Government, during which we have seen greater centralisation than ever before in the history of democracy, powers stripped away from local authorities and Conservatives appointed to quangos in Wales. The Minister of State has just told us that he is to visit Barcelona—Catalonia is the most successful economy in Europe. Is not it time that the Government learnt that the people of Wales now want their own Parliament?

Mr. Redwood: I am very interested in the idea that Catalonia is the most successful economy in western Europe. I thought that Spain had an unemployment rate of about one in four of the work force. I certainly would not want such a rate for Wales and his comment shows that there is no progress in the hon. Gentleman's views.

We do not want another body that taxes, regulates and legislates—too many laws already exist. We need to deregulate to make the task of business easier, so that people in Wales can have real jobs and more choice.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the whole thrust of Government policy is to ensure that decisions are made in schools by governing bodies and in hospitals by trusts and that it is not designed to try to create yet another layer of bureaucracy? Surely the unitary authority programme that we have brought forward has been warmly welcomed in Wales. There has been no drive towards creating a third layer of local government.

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend is right. He has answered another part of the previous question, because we restore real power to people—parents and patients—and offer choices in public services which Opposition Members would deny people. That is exactly the kind of democracy that is best and closest to people. An assembly would have to take powers away from local government and that would cause rows in the Opposition camp as well.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Does not the Minister feel a sense of shame that he has to appoint about 800 people to quangos and that they are responsible for about one third of public expenditure in Wales? Should not democracy mean

"government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people"?

Is not the use of unaccountable Tory placemen a corruption of democracy?

Mr. Redwood: I believe that local councils appoint quite a lot of people to the governing bodies of schools. I think that that is perfectly healthy and it is an analogue to what I am doing on behalf of Parliament and the people of Wales, in appointing people to bodies charged by the House, often under Labour legislation, to carry out certain tasks. As for spending, by far and away the biggest part of the Welsh Office delegated budget passes directly to local government in the form of a bloc grant.

Inward Investment

13. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current level of inward investment to Wales.

Mr. Redwood: In the first 10 months of the current financial year, Welsh Development International recorded 120 projects, which promise about 11,000 new and safeguarded jobs and a capital investment of £630 million.

Dr. Spink: Does not that demonstrate our economic success in a difficult world recession in a way that is not just good for Wales but good for the whole of our nation?

Mr. Redwood: That was a short and accurate question and I would give a short and accurate answer—yes.

Mr. Ainger: Does not the Minister accept that instead of sending the Minister of State to Barcelona he should send him to Brussels especially to intervene in the mess that the Commission has got itself in over Interreg II, as a result of which Dyfed in particular stands to lose a significant sum—possibly tens of millions of pounds—in European investment in the next six years because we are now being excluded by the Commission from the consultation process? Can he assure us that either he or the Minister of State is taking the matter up at the highest level in Brussels?

Mr. Redwood: Of course I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the Welsh Office is taking the matter up in Brussels, as he would expect. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State does great work for Wales in representing us in many countries in Europe, and I hope that the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) recognises that there is benefit in trade links of the type that my right hon. Friend is extending. The Under-Secretary also recently visited Brussels.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Stipends

28. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the Church Commissioners have made of the effect which the reduction of their contribution towards stipends will have on the number of parish clergy.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church

Commissioners): The proportion of the costs of stipends met by the Church Commissioners is estimated to decrease from 37 per cent. to about 20 per cent. by 1997 as a result of our planned reductions in diocesan stipend allocations. The extent to which that affects the number of parish clergy will depend on diocesan planning and lay giving. Our remaining support for dioceses will, however, continue to be targeted to help sustain the parochial ministry in areas of greatest need.

Mr. Lidington: Does my right hon. Friend agree that any organisation in financial difficulties needs to seek to restrain its overhead costs? Can he therefore assure the House that synods, bishops and the Commissioners themselves will not be exempt from the need for stringency?

Mr. Alison: The General Synod proposes to introduce cash-limited budgeting during the next two or three years. My hon. Friend will be glad to know that the Commissioners themselves have managed to reduce their staff by 25 per cent. during the past 11 years and that increasing productivity will continue on trend.

29. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what provisions are being made by the Church Commissioners to protect stipends of clergy following losses made on the property markets.

Mr. Alison: As the majority of the stipends bill is met from lay giving in parishes, any further improvement in stipend levels will largely depend on the willingness of laity to give more generously. Stipends are being increased by an average of 2.9 per cent. from this April and the majority of dioceses have recently supported a proposal for modest increases from April next year.

Mr. Banks: Why does the right hon. Gentleman think that those enormous losses were made by the Church Commissioners? Is it because of the incompetence in property speculation that the commissioners showed or is it because the Almighty has indicated his strong disapproval of property speculation? In either case, is not it unfair that priests should be expected to suffer the consequences, and that lay members should be asked to increase their contributions to cover the incompetence of the commissioners? Surely the Church Commissioners and their advisers should foot the bill.

Mr. Alison: I think that the hon. Gentleman did not hear the answer that I gave him, which is that the stipends are increasing by rather more next year than the hon. Gentleman's parliamentary salary, and probably by rather more the year after than the hon. Gentleman's parliamentary salary. So the invocation of the Divinity upon the prospects for pay in different parts of the country should take into account that He is obviously looking rather less favourably on Members of Parliament than on the clergy.

Parsons (Early Retirement)

30. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what plans there are to introduce an early retirement scheme for parsons; and what assessment the Church Commissioners have made of the financial consequences of such a scheme.

Mr. Alison: The pension scheme already contains a provision enabling clergy to retire with an immediate pension and retirement lump sum up to five years before the minimum normal pension age. Discussions are taking place within the Church to determine whether it would be appropriate and financially feasible to introduce a specific scheme aimed at encouraging some clergy who are close to pension age to retire early, in order to free posts for younger clergy.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer. Does he agree that the parsons' freehold affects the efficiency of the Church adversely, and also restricts opportunities for young and enthusiastic ordinands?

Mr. Alison: No, I do not think that I can go down that road. The parsons' freehold is not an immovable and irresistible block in the way of movement in the Church; nevertheless, I believe that it gives some genuine and, I believe, appropriate independence to clergy whose doctrine and ministry may not always be strictly in line with what parishioners want. I consider that desirable.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Record Office

36. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many members of the public visited the Public Record Office search rooms in Chancery lane during 1993.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): A total number of 104,429 reader visits were made to the Public Record Office search rooms at the Chancery lane site during 1993. The census microfilm search room accounted for 76,798 of the visits, while the remaining 27,000-odd visits were to the search rooms for original documents.

Mr. Lidington: The Department's plan to shift the PRO's facilities in their entirety to Kew will create difficulties of access for many readers who use Chancery lane. Will my hon. Friend consider keeping the Chancery lane search rooms open, perhaps as a family history centre, so that people can use the microfilm and other facilities?

Mr. Taylor: No decision has yet been made about the future use of the Chancery lane site. It is the subject of a review currently being undertaken by the Public Record Office and Property Holdings. The review is expected to be completed by 30 September 1994. If my hon. Friend wishes to give me the benefit of his thoughts, I shall be very grateful.

Mr. Maclennan: If a member of the public searched any part of the PRO, would he find a precedent—since the English revolution of 1688—for the monstrous and unconstitutional pressure put by the Lord Chancellor on Mr. Justice Wood, the president of the employment appeals tribunal, to violate his judicial oath and deny appellants an oral hearing in order, in his own words, to save the taxpayer costs?

Mr. Taylor: It is no part of my job to respond on judicial matters from the Dispatch Box; but I happen to think that if the hon. Gentleman were fully appraised of the facts, he would not have expressed himself in that way.

Mr. Boateng: It is, however, part of the Minister's job to respond to questions relating to the Public Record Office itself. Will he confirm that the review that he mentioned in reply to the question from the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) includes inquiries with the intention of imposing a charge on use of the PRO? Does he not accept that his role, and that of the Lord Chancellor, is to protect ease of access and freedom of use? Are we not witnessing —in terms of the development of the PRO—not the next step, but the final step to privatisation?

Mr. Taylor: There are no current plans to privatise the PRO. As for charging the public, the question of charges for access to the records is the subject of a review currently being undertaken by the PRO. An extensive market research exercise asking for the views of users has been carried out. The review is expected to be completed by 31 March; so the hon. Gentleman and the rest of the House will not have long to wait.

Sex Offences

37. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to encourage the publication of the names and addresses of those appearing on court lists in respect of sex offences and subsequently being found guilty.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have no plans to encourage the publication of the names and addresses of those convicted in the courts of sex offences.

Dr. Spink: Is my hon. Friend aware that 21 homosexual men were recently prosecuted in my local court for acts of gross indecency in a public toilet only a few minutes' walk from my house? Is he aware that all the public toilets in my constituency must now be closed at night, and that one has been taken out of use? Would not the publication of those men's names and addresses act as a deterrent?

Mr. Taylor: It is not the function of the courts to publicise details of convicted persons. The press may do so when the information is given in proceedings held in open court, unless a restriction order is in force, and, as my hon. Friend should know, almost all such cases are held in open court. The only exemptions are for the victims of sexual offences and for children and young persons involved in criminal offences.

Mrs. Roche: So far as sexual offences are concerned, can the Minister tell the House what stage the judicial studies programme for the training of judges in these matters has reached? Are outside speakers being taken on to deal with very serious matters, such as rape trauma syndrome?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Lady may be reassured that the matters she raises are high on the agenda of the Judicial Studies Board. Outside experts will certainly be contracted to provide the benefit of their knowledge and wisdom.

Magistrates Courts

38. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what consultations have taken place between the magistrates' associations and his Department over the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill [*Lords*]; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and I and our officials have consulted the Magistrates' Association on many occasions in the two years since our proposals were published. We shall continue to do so.

Mr. O'Brien: How does the Minister reconcile the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 31 January—*Official Report*, Vol. 236, column 610—in which he said that justices' clerks would be responsible to local magistrates committees, with the fact that in my area of Wakefield and Pontefract the magistrates committees will be abolished as a result of the amalgamation proposed under the Bill? How does the Minister reconcile his reply on that occasion with practicality? Will he now face reality and change the proposals in the Bill to ensure that local magistrates committees may continue?

Mr. Taylor: I think that the hon. Gentleman misunderstands the situation. I am at pains to tell him that, even if there are amalgamations—for example, in his own area—they will merely create a larger administrative unit under a magistrates courts committee. There will be a magistrates courts committee consisting of locally selected magistrates, and I can repeat the assurance that the justices' clerks and their chief will be answerable to the committee, which will have the authority. It will be a locally run service, which is what the hon. Gentleman and I both want.

Mr. Sims: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that the magistracy in south-east and south-west London has been very concerned at suggestions that the Lord Chancellor might use his powers under this legislation to amalgamate all the courts in the area under a single administration. Can my hon. Friend assure me that no such plan will be implemented without very careful consultation? Can he assure me, in particular, that the Lord Chancellor will have to satisfy himself that amalgamation would be more cost effective than the present arrangements?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend should know that we are still exploring with the outer London action group the details of its proposals. My officials' next meeting with the group will be held on Wednesday. The Lord Chancellor and I are hopeful that it will be possible to find a system that delivers our objectives in restructuring the outer London service, but falls short of amalgamating committees. We are working with the service to that end.

Legal Aid

39. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many representations he has received from legal practitioners, the Law Society and the Bar Council regarding the freezing of legal aid rates.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Department has to date received about 20 letters from solicitors and local law societies expressing concern about legal aid rates. The Law Society and the Bar Council are consulted when fee rates are reviewed and have expressed similar concerns.

Mr. Llwyd: Does the Lord Chancellor's Department realise that growing numbers of solicitors' firms are now going out of legal aid practice altogether and that this sad fact, coupled with last year's savage cuts in the green form

scheme, has resulted in tens of thousands of people in Wales, England and Scotland being deprived of access to legal advice and assistance?

Mr. Taylor: There is no evidence that legal aid fee rates are inadequate to allow solicitors to continue to undertake legal aid work. Since 1988-89, the proportion of solicitors' offices in England and Wales that received payment for legal aid work has increased from 68 to 82 per cent.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Is my hon. Friend aware that, if the Government were to do more to encourage private insurance in litigation cases, there would be less pressure on the legal aid fund and less need to freeze legal aid rates?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. and learned Friend should know that expenditure on legal aid this year is expected to rise by 12 per cent. The Lord Chancellor announced that he will be increasing all legal aid income eligibility limits by 3.8 per cent. and the green form limit by 15 per cent. He is also abolishing the means test for ABWOR—assistance by way of representation—for mental health review tribunals. Those measures prove the Government's continuing commitment to the legal aid scheme. Legal expenses insurance certainly has a role to play, but the market must show itself willing to participate. Progress in that respect seems to be slow.

Limitation Law

41. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects to complete his review of the limitation law.

Mr. John M. Taylor: We are considering whether the Limitation Act 1980 should be amended to change the limitation period that applies where a plaintiff claims damages for non-accidental personal injuries. We hope to reach a conclusion by the end of the year.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Does the Minister accept that the current limitation law is out-dated and inappropriate and does not take account of, for example, the specific circumstances of people who have been subject to childhood sexual abuse and who try to take legal action in adult life? Will he assure me that the circumstances of such people will be taken into account in the current review and give me an idea of how soon the review will be completed?

Mr. Taylor: The answer to the first question is yes, and the answer to the second is by the end of the year.

Magistrates Courts

42. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the average age of the magistrates serving on the Lichfield and Rugeley benches.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The average age of magistrates serving on the Lichfield and Rugeley benches is, in both instances, 52.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend agree that justice must not only be done but be seen to be done? Does he agree that, if it is to be seen to be done, magistrates should be drawn from all age groups and from all sociological backgrounds? What exactly are the Government doing to encourage that?

Mr. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor seeks to maintain a proper balance of ages on benches. It is important that there should be young as well as older people to ensure a continuity of experience. Efforts are made to ensure that people are aware that it is open to them to apply, but only those who put themselves forward can be appointed.

Trainee Solicitors

43. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what discussions he has had with the Law Society on the remuneration of solicitors in training.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. Trainee solicitors negotiate their own terms with their employers. This is an internal matter within the profession.

Mr. Banks: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the great problems being experienced by aspiring solicitors in getting grants from local authorities because such grants are discretionary? Is he further aware that, four years ago, the College of Law received two thirds of its income from local authorities but the figure has now fallen to 9 per cent? Will the hon. Gentleman consult the Department for Education to see what can be done, otherwise solicitors will be drawn from an ever narrower bunch of people in society?

Mr. Taylor: If the hon. Gentleman is talking about law students rather than trainee solicitors, to whom his initial question referred, he has correctly anticipated my answer. The policy on the awarding of grants for postgraduate education is a matter for the Secretary of State for Education. However, I do consult Ministers at the Department for Education and I will bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend accept that trainee solicitors face another problem in that many study for three years for a qualification and then sometimes have a job getting on to a course for their final year in order to achieve the full qualification? Is he proposing to do anything to make more places available so that when trainee solicitors have completed three years' training, they have the opportunity to become fully qualified?

Mr. Taylor: As I understand the problem, the difficulty is that grants for postgraduate qualifications—that is, the solicitors' professional examination after a degree—are discretionary; they are in the hands of local authorities. It is a matter for local authorities to decide and it lies ill in the mouths of those who argue for local authorities to have discretion to blame the Government for the way in which that discretion is used.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that as the Law Society, the solicitors and all those involved in the profession are excellent, they should be responsible for making proposals to ensure that trainee solicitors can be remunerated properly while they are training?

Mr. Taylor: Yes, of course. The profession has responsibilities which are concomitant with being independent and self-regulating.

Insolvency (Employees' Rights)

3.30 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the Insolvency Act provisions relating to employees' rights as regards administrators, administrative receivers and, in Scotland, receivers. The need for this statement arises out of a recent judgment by the Court of Appeal in the administration of Paramount Airways Ltd. For the House to appreciate the importance of this, let me first set out the legal background.

Under the Insolvency Act 1986, an administrator may be appointed to manage the affairs, business and property of a company in financial difficulties with a view to the survival of the company or its business, the approval of a voluntary arrangement or the sanctioning of a compromise or arrangement with its creditors.

The administrator has to consider the basis of continuing the business and, in particular, the position of the employees. Under the Act, he has 14 days from his appointment to decide whether to adopt contracts of employment. Where the business is continued with a view to its successful disposal, it hasbeen the practice of administrators formally to notify employees that, while they would continue to be employed by the company and to be paid their wages and so on, their contracts of employment would not be adopted by the administrator.

In the event of the survival of the company or a successful sale of its business, employees would continue with the company or the purchaser and their contracts would be maintained. If, however, the administrator concluded that survival or sale was not possible, he would, as was done in the Paramount case, have no alternative but to dismiss employees. The administrator would, of course, expect to pay employees' wages or salaries for the period of their employment under the administration. But, before the Paramount judgment, it was not thought that other payments, such as pay in lieu of notice and redundancy pay, would have priority.

The result of the Paramount judgment, subject to the outcome of any appeal by the administrators to the House of Lords, is that the entitlements arising out of dismissal would rank on the cessation of the administration as a first charge against the assets in the administrator's possession. This would place them in priority to all other claims against those assets.

At first sight, this may be thought to have advantages for employees. In practice, however, administrators will feel that they have little alternative but to dismiss the company's work force within the first 14 days and either close down the business or look to new terms of contract. Employees' rights in such circumstances in relation to termination entitlements will rank only as a claim with other creditors.

Indeed, the real position may be far bleaker. Because of the weight of the claims that would arise on dismissal and which would be a first charge against the assets, companies considering administration may conclude that it does not offer a rescue route and may simply move to liquidation, termination of the business, dismissal of employees and a break-up sale of the assets which will not be in the interests of anybody.

It is also necessary to deal with the position of administrative receivers. There are 3,000 receiverships in this country every year. In almost half of them, it has proved possible to save all or part of the business. This practice will be placed in jeopardy, with all that that means for jobs, commercial activity and business confidence. We must, therefore, remove this uncertainty as a matter of urgency.

Accordingly, I intend to introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity that will enable an administrator or a receiver to adopt a contract of employment with more restricted effects than at present. The change will allow him to adopt the contract with the effect that only wages, salaries and pension contributions falling to be paid thereafter will qualify as expenses of the procedure. Other liabilities arising from the contract of employment will remain, but will be treated as an unsecured claim against the company.

As regards administrative receivers, in addition to the need to limit the extent of the expenses that have priority, it is intended to restrict the receiver's personal liability to the same expenses as for administrators. What that means in practice is that the administrator or receiver will not have to renegotiate contracts of employment within 14 days from the date of appointment.

The proposed change will have only the limited effects that I have described. It will not affect the employee's position under employment law.

In view of the immediacy of the need for this legislation, I propose that, when enacted, it will have effect in relation to any contract of employment adopted after today. I am sure that the House will recognise the need for the measures that I have proposed and that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House will wish to see them brought in at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I welcome the fact that the President of the Board of Trade has made a statement on a ruling that has caused alarm to receivers and to some of the unions that represent the work forces most at risk. We accept that it is plainly impossible for receivers to provide a business plan to rescue an enterprise within 14 days, and that the effect of the ruling will be to oblige them to close the business rather than to try to trade out of bankruptcy.

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that it is perhaps particularly important for the Government to remove the threat to receivers as total bankruptcies are still running at the rate of one every 90 seconds of the working day and no longer show any signs of reducing, despite all the promises of recovery?

In the circumstances, we will not resist the proposed legislation, but will the President clarify three points that arise from it? First, for the avoidance of doubt, will he confirm that any legislation that takes effect from today's date will not remove the legal rights of Paramount Airways' employees or of any other company put into receivership before today's date?

Secondly, does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that there is genuine bitterness among workers who, after many years of loyal service, are made redundant by a company in receivership and who receive only statutory redundancy, despite an entitlement to much more under their contracts? Before introducing legislation, will he therefore review the limit on statutory redundancy pay, which is still based on a maximum wage of £205 per week? Is he aware that last

year was the first for a decade in which that statutory limit was not uprated and that it now sets a maximum that is well below the average wage of industry?

Finally, will the right hon. Gentleman circulate his warm words about the success of receivers, which I endorse, to his ministerial colleagues, particularly those with responsibility for the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise, which in the past five years have achieved a staggering fourfold increase in the number of companies that they have put into bankruptcy? Almost always, those companies were wound up straight away; they rarely went into receivership.

Now that the President has rescued the function of receivers, will he remind the tax authorities that it is in everyone's interest, including their own, that businesses should be kept as trading enterprises rather than put out of business by the Government?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful for the way in which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) welcomed my proposals and for his assurance that the official Opposition will in no way obstruct the rapid progress of legislation through the House.

I can give the hon. Gentleman the answer that he sought in response to his first question: there will be no change in the legal position before today's date. From midnight tonight, my proposals will affect new arrangements, but will not upset previous ones as we are not indulging in any sort of retrospective legislation.

The hon. Gentleman raised a number of much wider issues. My right hon. Friends in the Department of Employment and in the Treasury will no doubt read with interest what he said. I think that it would be wrong for me to widen the narrow suggestion that I have put to the House.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is to be congratulated on taking such speedy action but for which a large number of firms that might have survived would have undoubtedly gone to the wall and have been abandoned and many thousands of employees would have lost their jobs? Therefore, does he agree that it is essential that hon. Members on both sides of the House who believe in maintaining employment and helping firms to survive allow the Bill the speediest passage through the House?

Mr. Heseltine: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend and to the officials of my Department and a number of other Departments who have worked through the weekend to bring us to the point at which we could make the statement today.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the President of the Board of Trade accept that I, on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, very much welcome his prompt statement today? There have already been announcements in the past week and during the weekend of receiverships that would have been banded into liquidation and jobs would have been lost. I must echo the view of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) that it is vital that the Bill goes through quickly and urgently and that all hon. Members support it and recognise that it is an issue of jobs. Nevertheless, will he confirm that, when he brings forward the legislative proposals, he can guarantee that where a receivership is successful in bringing a business to its ultimate sale the rights of employees will be fully safeguarded? That assurance is necessary as people would want to know that, if the receiver is successful, they have the right to share the net benefits of the receiver's success. How many receiverships in administrations lead to a successful onward sale? We still have far too high a level of bankruptcies and not enough successful rescues.

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his words of support. Of course, he is right: the proposal has behind it the real chance of saving many more jobs. In answer specifically to the question about the number of receiverships that are, in practice, likely to be successful, may I say that it appears to be approaching half which lead to on-going opportunities for companies concerned. The existing rights, under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, for example, would not be affected by what I have said today. I am dealing specifically with the narrow aspect which I outlined in the statement.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): The speed with which my right hon. Friend has acted is welcome and will save many jobs in the future when receiverships occur from today's date. Does he agree that one of the problems of judge-made law is that it is retrospective? Will he give some indication of what the situation will be for companies for which receivers have been in place for more than 14 days already, and for receiverships over the past few years that have been concluded on the basis of the law as it stood before the Paramount judgment was the one with which they complied?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend raises a most important point. I must consider the principle of retrospection and, as I have made clear to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), the changes that I am proposing will come into effect only from midnight tonight, if Parliament legislates in the way in which I hope that it will. The specific answer to my hon. Friend is that the law will remain what it is until the process of change comes into effect at 12 o' clock tonight.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Given the importance, not only of saving as many jobs as possible but of providing as much compensation as possible to people who lose their jobs after years of loyal service to companies that go into receivership, does not the President agree that it is a good opportunity to improve compensation rights for redundancy?

Mr. Heseltine: It would be an abuse if I were to try to use the expedited processes which I am asking the House to consider for anything other than the most narrow of purposes which justify asking Parliament to move at such speed. There are plenty of other opportunities for my hon. Friends to consider the wider issues in a timely way.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on seeking to preserve the system of receivership, which has saved tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of jobs in high-profile cases such as Leyland DAF and Rolls-Royce plc, as well as in many smaller receiverships. Does he agree that 14 days would be too short for any potential purchaser to carry out a duly diligent investigation when he is thinking of buying a business from the receiver and that liquidation and jobs losses would be much speedier if he had not acted this afternoon?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful for my hon. Friend's support. I join him in paying tribute to the work of extremely professional receivers in finding ways to keep businesses going and seeking negotiations which, as we have said, happily are successful in a high proportion of cases. There have been some very well-publicised events recently, perhaps most significantly that of Leyland DAF, but there are others. We are all in the debt of the very skilled men and women who carry out that work.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It is a bit rich for a Minister who has just sacked 31,000 miners to be telling us that he is concerned about employees' jobs after 15 years of Tory rule and when 4 million casualties are looking for work. Will he answer this question? If the Major Government go into receivership this summer through lack of support, will he act as administrator?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman, on reflection, will realise that the people who lost their jobs in the coal industry received very generous redundancy terms which were far in excess of those available to the vast majority of people. The hon. Gentleman will welcome, as I do, the fact that unemployment is now falling.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): In welcoming my right hon. Friend's very prompt statement, may I put it to him that it is important that, in the medium term, we have a thorough review of insolvency law because the present bias towards the banks and away from trade creditors, much of which is built on case law, provides a very strong disincentive for unscrupulous bankers to put companies into receivership and instead to place them straight into liquidation?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who I know has a particular interest in the subject. We are consulting at the moment on the wider issues that he raises. The consultation period is due to end on 31 March and we will then be able to reach what decisions are appropriate.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Having asked for a statement during business questions last Thursday, I thank the President for making it today. I hope that any questions that I put to the Leader of the House in future will receive such a speedy response.

Does not the judgment of the Court of Appeal reveal that the drafting of the insolvency legislation was inadequate?

The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that several important receiverships are on-going. The present situation covers half the receivership and the Court of Appeal judgment, which one hopes will be appealed against in the House of Lords, while the other half will come into effect at midnight tonight. What will happen in the case of constructive receiverships, such as that at RFS Doncaster, which are on-going at the moment and in respect of which vital jobs are at stake?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will have heard my earlier reply when I said that I am not seeking to change the law retrospectively. The law is the law and receivers will have to make up their own minds, in the light of their best judgment and best professional advice, how they continue the receiverships in which they are already engaged. As for the hon. Gentleman's second point about the inadequate original drafting, I could not for a moment consider the possibility that anything that this Government had done was in any way inadequate. Nevertheless, on mature reflection, we have decided to have another look at it.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on bringing legislation forward and on not being tempted to wait until the House of Lords gave its judgment. However, will he now give a very clear signal to receivers currently investigating companies that it is the will of the whole House that the legislation should go through and therefore their actions should not in any way be influenced by the Paramount case?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend raises a most important point. I am aware that there is one case—there are probably others—in which receivers are under pressure to reach judgments because of the near expiry of the 14 days. I have asked officials to consider how we can draw the attention of such receivers to the statement that I have made this afternoon.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): In view of the stress and strain that is put on families and workers by receiverships, and of course the inadequate drafting that has been referred to, can the President of the Board of Trade assure the House that he will consult widely as a matter of urgency, and especially consult the Trades Union Congress, prior to publishing the Bill? Can he tell the House when he intends to publish the Bill?

Mr. Heseltine: The House realises that there is a dilemma about consulting widely on such a matter where urgency seems to be so important. There is bound to be an opportunity for people to make representations. We will publish the Bill and the House will then be invited to consider it speedily. We will do our best to take account of representations from any sources where people wish to make them. I do not have a specific date because that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. However, I have given the clearest indication I can that the Government consider this to be a matter of great urgency.

Points of Order

3.50 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, of which I have given you notice. I should like your ruling on a matter arising from the private Bill being promoted by the London Docklands development corporation.

The main purpose of the private Bill is to enable the development corporation to make byelaws covering the use of the former docks and the areas surrounding them. The Bill would give additional powers to the Secretary of State for the Environment relating to those byelaws, and they may seem appropriate for inclusion in a private Bill. However, clause 22 of the Bill would, I think extraordinarily, empower the Secretary of State to dispose of all or part of the assets of the London Docklands development corporation without any further reference to the House.

The most recent published accounts of the London Docklands development corporation show that the value of its assets exceeds £1,200 million. That is an enormous sum of public money which was put into the hands of the London Docklands development corporation under a general public Bill. Surely the power to give away those assets, which belong to the taxpayer, should not be smuggled through in a private Bill. This is not a private matter—it concerns a huge sum of public money.

I want to know why the Secretary of State for the Environment was allowed to include this public matter in a private Bill and how the House can safeguard the interests of the taxpayer.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has raised the question whether clause 22 of the Bill is a proper provision to be included in a private Bill. In the past, the Speaker has ruled that certain private Bills presented to the House should not proceed to a Second Reading because their principal provisions involved matters of public policy or conflicted with the general law. That ruling can be found at pages 804-805 of *Erskine May*.

However, there are precedents for provisions in private Bills giving the Secretary of State powers relating to the transfer of the property and functions of the promoting body—for example, section 10 of the British Waterways Act 1983. I cannot therefore rule that clause 22 of this Bill is not proper to be included. Of course, it is open to hon. Members to argue on Second Reading that the powers are too wide or that the relevant orders should come before the House. There are no petitions against the Bill, and the Bill has completed its passage in the House of Lords. It will be for the Committee on Unopposed Bills now to consider what amendments may be necessary.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Obviously, I accept your ruling and bear in mind the precedents. However, I am led to believe that the precedent that you quoted did not involve such an enormous sum of money or the possible gratuitous disposal of assets totalling as much as £1,200 million.

I should like to know your views on this matter, Madam Speaker. I understand that the authorities of this House, including the Speaker's Counsel, and those of the House of Lords look at such Bills to see whether their provisions are appropriate. It seems strange to me and to many of my hon. Friends that your advisers and those of the Lord Chancellor did not suggest to the promoters of the Bill that, at the very least, they might have provided in the Bill as originally drafted that such transfers could not take place without the prior consent of the House by a debatable order.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South) Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I thank you for your ruling. You may have expected that some hon. Members would refer to the matter during the debate, and it may be that something will emerge from that. Whatever may emerge in terms of the procedures in the House for which the Bill at the moment does not provide, is it your ruling that the Committee on Unopposed Bills can also consider whether, even with the safeguards, such a provision in a private Bill affecting the powers of a Secretary of State who has established the corporation and who has the power to dissolve it is in order in terms of the relationship between private and public legislation?

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose—*

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member who is in charge of the Bill wishes to make a point.

Mr. Hughes: I am sorry that I was not here when you began to deal with the point of order, Madam Speaker. I was alerted by your Secretary and by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). I am the hon. Member who is promoting the Bill. This is a point which has emerged late in the day. Advice has been taken, and will be available to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and other colleagues at 7 o'clock when the Bill is due to have its Second Reading. The advice that you have given already will be taken into account, Madam Speaker, and there may be further information available later. I ask hon. Members to be patient. I understand that the issue is important, but the point was neither raised nor spotted earlier. The purpose of the procedure is to give the House a chance to see whether such issues arise.

Madam Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. In reply to the latter point raised by the hon. Member for Newham, South, the answer, of course, is yes. The matter can come before the Committee on Unopposed Bills.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am raising a point of order similar to that which I raised on Friday. There have now been three mortar bomb attacks at Heathrow airport, which is, more or less, in my constituency, and yet I still cannot get an opportunity to get the Home Secretary to appear in the Chamber to make a statement. I understand and respect your decision with regard to my previous point of order. It seems strange that the whole country is talking about the busiest international airport in the world being under threat. Discussions are taking place in the press and among Opposition Members on the lack of security—I do not believe that to be the case—and yet I, the hon. Member who has the airport in his constituency, have no way of raising the matter in the House. I find that deplorable.

Madam Speaker: I believe that the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) wishes to make a similar point.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. May I preface my remarks by

[Mr. David Wilshire]

saying that I totally understand and fully support your ruling on my request for an emergency debate? I seek your guidance. Sunday's mortar took off from and landed in my constituency, and my constituents therefore rightly expect me to inform the House that the last thing that they want is a knee-jerk over-reaction. The other thing that they would want the House to know is that they have absolutely no intention of being bombed into submission by evil psychopaths. How on earth can they make that view known to the House? Perhaps you will give me some guidance, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am grateful to hon. Members for the way in which they have raised their points of order and for the support which they have given to the Chair. Right hon. Members on the Treasury Bench have no doubt heard the strength of feeling which has been expressed today. I think that we had better leave it at that for the moment.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I informed you that I wished to raise a point of order because I am being treated differently from other hon. Members—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. I have exchanged correspondence with the hon. Gentleman, and I asked him to see me. He did so, and I hoped to be able to explain the procedures of the House to him. I asked also a senior Officer of the House to try to help him to understand the way in which our procedures operate. I received a letter from him on Friday which I am now reading and to which I shall be replying. The hon. Gentleman cannot raise points of order on those matters. I have taken weeks to try to help him with the procedures of the House.

The hon. Gentleman wrote to me on Friday. He must give me an opportunity to read his letter and reply to it. The matter does not constitute a point of order. I explained that this morning to the hon. Gentleman. Officers of the House have also tried to be helpful. I have given him a good deal of time. My door is open to the hon. Gentleman if wants to see me again. However, unless he understands the procedures of the House, it will be extremely difficult. He is still unfamiliar with them. If he wants to come and see me again, my door is open and I will willingly go through them all with him again.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Llew Smith: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the point of order. I am moving on to the point of order from the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

Mr. Smith: It is because of the discussions that I have had with you, Madam Speaker, and the assistance from your colleagues that I am raising the point of order. I am discriminated against—

Madam Speaker: Order. There is no discrimination against the hon. Gentleman. I have attempted personally to explain to him the procedures and to do everything that I can to help him. I am still willing to help him if he does not understand. He is unfamiliar with the way in which we proceed in the House. The hon. Gentleman can take up my time as Speaker at any time that he wishes, but he cannot abuse the procedures of the House by raising points of order which are not points of order.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Last Monday, I raised with you a question about the then imminent decision of the Government on the blocking minority rights which arise under article O of the Maastricht treaty. You said that you would consider the matter. I am grateful to you for that. However, the matter is still under consideration. As there has been no debate in the House because of the nature of the instruments in question, will you consider taking a private notice question for tomorrow on the matter? Apparently, the decision has not yet been taken. The decision so vitally affects the interests not only of the House but of the country that we deserve at the least an opportunity to put questions on a statement and to have a debate on the matter.

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman has already explained, I looked into the matter after he first raised it. If he wishes to put in a private notice question to me tomorrow, of course I shall consider it seriously, as I always do. However, proposals for changes in voting procedures in the Council of Ministers are not founded on European Community documents of the type that are subject automatically to our procedures. Nothing out of order has occurred. If the hon. Gentleman is anxious to secure a debate on the issue, as well as putting in a PNQ to me, he should make his request known in the usual way.

ESTIMATES DAY

2ND ALLOTTED DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1993-94

Class VII, Vote 1

Housing Corporation

[Relevant documents: second report from the Environment Committee of Session 1992-93 on the Housing Corporation (House of Commons Paper No. 466-I and II) and the Government's response thereto (Cm 2363)]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further supplementary sum not exceeding £213,686,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1994 for expenditure by the Department of the Environment on subsidies, improvements and investments, payments to the Housing Corporation, payments to commute loan charges on grants to local authorities including the urban programme and urban development grant, and other sundry services.—*[Sir George Young.]*

4.2 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I know that estimates debates are not necessarily the most gripping of the matters that come before the House, Madam Speaker, but you will know as a student of political history that they are key to the powers and privileges of the House because the scrutiny of Government policies and expenditure is the heart of the House of Commons. I take seriously the Select Committee's responsibilities with regard to that function.

We have devoted two or three evidence sessions every year to hearings on the Department of the Environment estimates and annual reports. We have produced a report on each of the subjects. By that means, the Committee has tracked the progress of the Housing Corporation for several years, noting its triumphs and difficulties and following its development as the funding and regulatory body for non-local authority social housing in England. About 15 months ago, my colleagues on the Committee and I judged that the time was right to launch a full-scale inquiry into the activities of the corporation. The Committee's predecessors had resolved to do that, but, for one reason or another, it did not seem right to have a full investigation at that time.

The inquiry that we held and the report that came out of it marked something of a return to housing as a subject for the first time for some years, although, of course, we looked at some aspects in our annual estimates hearings. At least those in the Department's environmental and countryside divisions, who had had the focus of our spotlight on them for some 10 years, were able to retire, albeit temporarily, into the darkness while we looked at housing.

The key is for a Select Committee to consider a balanced range of issues. I pay tribute to my colleagues on the Committee for their non-partisan, consensus approach to the inquiry. If a Committee is effectively to bring issues to the attention of the public and the House it can best be done by co-operation. Together, we were able to agree conclusions that did not lack bite or duck the issues, as I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction will agree. Apart from the work that the Select Committee put into the report, I must also pay tribute to the two men who advised us during the inquiry—Richard Best and Peter Chapman—who gave us sterling guidance, which was most helpful.

During its inquiry, which lasted from February to April last year, the Select Committee questioned 16 groups of witnesses, visited housing association developments in Leeds, rural Yorkshire and east London, and considered 140 written submissions. Since I read every page of those submissions, I can confirm that they contained much high-quality evidence, not merely from housing associations and interested bodies but, in some cases, in movingly written notes from members of the public and tenants. We did not need to travel overseas because the Housing Corporation is a peculiarly British animal—a public sector body which funds and regulates a disparate collection of private sector organisations.

I hope that it will be helpful to the House if I proceed by summarising the main proposals in the Committee's report and in each case comment on the responses from the Government and the corporation.

We began by considering the relationship between the corporation and its sponsoring Department—the Department of the Environment. The Housing Corporation is a quango and is therefore quasi-autonomous, whatever that means. Some people told us that the corporation was a creature—usually a poodle—of Government. No one told us that it was too autonomous.

The Committee's view is that under the out-going chairman, Sir Christopher Benson, to whom I pay tribute, the corporation behaved in a correct but unpoodle-like manner. The Committee was given a copy of the corporation's top secret corporate plan. Frankly, we were surprised at its tone. Sir Christopher and his colleagues did not shrink from giving strong advice, whether it was welcome or not.

The Committee felt that the relationship between the corporation and the Department was about right. The corporation spends a lot of public money and is rightly closely supervised in that. As a non-governmental organisation, however, it must remain free to express its views on policy matters—but only in private.

When people first learn that the Housing Corporation's corporate plan is not published they are surprised, given the huge sums of public money involved. The frank advice to which I referred is partly the reason why it remains a private document. The Committee felt strongly that the plan should be published, as a contribution to the continuing public debate on social housing. The Government did not feel able to accept the Committee's recommendations, for reasons that I understand, but the corporation has at least been able to produce its first three-year statement of plans and priorities.

That statement is effectively an agreed version of the corporate plan, without the discussion of alternatives that characterises the latter, but retaining an encouraging tone of frankness. The statement is certainly more useful than the annual report, which has not been terribly useful to anyone who has taken a close interest in the corporation's work. The Housing Corporation should be congratulated on producing its new document. There can be no doubt that future editions could be improved by greater openness and more discussion of the relative merits of policy options.

Openness is also required in the appointment of the corporation's board which, in the Committee's view, did not fully reflect the breadth of experience desirable in such an organisation. I therefore welcome the recent

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

appointment of new members with experience of housing—in one case, a local authority housing manager and in another, a housing association tenant. The fresh perspectives that those new board members will bring will be of great value to the corporation and to the Government.

The announcement last Tuesday that Sir Brian Pearse, the chief executive of the Midland bank, is to succeed Sir Christopher Benson as chairman, is also to be welcomed. I trust that Sir Brian will continue his predecessor's robust approach to his work. I think that my right hon. Friend has brought off a considerable coup in managing to secure the appointment of Sir Brian Pearse. There is absolutely no doubt that the relationship between housing associations and those who are increasingly financing them will be of key importance in coming years.

The Committee gained the impression both at first and at second hand that, at regional level, the corporation works effectively as a partner of housing associations. Like many partners, the corporation can at some times be a little interfering and bossy and at others less helpful than some would wish. In most respects, however, it is supportive and effective. We suggested some improvements, such as aligning the corporation's regional structure with that of the Department and seeking feedback, through a consultative process, with local interests. In each case, the Government responded positively, for which I am grateful. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to inform us of progress on realignment, especially as it affects London and the home counties, and on the twice-yearly consultative meetings, which I understand may start as early as next month.

Important as it is to get the structures and personalities right, there are other, more important issues that the Committee identified. The first is the question of housing association grant rates, together with affordability of rents and availability of private finance. The Committee recognised, as do most observers and those more closely involved, that those apparently separate considerations are in fact interwoven and interdependent. As the Government quite properly seek to contain public expenditure and attract a higher proportion of private capital into the development of social housing, so they must face the likelihood that housing associations will find it increasingly difficult to secure their loans, that many of them will find it necessary to increase their rents and that, at the end of the chain, increasing numbers of tenants will find it ever more difficult to escape the protective embrace of housing benefit.

Whether we term that state of affairs somewhat emotively "the poverty trap" or whether we characterise it as housing benefit dependency, the effect is the same. The Exchequer necessarily spends vast amounts of public money on housing benefit, yet everyone—including those in receipt of the benefit—wishes that it were otherwise. The Committee did not pretend to know how to resolve the dilemma of how to provide an affordable safety net without, at the same time, creating a disincentive to work, but all Members were as one in calling on the Government to get on with tackling the problem. It is surely in no one's interest that we should continue to subsidise that powerful deterrent to self-betterment.

Therefore, I was disappointed that, in their response, the Government were apparently content to refer to the existence of an inter-departmental working group that discusses such issues "on a regular basis". Having heard nothing since of the discussions of the group, may I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister what is being done to counter housing benefit dependency and, in particular, to investigate the relationship between HAG rates, rent levels and benefit entitlement?

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): I have read the report with much interest, and note its concentration on tenants and their importance in housing associations. Did the Committee consider secured, as opposed to assured, tenancies, and what direct measures can be taken to bring down tenants' rents to a more manageable level?

Mr. Jones: I think that the two issues are slightly separate. We certainly addressed the former issue, albeit tangentially. The latter issue depends very much on addressing the relationship that I have just described.

My right hon. Friend the Minister has exercised delicate judgment in setting HAG rates for 1994-95 at 62 per cent. I know that the announcement was not universally welcomed but, in revising the original objective of a cut to 60 per cent., my right hon. Friend has shown that he is willing to listen and reconsider. So far, and despite the small reduction in HAG rates announced my right hon. Friend, the great majority of housing associations appear to have been able to continue to raise private finance for development.

It is worth repeating here the Committee's concern that "if the Government waits until a funding crisis arrives, any action it then takes may be too late."
Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that he will take a long-term view and, in particular, that he will consider seriously the need to set housing association grant at a level that will enable associations to avoid running out of loan security or finding that they are no longer able to raise money from private institutions?

The second major issue that I wish to raise is that of standards. There are two quite separate concerns here. One relates to standards of housing provision and the quality of the accommodation that associations provide and the other to standards of housing management. On the former, I do not count myself among those who mourn the passing of the Parker Morris standards, which applied to all public sector housing. However, if they build houses that are inappropriate to people's housing needs and aspirations, housing associations will run the risk of replicating some of the social problems that have arisen as a result of the misguided policies of the 1960s and the 1970s.

Therefore, I welcome the recent evidence of a shift towards the rehabilitation of existing property and away from new build, not least because such property is likely to provide tenants with more space and better facilities as well as address the issue of urban regeneration.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The Government are encouraging the rehabilitation of property and everyone would accept that that should be achieved. However, does the hon. Gentleman accept that in areas where property is of extremely low value, such as in the north, it is difficult for either an owner-occupier or, for the very same reason, a housing association to invest properties that are worth less than the cost of those improvements?

Mr. Jones: One of the experiences that I have enjoyed in the House has been my period of common service with the hon. Member on the Select Committee on the

Environment. One of the facts that I will retain until my dying day is that the problem to which the hon. Member referred exists in places such as Burnley. It needs to be tackled in the broad context of urban regeneration, not just through housing association grant but through our approach to home improvements. That is absolutely key to solving the problem.

Can my right hon. Friend the Minister tell the House whether the Government now accept that rehabilitation offers several important advantages over new build? Does he intend to increase still further the proportion of rehabilitated property? On the subject of specialisation, the focusing of housing association work not just on rehabilitation but, for example, on the disabled, other specialist groups and rural housing is extremely important and welcome.

As for standards of management by housing associations, the Committee learnt that those vary widely. Such is also my experience as a constituency Member, because I have known excellent housing associations and also pretty poor ones. I suggest that that experience is shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I therefore welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement last week that the Department is to fund the Institute of Housing's good practice unit for the next three years.

One of the unit's first tasks might be to consider the evidence that the Committee received, which suggested that small, local associations are more popular with tenants than the larger, national ones. Some of the latter came in for strong criticism because of their remoteness and lack of responsiveness. Some evidence, however, suggests a trend towards ever-larger associations, whether through merger or large-scale transfer of local authority stock.

Some large housing associations have an excellent record, either because they really care about delivering quality maintenance or because they have been organised in such a way as to overcome the argument about remoteness. The Paddington Churches housing association, for example, has a development in my constituency. People were naturally worried about a housing association that had its headquarters in Paddington. They have overcome their concern because the association has established an office on the estate to which people can go with their problems about maintenance or queries about their rent. The Sutton housing trust also has its headquarters in my constituency and it has an excellent record of attentiveness to the problems of its tenants.

Do the Government accept, as the Committee has, that a diverse housing association movement, encompassing a range of providers meeting specialist or general needs at local level, represents the most attractive and effective option for enlightened housing management? If so, what can my right hon. Friend say tonight to reassure those who fear that the Government's policies will lead to the creation of even larger, more remote landlords?

May I ask my right hon. Friend, purely from my point of view rather than that of the Committee, whether he has considered the scope of rent officers, given the increasing number of assured tenancies? I wonder whether the jurisdiction of rent officers over housing associations is appropriate any longer and whether it might be better for rents to be set by housing associations, obviously after consultation with their tenants.

Thirdly, I wish to mention tenants' rights, which emerged as one of the main themes of the Committee's inquiry and was the subject of the concluding chapter of our report. In all the discussion of bureaucracies, finance, policy initiatives and so on, it is all too easy to lose sight of the fact that the Housing Corporation, housing associations and associated paraphernalia exist to provide a service not to Government, not to Parliament, but to tenants.

The Committee met and spoke to housing association tenants during its inquiry and received written evidence from several more. Although no national organisation was able formally to represent to us the views of all tenants, we heard oral evidence from the Tenants' Participation Advisory Service, an organisation with which I was extremely impressed.

I think that we gained a pretty good idea of what tenants want. In addition to affordable rents, to which I have referred, tenants want access to information, a prompt and effective repairs and maintenance service, to participate in decisions that affect them and to know that any complaints will be dealt with fairly. The news on all those fronts is good.

In their response to the Committee's report, the Government promised that the corporation would seek the views of tenants as part of its monitoring of associations' performance. The corporation also undertook to monitor more closely associations' performance on repairs and maintenance and to improve associations' performance on tenant participation. To what extent have those fine words resulted in action? What feedback has been received from tenants about the effectiveness of the measures announced in the Government's response to the Committee's report?

The announcement that a tenants' ombudsman would be appointed preceded the Committee's inquiry but was not divorced from it. In our report, we had much to say about the way in which the proposed service should be constituted and should operate. Although I understand the difficulties involved in proposing primary legislation, I am disappointed that the new ombudsman is not demonstrably independent of the corporation. I wish Mr. Jeffries well and it is to be hoped that he will prove his independence in practice, but I and my colleagues were worried lest confidence in that important service be dented due to its close association with the corporation.

With his characteristic fairness, my right hon. Friend the Minister left the door open by promising to keep the new service under review and to place it on a statutory footing, should that prove necessary at a later date. Perhaps he would expand a little on that statement tonight and tell the House how he proposes to review the work of the ombudsman and when he expects to decide whether to legislate.

No right is more important to tenants than the right to buy. The situation pertaining to charitable housing associations remains unacceptable to me and to many Conservative Members. I know that in the more enlightened charitable housing associations there has been a growing realisation that they are causing themselves as much damage as they are the tenants because, inevitably, they are driving the most motivated and ambitious of their tenants to leave their estates and to find their homes outside. That is not good for the community, it is not good for the housing association and most assuredly it is not good for the tenant. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will send a clear message to the other place that people who own more than one house should not stand in the way of the aspirations of ordinary people who are tenants of charitable housing associations.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I have listened attentively to the hon. Gentleman's speech, which faithfully followed the course of the Committee's consideration and report until he reached the last point, on which I recall no recommendation of the Select Committee. I think that he should make it clear that he is expressing his own view, rather than the view of the Select Committee, on that subject.

Mr. Jones: I am happy to underscore that because not only is it my view, but, over the years, it has been one of the points that have most characterised the differences between Conservative Members and Opposition Members. We believe in the aspirations of those people who wish to buy their homes, even if the hon. Gentleman does not.

I could go on at greater length, but I think that many Members wish to catch your eye, Madam Speaker. In conclusion, I welcome the opportunity to consider the work of the Housing Corporation and to acquaint the House with the important work of the Environment Committee. I am also pleased to be able to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister for his constructive approach to the inquiry and his helpful response to the report. However, there remain some items of unfinished business. I warn my right hon. Friend that today's debate marks only another stage in the process and that, in the best tradition of the Environment Committee, we shall follow up our report before the dust of Marsham street has settled on his files.

4.24 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The Select Committee inquiry has done a service in focusing on a subject that is, in my view, of great economic and social importance. It is of economic importance because, at least in London—housing problems vary in different parts of the country—the capital cannot work efficiently unless there are affordable homes for those who work and receive moderate incomes. I am thinking of people employed in transport, education, health and other essential services; people begining their careers, who cannot yet afford to buy homes; and those who are training—often after university—and are still on moderate incomes.

I shall concentrate, however, on the social importance of housing, to which the Committee referred. We do irreparable damage to the fabric of society by gearing housing in a way that adversely affects the construction of society and the preservation of values. There is, for instance, something very wrong with a society that does not enable people to live near their parents. Enormous social reinforcements are provided when grandmothers can look after children and do some babysitting and other members of the family can provide a stimulus. That is an important ingredient in the health of the inner city.

It is equally important for parents to live near their own parents. Like many other Members of Parliament, I am visited every week by people who ask why their elderly mothers, aunts or other close relatives cannot live with or close to them, where they can be taken care of, rather than having to live in expensive old people's homes, sometimes unhappily.

Housing policy, albeit unintentionally, is not just breaking up families but making self-help and sustenance from within the family impossible. That is certainly happening in my borough. It is difficult to rebuild an inner city when the children who grow up successfully there cannot afford to live in the area—near their parents—and must move away. Rebuilding inner-city society depends on values as well as bricks and mortar; one reinforces the other.

There is a further dimension to the social aspect: social housing must be truly affordable for those who work or want to return to work. We need to provide housing that is not a trap and does not create a poverty ghetto. What I find offensive is an apartheid in housing, based on social and economic status.

There are examples in my constituency, where housing has been built on reduced grant for assured tenancies. We are building homes with gardens where people cannot afford to buy a spade; we are building homes with picture windows and greater floor space, where people can hardly afford curtains and carpets. Children are being brought up by parents who have no money to provide any social stimulus, entertainment or holidays—all of which are important to the growing-up process. We are building housing that imposes heavy penalties on those who want to return to work, to stay in work or to gain promotion.

Let me illustrate the problem by referring to some recent building by housing associations in my constituency. New three-bedroomed homes have been built: the rent is £70 a week, in addition to council tax, charges for heat and lighting—soon to be taxed—and water rates. Let us take the example of a person who is in work, but whose spouse is not; they have two children, aged 12 and four. If that person's net income is £125 a week—about £150 gross—he or she will pay no rent, being very close to income support levels. If he or she receives an extra £1 in pay, they will lose 65 per cent. of it in a taper on the loss of housing benefit and 20 per cent. in the taper on council tax benefit. Thus, the result of an additional £1 a week will be a net gain of 15p.

Let us take another example—a person with the same family structure but earning £175 a week net. That person's rent becomes £38.05 a week—22 per cent. of a low income. If he or she starts to move up the salary scale, every extra £1 earned will result in the loss of 65p in housing benefit taper and the withdrawal of 20p in council tax benefit—leaving 15p. That is a hell of a loss of benefit for someone earning only £175 a week.

The penalty goes on and on. The figures are not substantially different in the case of a single-parent family and they are very much worse in the case of a single parent who has to pay for child care. Thus, people of moderate income are financially pinned into the home. Despite what has been said about rehabilitation and about concentration on the building of new estates, they are also corralled geographically. We are beginning to build houses with basements again. But they are proverbial basements. They are poverty basements, out of which it is very difficult to climb to the next floor. Such is the housing that is now being constructed with housing association grant.

In a way, the position is even worse than that. Because of the indicative costs, and because of the uncertainty of the cost of converting a street property, housing associations—at least those in my area—are buying fewer properties for rehabilitation. Here we have another reason for the greater difficulty. Every time an individual property is bought, one is up against the private financial bureaucracy that housing associations now have to face. People have to cope with increasing isolation and are not securing the street properties that they want so much.

If I sound very pessimistic about the new type of housing on assured tenancies, my pessimism is increased by the fact that what is happening, in terms of the poverty trap, to the new assured tenancies—properties built with reduced grant—is happening also in the case of the older housing association properties that were the subject of secure tenancies, with rent control by the rent officer. The Milkwood estate in my constituency is run by the London and Quadrant housing association. That association applied for a rent increase, as, under Housing Corporation procedures, it was obliged to do. It asked the rent officer for an increase of £12 a week, but the rent officer decided on a figure of £14 to £15 a week. Typically, those tenants have had their rents increased from £37 to £51—a rise of 37 per cent. at a time when, for example, people who work for a local authority have had their income frozen.

The same kind of trap is being constructed in the case of the older housing association estates. The rents under private assured tenancies are dragging up those under secure tenancies. The cure is reproducing the complaint. As we try to eradicate the problems of the 1960s—I am thinking of housing problems associated with poverty and with the poverty trap—the Government are driving down the grant and pushing up rents under assured tenancies. Thus, we see the creation of exactly the same phenomenon as prevailed in the past.

And the prospects are even worse than that, I am afraid. It is not just that housing association tenants have to suffer penalties and disincentive. The situation can only get worse as the grant, which at one time was 80 per cent., comes down to 55 per cent. We know that the Government have massacred council housing. During the last Labour Government's final two years, the average rate of building social housing was 120,000 houses a year. The number is now down to 11,000, which is why I refer to the massacre of council housing. It is no wonder that the level of homelessness has gone up. It is not being replaced—

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fraser: No, I shall not give way. We are short of time.

Housing is not being replaced by housing association production, which is running at only 21,000 homes a year and is set to decrease according to the Government's projection of its expenditure.

The Government are creating a greater handicap for housing associations in three ways. The first is caused by cuts. Tulse Hill school in my constituency was knocked down—the Minister will know it well from his time as a councillor in Lambeth—and the site was bought by a housing association to provide homes for 160 people. It lies idle this year and will be idle for the next financial year because the Government have run out of housing association grant, even at reduced rates. It is disgraceful that we have the land and building workers available, but we cannot get on with building houses in an area which has a high level of homelessness.

Secondly, the Government are imposing—

Mr. Peter Ainsworth *rose*—

Mr. Fraser: I said that I shall not give way.

The Government are imposing a form of financial cannibalism on housing associations. Associations are having to charge their reserves and existing stock, but the time comes when they can no longer eat their own flesh which, in financial terms, is what they are being asked to do. There will be a point at which private finance will say that there is no more security left on the balance sheet on which it can lend.

Thirdly, private finance is beginning to get nervous about the housing association movement. I do not want to be overly pessimistic, but it is getting nervous because it is looking in part to security that is gradually running out and to what is called the rent stream. On the newer housing estates in my constituency which I have described—they are typical of those in the rest of the country—there is not a rent stream but a housing benefit stream. The Department of the Environment does not have complete control over the housing benefit stream and will eventually come up against the golden rule of politics which is, "It can only go on for so long." I give examples of that rule: it was true of the powers and rights of trade unions—the Government said that they could only go on for so long; it has been true of local government expenditure; and it is true of housing benefit. As rents go up, as grants are reduced, as the poverty trap tightens and expenditure on benefits goes up, the Treasury will one day—

Mr. Warren Hawksley (Halesowen and [illegible]urbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fraser: No, I shall not give way. *[Interruption.]* Many hon. Members wish to speak and I shall best serve my colleagues by getting on and finishing my speech as quickly as possible.

Eventually, housing benefit expenditure itself will be challenged, which will create a great deal of nervousness in the City, among the building societies and banks, many of them foreign.

I am sorry to close on a pessimistic note. I have only one piece of optimism, which is that the golden rule of politics may yet help me out: "It can only go on for so long" must also apply to the Government.

4.37 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I am very glad to be called to speak. I must first declare an interest as my wife is chairman of a housing association—

Mr. Fraser: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I too, should have declared an interest as I belong to a firm that advises some housing associations. I apologise for not declaring it at the beginning.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I an grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: My interest is not the same as the hon. Gentleman's. I declare an interest as my wife is chairman of a housing association and a member of the Housing Corporation.

This is an important issue which was brought to my attention by a group of ladies who came to my advice bureau some time ago. They represented various religious beliefs and wanted to talk to me about housing. As my wife knows more about the subject than I do, I twisted her arm and made her attend the advice bureau with me. We listened carefully to the ladies who spoke with great sincerity and were clearly very concerned about people less fortunate than themselves. We all agreed on one point—the

[Sir Fergus Montgomery]

vexed question of affordable housing. I have raised the matter in the House before and I will continue to raise it because it is so important.

Some time ago, the Select Committee on the Environment warned of the serious consequences if the housing association grant should fall below 67 per cent. In fact, it has fallen to 62 per cent. today. The problem is that with less grant, housing associations have to borrow from the private sector and as a consequence, rents tend to rise. The net result is that we get rents that are not affordable by low-income households, and that causes great concern.

I am told that in the north-west of England, housing association rents for new homes are nearing market rents. The consequence is—this point has already been raised in the debate—that there are people receiving housing benefit living in those homes because they can better afford to live on the new estates. I am told that on some new estates in the north-west, as many as 95 per cent. of properties are let to tenants who are on housing benefit. They are often single parents with young children.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is giving serious consideration to the £9 billion that is spent on housing benefit. Nobody can blame him for that. After all, the social security budget is the largest budget of any Department and housing benefit is the third largest item in the social security budget. It is exceeded only by the state retirement pension and by income support.

If the amount that we spend on housing benefit had been fairly constant for years, one could understand leaving it alone, but the fact that it has risen dramatically in recent years and has now reached £9 billion has led my right hon. Friend carefully to scrutinise it. However, I sometimes wonder whether there is any co-ordination between the Department of the Environment, the Department of Social Security and the Treasury on such issues.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Has my hon. Friend considered two factors that may affect the affordability ratio? First, there are now far lower interest rates than was the case hitherto and, secondly, with construction costs that are far more reasonable than they were at the peak in 1988-89, it is possible to build and refurbish houses far more cheaply than before.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I accept my hon. Friend's point. The fact that interest rates are far lower is beneficial, although it does not alter the fact that there are still too many people who find it difficult to get housing that they can afford. That is the point I am trying to make.

One of the recommendations of the Environment Select Committee is that the Government should try to develop a strategy for easing the problems faced by housing association tenants and others caught in the poverty trap. As rents increase, the disposable income of tenants who are not receiving housing benefit drops and the possibility of the poverty trap increases.

The National Federation of Housing Associations has defined affordability. It says that affordability exists if the majority of working households taking up new tenancies are not caught in the poverty trap because of dependency on housing benefit or because they are paying more than 25 per cent. of their net income on rent. The association stresses that rents are not affordable when more than 50 per cent. of working tenants are either caught in the poverty trap through being dependent on housing benefit or, if not on housing benefit, are paying more than 25 per cent. of their net income on rent.

I do not want a growth in the dependency culture. I want to encourage people to stand on their own feet—that was one of the things that drew me to the Conservative party. Of course there are people who we must look after, such as the sick, the elderly and the disabled. However, I want to ensure that young people are encouraged to find work rather than believing that the state should provide for them.

I worry about the people who try to help themselves, such as those who take low-paid jobs and then find that they might have been better off if they had not gone out to work because they would have been more secure financially with benefits. It cannot be right, it is nonsense and economic madness for someone to be better off by not going out to work than by looking for a job. We must also think about the children who are brought up in such an environment. What sort of life will they have if they can honestly believe that they will be better off by not working than by seeking work? That is an example of initiative being penalised.

Thrift by the elderly is also penalised; I make no apology for returning to the matter yet again. All of us must know of elderly constituents who, during their working lives, have put money aside, who have done without things and who have saved for the proverbial rainy day. They find that when they retire, their thrift is used to penalise them. As the rules currently apply, people with capital of between £3,000 and £16,000 find that interest is assumed—"assumed" is the all-important word—at the rate of £1 a week for every £250 of capital. As I have said before, I wish that some kind person would offer me such terms because I would transfer my savings immediately and I would live happily ever after.

What incentive does the scenario I have described give to anyone to save? For years, I have repeatedly posed that question and I have never had an answer. I hope that I shall get an answer today. I should like an assurance that the ridiculously high assumed rate on savings will be considered urgently.

Good housing is vital. As a nation, we can take pride in the fact that we have eliminated the awful slums that were such a blot on our industrial areas years ago. However, I often wonder whether we were wise to build the multi-storey tower blocks and to build the great council estates that sprawl on the outskirts of towns and which took people away from where they had lived as part of a community.

We might have been better off spending money on the Coronation streets of this world—the old terraced houses which were well built. If we had only spent some money on modernising them and on making them more pleasant for people to live in, people would have been happier because there was far more community spirit there than one experiences today. However, I realise that there is no point in harping on about what happened in the past. Instead, we must try to ensure that we get things right in the future.

The construction industry needs a boost. I am told that about half a million construction workers have lost their jobs over the past few years. If the estimate that every unemployed person costs about £9,000 per annum is right —that is the amount paid in benefit and the amount that is

lost in taxation—a great deal of money is involved. If we could get those people back to work, there would be a tremendous boost to the economy. We desperately need more low-cost housing.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): Is my hon. Friend aware that there are 850,000 empty houses in this country? That translates into about 1,000 empty houses per constituency. Would he not rather those empty houses be brought back into use than more and more new houses being built over the green fields in his constituency?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I do not disagree with my hon. Friend. I watched him speaking effectively on this very point on television yesterday. I think that he said that Manchester city council was just about the worst in the country for unoccupied houses.

Mr. Hendry: Second.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Second?

Mr. Raynsford: Westminster.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I do not think that Westminster is top of the list. The hon. Gentleman should verify his facts before he interrupts.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): You do not.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I am sorry; I did not hear.

Mr. Banks: You do not—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Sir Fergus Montgomery.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I am very grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have your protection from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

By reducing unemployment, we would help the building industry and we would rehouse people who are in urgent need. I hope that we would also do something about homelessness. I get depressed at the sight of all those people sleeping rough in our cities today. There are, of course, many reasons for that. Some are there as a result of divorce and broken homes; divorce has increased enormously over the years. Young people tend to leave home far earlier than they did and that has caused problems. Whatever the reasons, I hope that we can do something to try to solve at least part of that problem.

I praise my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction. He does a great job in housing in the Department of the Environment. He is one of the most caring Ministers and he has earned enormous respect from people in the housing association world. However, I end by making the plea that the Housing Corporation is given adequate funds to enable housing associations to provide housing at affordable rents for people who are desperately in need.

4.49 pm

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury): This morning, I took the opportunity to attend a meeting of Newbury district council's annual housing forum—an excellent institution which has proposed a number of good ideas in recent years—where I spoke to the council's housing manager and asked his advice on what I should say in the debate this afternoon, were I lucky enough to be called. He said that he could summarise what I should say in just two words: "not enough". He said that there was not enough in terms of the approved development programme, not enough in terms of the proportion of housing association grant allowed for housing association schemes and not enough cheap rented accommodation.

If it is true that there is not enough of those things in Newbury, how much more must it be true that there are not enough of them in deprived inner-city areas.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: The hon. Gentleman is playing true to the form of members of his party, who frequently castigate the Government for not spending enough and, once the Government do so, then say that they are spending too much. Is he aware that total spending on housing of the type that we are discussing has risen by about 60 per cent. since 1988-89 and now stands at about £12 billion a year?

Mr. Rendel: I hope to show that, in practice, if the Government spend more on housing it is likely to pay for itself and that, therefore, whatever the Government are now spending, it would be beneficial to put more money in.

The housing manager to whom I spoke said that it was wrong for the Government to place more emphasis on shared ownership, for which there is limited demand: only a certain number of people can benefit from that form of tenure.

I recently visited a new housing association being built in Basingstoke by Wimpey, whose people kindly took me round the estate and showed me the different forms and sizes of housing and different forms of tenure. They told me which of the forms of tenure had been the easiest to fill. Interestingly, they said that the hardest to fill was shared ownership accommodation. When I asked why, they said that the answer was obvious: much of shared ownership costs more than outright purchase or renting, which is why people are unwilling to take it. A move towards more shared ownership, therefore, will have only limited applicability in trying to solve our housing crisis.

To a large extent, I welcome the emphasis on rehabilitation in the report of the Select Committee on the Environment. We should all like the standard of housing in this country to be raised. Much housing is in far too poor a condition nowadays and there are many advantages to be gained from rehabilitating older housing stock wherever we can. But a balance should be struck.

There is no point in putting all available resources into rehab or new housing. We must get the balance right. As long as the Government do not go overboard on rehab, I would welcome any moves to put money into that part of the housing movement.

The Government claim that they wish to spread their resources more widely by reducing the amount of housing association grant to each housing association property. One can understand their reasons for wanting to do that, but here again there is a danger in going too far. If Government resources are to be spread more widely, more money will be needed from the private sector and, as has already been said, there is a limit to which the private sector will be prepared to meet its share of housing costs.

Obviously, the more housing sector finance is demanded, the more rents of such housing will rise because interest on that finance will have to be paid. In addition, the larger the proportion of the money from the private sector, the higher the interest rate is likely to be, because the private sector will wish to have a higher interest rate if the risk is large. Clearly, there is a point at which it becomes

[Mr. Rendel]

counterproductive to continue to lower the percentage of housing association grant into each housing association property. The Government's new proposals go beyond that point.

What will happen? Rents will inevitably rise and much housing will no longer be affordable. At the same time, the Government's proposals on homelessness will push more homeless people into the private sector, where rents will also increase, leading to more dependence on housing benefit.

Housing benefit is due to be capped. Somewhere, we shall come to a crunch point. Sadly, for various reasons, many people are losing homes that they have owned for a long time. For instance, people lose their jobs or face difficulties with the Child Support Agency. If they are vulnerable—for example, they may have young families—they will be housed by the local council and the costs of that housing will be met by housing benefit.

When such people find another job, they may be worse off. Even in the present situation, with people being housed in comparatively cheap rented accommodation by local councils, they may face difficulties in paying the rent. For the many who are housed in private rented accommodation at higher rents, the problem will be exacerbated. I foresee a difficulty because if someone loses their job and then their house, they will be rehoused, but if they find another job, they may lose their house again. The Government are leading us into the position whereby people can either have a job or a house, but not both. I am sure that that is not a position which the Government will wish to endure.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the rate of repossessions has been falling significantly in recent months? Will he pay tribute to the efforts of lending institutions in achieving that? Does not he accept that the housing market is on a stabilised, if not improving, trend?

Mr. Rendel: I accept that there are some signs that the housing market is picking up. We have yet to see whether that will benefit or harm those who need cheap rented accommodation.

The Government say that the housing benefit tapering system will ensure that people cannot lose their house and their job. The problem with the taper, however, as I think all housing professionals accept, is that it is much too sharp. That is why people are often better off remaining on benefits than getting a job.

The tapering effect is 85p in every pound just on housing benefit and council tax, but when one takes on a job one may have extra expenses—for example, with the CSA or because of the costs of travelling to work. With the taper as sharp as it is at present, one may be better off remaining on benefit and not getting a job. We need an integrated tax and benefit system, but were I to discuss that now I should stray wide of the subject of the debate.

I commend two aspects of Government housing policy. The first is their living-over-the-shop initiative, which, if implemented across the country, would contribute a great deal to solving homelessness. It has many advantages. Shopkeepers can gain income and security for their shops. It can bring life back into the town centre and lead, therefore, to crime prevention. It can offer convenient places to live for young couples who have no children, or perhaps elderly people, who often do not have transport to get them into town centres. I was proud to have promoted that policy long before the Government took it up and I was especially proud recently to have been able to open a scheme of that sort, as the housing spokesman for the Liberal Democrats, in my constituency in the centre of Newbury. Now that the scheme has been launched, it will encourage other people to open similar schemes. That scheme was for six flats and it has already been indicated that we may be able to get 12 more flats next door in the near future.

The second aspect of Government policy that deserves some praise is mentioned specifically in the Select Committee report. It said:

"We believe that, if and when there is a depressed property market, the Corporation should be ready to put in place a programme for acquisition of existing, unsold houses . . . The housing of homeless families in property integrated into the community as a whole may represent a more constructive approach than the growing concentration and segregation of such families on newly-built estates."

I certainly agree. The Government's response was:

"The Government believes that the Housing Market Package in 1992-93 was very successful."

There were faults with that package. It involved no new money. Money was simply brought forward from future years—that was a pity—and involved mainly the purchase of new homes on large estates which could otherwise not find a buyer.

However, there are many benefits to the scheme. It makes purchase under the right to buy less risky. Many people are unwilling to purchase their own homes because they fear that they may never be able to sell them again. If that scheme were renewed, it would clearly give housing associations a chance to take back those homes and thus make it less risky for tenants to purchase their own homes.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: May I correct the hon. Gentleman on the housing market package about which he was so disparaging? It enabled 18,000 homes to be purchased in 93 days, admittedly at a cost of £577 million brought forward from future years, when the housing market was especially depressed. Therefore, surely it encouraged the housing market to recover quicker.

Mr. Rendel: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been listening. I was saying that that was one of the two aspects of the Government's housing policy of which I approved. Perhaps if he had listened more carefully, he would not have bothered to intervene.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Does my hon. Friend agree that, in a city such as Liverpool, where there are some 13,000 empty properties—some 7,000 in the private sector—there is a desperate need to use such properties to assist people who will not only drift away from that city to the south of England, but who are homeless?

Mr. Rendel: I entirely agree. Indeed, it was one of the benefits that I was about to mention. One of the benefits of that system is that it allows housing associations to spread their properties throughout a community and thus leads to less of a ghetto-type situation, which we are moving towards.

It is also true that it is a quick way in which to bring more cheap, rented accommodation into the housing association sector. In spite of the difficulties of buying a house in this country, it takes a lot less time to buy a house

that is on the market than to build a house from scratch. At present, housing is comparatively cheap and we need to use that sort of a scheme before the housing market takes off again. How sad that the Government's response went on the say:

"The Government has no plans at present to repeat the initiative."

When they do something right, it is a pity that they cannot carry it through for a longer period.

In housing, the Government are their own worst enemy. Failure to invest in housing leads to rising homelessness, to fears about queue jumping—the cause of their latest document—to increases in housing benefit, which is a cause of worry to the Treasury, to a deepening of the poverty trap and to lower work incentives. The answer is two-fold. First, we must release the receipts from council house sales for further council accommodation and secondly we must have more direct Government investment in housing. Housing investment often pays for itself. Poor housing can lead to families breaking up; indeed, it is one of the most common causes, with all the involved costs to the Government.

Housing investment can lead to lower benefit costs, better social conditions, less vandalism and other crime and more stability, especially for families with children, whose education will benefit as a result. We are discussing the level of housing investment by the Government. To use the words of Newbury district council's manager, which are echoed by almost all those professionally involved in housing and by councillors of all parties in local authorities throughout the country, the present level of Government investment in housing is simply not enough.

5.4 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Without wishing to be a founder member of the mutual admiration society, it should be incumbent on myself or at least somebody on the Committee to pay a tribute to the chairmanship of the Committee which produced the report. Many pundits in housing and in politics generally thought that the subject was a minefield and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) guided us through it excellently. In our press release when the report was published, we said that it showed that a controversial subject, such as housing, need not necessarily lead to a Select Committee being bogged down in some of the problems that we have seen elsewhere in the House. It is certainly a long-held tradition of the Environment Select Committee that it strives for some consensus in its reports because it believes that they pack a greater punch as a result when they arrive on the Minister's desk.

Many of us have experience of housing and for some of us it has been a great joy. I share the happy distinction with the Prime Minister of having chaired a housing committee, although he seems to have done rather better than I have. One of my happier housing stories was that of the archetypal little lady who had several piles of rubble outside her back door and her front door, which seemed to be alarming her neighbours. The housing manager of the local authority went to see what was the problem and discovered that, single-handedly, she had knocked down all the internal supporting walls in her house so that when one opened the front door, one could look straight through to the back door and the kitchen. When asked why she had done it, she said that it was to give the budgie more room when she let it out of its cage to exercise.

There is nothing more personal to all of us than our homes and that is why the report and the work of the Housing Corporation is so important. My hon. Friend the Chairman of the Committee has already welcomed Sir Brian Pearse, whose deputy chairman, Peter Cook, was appointed the other day by the Secretary of State. I questioned the outgoing chairman, Sir Christopher Benson, on a particular point. I made the point in Committee that there would not be a company with which Sir Christopher was associated which would not introduce an age debtor scheme to the board of directors. I was therefore rather surprised that Corporation does not require or report to the Minister the length of time that housing associations hold on to cash, liquid assets, without reinvesting them. I ask the Minister to consider that specific point. I know that it was something of a soap box issue of mine during the compilation of the report, but if the housing association movement stands for anything, it is for the provision of low-cost housing, as my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) said. It is essential to make assets work hard and to invest in housing stock. There are a few housing associations —not many—who seem to accumulate the loot but do not invest it.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Does my hon. Friend agree that that point is indicative of an attitude, which some Select Committee members noted, of the Housing Corporation—that its audit role is seen as being more that of accountant than of adviser? Perhaps in future the Housing Corporation should consider putting more effort—it already makes some—into the dissemination of good practice and giving guidance to housing associations on better management practice.

Mr. Field: I hear what my hon. Friend says. I recall that, in the evidence that we heard in Committee, several housing associations felt that Sir Christopher's regime in respect of financial reporting—of which there was very little or none before his arrival at the Housing Corporation —was rather onerous.

My experience as a chairman of a housing committee and as a director of a building society and of various other financial posts tells me that if we do not get the finances right or the debits and credits in order, nothing else flows. In respect of taxpayers' money, we must get the finances right and the debits and credits in order. I know of no business or organisation that got into trouble when its finances were properly managed and reported upon. I slightly disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) in that regard, but that brings me to my next point. There is no doubt that Sir Christopher did a great job reforming the reporting structure and tightening up the way in which associations operate generally.

My next point was not included in the Select Committee report—we could not include everything that we wanted to. However, I believe that the Chairman shares my view that there should be three levels of audit function on the part of the corporation, depending on the size of housing associations.

I have referred to three levels, but that number is arbitrary. Perhaps there should be four or five levels. However, if we consider the example taken by the Department of Trade and Industry for auditing companies, it is clear that there are various points with which they must

[Mr. Field]

now comply in the way that they report. The smallest companies can even dispense with the services of their auditors. Companies of the next size up can have abbreviated accounts. Full-sized companies must have the full works. There should be a small, medium and large structure for housing associations' requirements.

Some of the smaller associations made a fair point when they told the Select Committee that there was a feeling that a sledgehammer was being used to crack a nut. I hope that that point might yet commend itself to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction.

My next point has already been referred to by the Chairman of the Select Committee. During Environment questions the other day, I paraphrased Shakespeare to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction, saying that we want

"Sir George for England and for housing tenants."—[*Official Report*, 16 February 1994; Vol. 237, c. 937.]

We want a right to buy for housing association tenants.

I have been working with the North British housing association which, to recap briefly, took over the Greater London council's seaside homes when the GLC was quite rightly abolished. It was a moribund and useless organisation if ever there was one. In those days, the Liberal Democrats on the Isle of Wight concentrated entirely on politics and not on progress.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Field: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment if he will allow me to finish this point.

The very first housing committee and council committee meeting that I attended as candidate on the Isle of Wight, debated the transfer of the GLC's seaside homes. As committee chairman, I had done a deal with the GLC for the transfer of the GLC homes in Horsham. Those homes were financed for a very nominal increase in nomination rights.

The Liberals on the island went on and on about the fact that if the Government wanted them to acquire those properties, the Government should make the money available through the Housing Corporation or whatever. If the Liberals had concentrated less on the politics and more on progress, they could have had those houses for the benefit of the people of the Isle of Wight.

Those houses went to the North British housing association, which has not commended itself to its island tenants. I have had some strong correspondence with its chief executive, Eric Armitage, who has tried to bamboozle me about the nomination rights for the properties concerned and on the opportunity for those tenants to purchase their properties. I will give way now to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Mr. Tony Banks: I shall pick up on that later.

Mr. Field: I am much obliged to the hon. Gentleman. I like it when he picks up points from my speeches.

The North British housing association had refused to allow several tenants to purchase their properties. Let us be quite clear about this. We are not talking about the right to buy in terms of discount. We are talking about the fact that the Minister has legislative power to allow those tenants to purchase their properties where those properties do not have specialist functions and are not warden assisted, but are stand-alone properties. A small number of the tenants have the money to buy their properties and it is quite wrong that my hon. Friend the Minister and the North British housing association should stand in their way.

Of 41 tenancies that have been allocated over the past five years, 29 went to London borough nominations, six went to internal transfers within the seaside and country homes lettings, and the Isle of Wight received just five nominations—which is why I say that the Liberal Democrats sold the Isle of Wight so badly down the river by not taking up that opportunity—and the housing association nominations for tenants living in the Greater London area amounted to just one.

I am concerned about the way in which the North British has operated because, on its estate in Wootton, there is a small ransom strip of land which gives way to a quite valuable building plot. The association consulted its tenants about whether to sell that ransom strip which would have accommodated only two dwellings. The tenants said no, so the plot remains growing weeds in the middle of that housing estate.

I have no objection to that. However, I cannot marry up the housing association consulting its tenants on the sale of that ransom strip with the fact that it obdurately refuses to allow some of the tenants to purchase their properties, which they would dearly like to do.

I do not wish to finish on that sour note, particularly in view of the plaudits received by the Environment Select Committee's report on the Housing Corporation. I will finish on a more positive note. In Committee, we were assured that a housing ombudsman would be established as soon as possible and we felt strongly that the ombudsman should be independent of the Housing Corporation. However, the Minister told us that primary legislation is required to make the ombudsman independent, so as a pro tem measure, and to ensure that the housing ombudsman was available very quickly, it was set up under the aegis of the Housing Corporation.

One of the great difficulties in the housing association world was the liquidation of the Legion Leasehold housing association. I am told, although I have not had this confirmed, that the ombudsman has taken up those concerns and worries and the tenants of Birch close at East Cowes are pleased about that. That good news story has arisen from our report. I am absolutely delighted and, may I say—not in a trite way—very proud to have been associated with the report because I believe that it is a major contribution to the housing debate in our country.

5.17 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I should tell Conservative Members that it is a pity that there is a Pavlovian response or knee-jerk reaction whenever someone mentions the Greater London council—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] There it goes again—as if its abolition was all good. If one consults Londoners, one would find that two thirds of Londoners, according to the latest opinion polls, have said that it is a great pity that the GLC was abolished and that London needs a strategic authority.

If Conservative Members do not want to believe me, they should believe the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), who made it clear, in respect of London's Olympic and Commonwealth games bids, that there is no way in which London will ever acquire international events like that because there is no one to sign

on the dotted line on behalf of London as a whole. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) should not assume that it has all been gain so far as London is concerned. That is not how we see it.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight referred specifically to the seaside and country homes initiative of the GLC and the London county council. Only a strategic authority could have carried out such an initiative. That initiative gave elderly Londoners, particularly those in the east end, the opportunity to go to a part of the country where they could breathe the air rather than chew it first to enjoy their retirement. No one does that now. When the GLC was being abolished, we warned the Minister who is now Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction that transfer to the North British housing association was likely to prove to be a bad thing for the former GLC tenants. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight is now proving that point.

Mr. Barry Field: My point is that the Greater London council was the greatest piece of political gerrymandering that the nation has ever seen, costing millions of pounds of taxpayers' money to reinforce the Opposition vote in a number of Conservative-held borough councils such as Hastings.

Mr. Banks: If we are talking about political gerrymandering, we need look only at Westminster to see what it has been doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are debating the report of the Select Committee on the Environment on the Housing Corporation. Perhaps we could come back to that now.

Mr. Banks: Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am only responding to the points made by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight in his speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have now blown the whistle, so we should get back to the debate.

Mr. Banks: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say with the greatest respect that it is a great pity that the whistle was not blown a little earlier. However, I understand what you are saying.

I welcome the report. In Newham, we are particularly dependent on housing associations. The London borough of Newham, works very closely with the East London housing association, London and Quadrant, the Family housing association and Circle 33. As more and more pressure is put on the local authority's housing stock, we are especially indebted to the housing associations for their ability to provide for single people when there is no statutory obligation on the part of the local authority.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: The hon. Gentleman speaks with knowledge and some feeling about his constituency. In what way would his constituents be better off if the £11 million of council rent arrears in Newham were collected and redistributed to the people whom he represents and the councillors were elected to serve?

Mr. Banks: I suppose one could suggest that that question is not relevant to the report, but I shall answer it because Mr. Deputy Speaker has not ruled it out of order. The answer is that they would be much better off.

It is not as though the London borough of Newham is not taking all measures to get the rents. No one wants rent arrears. We do not encourage rent arrears in the London borough of Newham. However, the hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) should realise that, for example, 69 per cent. of all council tenants in Newham are in receipt of housing benefit, which shows the level of poverty in my area. In 1992-93, 97.2 per cent. of all rents were collected by the London borough of Newham. If the Government were 97.2 per cent. successful in terms of running the country, I suspect that they would have a much better standing in the opinion polls than they do at present.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth *rose—*

Mr. Banks: I shall give way if the hon. Gentleman wants me to, but there are other hon. Members who want to speak.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Of course, rents cannot be collected from vacant properties. Does the hon. Gentleman have any comment to make about the 400 empty properties which are currently standing idle in Newham and which could be serving local people?

Mr. Banks: Of course there are empty properties in the London borough of Newham. A much greater proportion of them are in the private sector than in the public sector. In the London borough of Newham, we do not deliberately encourage people not to pay rent, or deliberately set out to keep properties empty. I do not know what point the hon. Gentleman is trying to make, because I can assure him that in my borough we take all the steps we possibly can to, first, collect rent and, secondly, ensure that there are no void properties.

One of our problems is the inability to spend the sort of money that we want to spend on bringing unfit properties up to a state of decent habitation. There are many empty properties in the London borough of Newham with which I am sure the hon. Gentleman would not soil his hands. He certainly would not want to go and live in them and therefore we should not expect other people to do so. The hon. Gentleman touches me on a raw nerve.

I return to the point that I was trying to make with regard to the report. Paragraph 157 states:

"We recommend that assessments of housing need—whether expressed as a range or as a precise figure—should be published by the DoE, using widely accepted methodology, on a regular basis."

The Government's response, which I thought was very disappointing, was that there is no single accurate figure estimating the potential demand for social housing.

One of the things that the Government should do is take far more pains to discover the extent of homelessness in my borough and, indeed, in London as a whole. We do not know the accurate figure with regard to homelessness in London. We do not know how many people are sleeping rough on the streets. The Greater London council used to collect the figures. However, now that it has gone, the Department of the Environment is not particularly interested in doing so. The Department always works on the assumption that if the statistics are not collected, ergo the problem has gone away. Of course, we must now rely on organisations such as the Salvation Army to know how bad the problem is.

As the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir. F. Montgomery) said, it is distressing to walk round London and see so many more people living rough on the streets. That is the important point. It is not anecdotal evidence —it is the evidence of one's own senses. Tory Members know that to be a fact. I know that some of them are very young and wet behind the ears, and know very little about

[Mr. Banks]

what goes on in London, but surely even they must have appreciated, when they were brought up to London in their earlier years, how many more homeless people are on the streets of London now. Whatever the figure, it is greater than it was in 1979, and that is the indication that I go by. It seems that the Government—

Mr. Thomason *rose—*

Mr. Banks: I think that it would be best if I did not give way. I am more than happy to give way to Tory Members, but I appreciate that other hon. Members want to speak and I do not want to fall foul of the Deputy Speaker. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) thinks that I am afraid of him, I shall give way.

Mr. Thomason: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I am especially grateful when he refers to some of us as being young. I hope that that included me, as I think that I am roughly the same age as the hon. Gentleman.

Earlier, the hon. Gentleman referred to the problems of vacancies in the private sector in his constituency and housing pressures. Can he tell us what action his party would propose which would bring into greater use some of the private sector accommodation to remove the very straits about which he is complaining?

Mr. Banks: As the House knows, I do not speak as a party spokesperson, so my comments are without authorisation. There is much that we could do. We could go into compulsory purchase in the private sector, especially with properties that have been vacant for a considerable period. It is offensive for homeless people or those living in particularly straitened circumstances to see houses that have been empty for such a long time, whether they are publicly or privately owned. That is one thing that could be done, and I would be very much in favour of doing it. Of course, I am sure that my hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor would say that it could be done only when resources allow.

I return to the report. It is a great pity that the Government are not prepared to look more closely at housing problems in London and collate figures and statistics in such a way as to make them understand the difficulties that people face. The right hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir. G. Young) is often given the reputation as a decent, humane and warm-hearted Minister. That is a fairly rare accolade for anyone on the Government Front Bench these days. However, he should pay perhaps a little more attention to what is going on in Tower Hamlets at the moment, which is under the control of the Liberal Democrats. *[Interruption.]* I hope that the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) will pay a little attention to what I am saying.

My late and much-lamented dear colleague, Ron Leighton, who died recently, wrote a letter to the Secretary of State about Tower Hamlets adopting the policy of placing its homeless families in private rented accommodation outside the borough. The council was doing that to fulfil its statutory duties under the homelessness legislation. Ron Leighton made four points to the Secretary of State, including the fact that the London borough of Tower Hamlets

"are predominantly using this for Bengali families."

He said that Tower Hamlets

"are 'exporting' their homeless families and expecting the receiving authority to pick them up in future years, as well as provide education and social services support.

Families placed in this way were being charged up to £250 for a 3 bed house in Newham, an obviously inflated and unrealistic rent."

Of course, because such rents are above housing benefit levels, they lead to rent arrears and the problem then of people being evicted and made homeless, but homeless in the London borough of Newham. I quote:

"Families are being given no choice in this exercise."

The Minister received a letter from the Bengali National Association in Newham which made precisely the same point. Mr. Osman Gali, the president of the association, said that up to

"3-4 hundred families have been forced out of Tower Hamlets. The Council have adopted a policy of misleading the families by offering short-hold tenancies, and evidently the families were given false hopes of permanent rehousing by the Council. Most homeless families who were already living temporarily in Newham, Waltham Forest, Hackney, Dagenham and other areas have been subjected to intense pressure by the Council officers."

The letter goes on to refer to instances of harassment from Liberals in Tower Hamlets. One does not need to look at the racism of the British National party in Tower Hamlets —the Liberals can provide all the racism one would need in that part of east London.

Mr. Gali also referred to "ethnic cleansing". That is an emotive phrase, but I get his point.

I now turn to paragraph 157 and how it relates to paying attention and collating statistics, which is why I am disappointed with what the Government have said in response to the Select Committee report. Baroness Denton of Wakefield, the Minister responsible in the House of Lords, replied to my late colleague Ron Leighton in terms of the letter that he had written to the Secretary of State. She said:

"Authorities should look carefully at the terms on which the accommodation is being offered, and in particular at the landlord's intentions once the minimum period for a tenancy has passed. They should assure themselves that accommodation will continue to be available for a reasonable period, and should consider every case on its merits in light of the circumstances of the household they are placing. Where a household is placed in such accommodation in the area of another authority, this should be done in liaison with that authority . . . I would be concerned if one authority was consciously adopting a policy of transferring homeless households into another authority's area in the expectation that this would off-load any future responsibility."

That is precisely what Tower Hamlets is attempting to achieve, particularly with the Bengali families. The council is exporting them into other parts of the east end and transferring what they see as a problem to other areas.

The noble Lady went on to say:

"we are watching developments with interest. We will consider whether there are any problems for us to address when we reform the homelessness legislation."

I hope that the Minister will say something about paragraph 157 and how he is responding in terms of monitoring the situation.

The leader of Newham borough council, Councillor Timms, has written on number of occasions to Councillor Peter Hughes, the Liberal Democrat leader of Tower Hamlets council, and he has not even had the courtesy of a reply. That is how rude the Liberals in Tower Hamlets are, so on top of racism they add on a large dollop of rudeness. That is typical of Liberals, who like to come here and pose as decent people when the reality on the ground is completely different. The word hypocrisy comes immediately to my mind when I think of Liberal Democrats here and in Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: As a resident of Tower Hamlets, I entirely share the hon. Gentleman's views about the racism of the Liberals in Tower Hamlets and the appalling management of the council. However, exporting the problem of homeless families beyond a council's boundaries is not limited to Tower Hamlets. In my constituency, through both housing associations and local authority housing, that is precisely what the old GLC did, and what agents of some Labour authorities in London are still doing.

Mr. Banks: We are going back to the GLC, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Under the mobility scheme, the GLC was able to give people a wider range of opportunities or a choice in terms of the location. It was, after all, the GLC and the London county council which provided substantial estates outside the Greater London area and on the periphery of that area. No one ever said that the GLC was exporting its problems, unless one thinks that giving a senior citizen the opportunity to move into a seaside or countryside home was exporting problems. If someone desperately wants that, why should they not have the opportunity when they retire? That can hardly be described as exporting problems. It was giving them the sort of opportunity which unfortunately they do not now enjoy and certainly will not enjoy until we have a strategic authority restored once again to the citizens of London.

In conclusion, I hope that the Minister will respond to the following points. I think that it is now necessary to have a ministerial inquiry into what is going on in Tower Hamlets. We have tried hard to work with the Liberal authority and we know they have housing problems. We all have housing problems in the east end, but we do not expect councils to take the dogmatic, disgraceful and racist attitude which Tower Hamlets has been taking in terms of its housing and the question of homelessness. I hope that the Minister will be able to announce that he intends to look critically and urgently at the terrible racist housing policies in Tower Hamlets.

5.35 pm

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): I am grateful to have an opportunity to speak in the debate and particularly to follow the wide-ranging remarks of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). I shall start by declaring an interest, in that I am a newly appointed chairman of a company called Home Rent 16 to 23 plc, which is a private rented sector company.

I congratulate the Select Committee on the report and on the thoroughness with which it has gone about tackling a detailed and complicated subject. I particularly welcome the fact that the Committee decided to look into it in the first place. The basic fact is that this year some £1.5 billion of public money is going to the Housing Corporation, which will enable some 58,000 new houses to be built for letting. The Government's reduction of the housing association grant rate, and thereby the bringing in of money from the private sector, has enabled the building of a significant number of new houses that would not have been built had we relied purely on public sector funding. During the past five years, the increase is estimated at some 55,000 additional units of housing.

We must look at the balance between the number of houses that we want to achieve and the rent that is to be charged for those houses. The Government are absolutely right to say that we should be shifting the way in which funding is contributed from subsidising bricks and mortar to subsiding the individuals who live in the houses. In other words, just because someone has a local authority or housing association house, it should not be built and provided for him at a below-average rent if he can afford to pay the realistic market rent. Those who cannot afford to pay that rate should be helped through the housing benefit system.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) has left the Chamber, because he refused to take interventions during his speech. He was fundamentally wrong to look at the number of new houses that are built when we should be looking at the number of new lettings every year. We are concerned about the number of people who are able to move into social housing who would not otherwise be given that opportunity. The combined number of housing association and local authority lettings last year is the highest ever and is significantly higher than the number that applied in 1979 when the Government came to power.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): If the Government's policies for access to local authority and housing association housing go through, and as a result of that landlords use shorthold assured tenancies or six month lets, if the same family is in a place for two years, will not that count in the Government's statistics as four lettings, although no other family has been housed?

Mr. Hendry: I am more than happy to divert from the debate on the Select Committee report into the consultation document to which the hon. Gentleman refers, if you will allow us to do so, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If the private sector is to be used—most of my hon. Friends agree on that as an absolute principle—inevitably we shall see greater use of short-term assured tenancies. The hon. Gentleman does not understand that a short-term assured tenancy can provide in many cases a better quality of accommodation than local authority housing and can also provide security. Many of us live in short-term assured tenancies and, according to the statistics that the hon. Gentleman has bandied about, we are considered to be homeless.

We must move from the negative attitude that the Opposition have continually taken towards the private rented sector and accept that it has a much more important role to play. One of the benefits that will result if the proposals in the consultation document are enacted is that there will be a better use of the private rented sector. In terms of the Housing Corporation and the money that is allocated to that, we must be certain that every penny of public sector money is being used to the best effect. The only way to do that is to squeeze the resources from time to time.

To make sure that they are lean and efficient and use their resources sensibly and effectively, private companies, from time to time, clamp down the hatches and tighten their belts. That applies equally to the Housing Corporation. If we are to continue to be sure that every year we can put more money into the Housing Corporation, we must first be satisfied that every pound and every penny that go into it and into housing associations are used to best effect. If hon. Members on both sides of the House ask themselves honestly, they cannot say with their hand on their heart that that is the case.

[Mr. Hendry]

We have concerns about the administration and running costs of the Housing Corporation. The squeeze that it is going through will make it look carefully at how its money is used. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) said, we can reduce the current grant rate in view of two factors that he outlined clearly. First, interest rates are lower than we have seen for a considerable time so the money that the housing associations are expected to borrow can be borrowed much more cheaply.

Secondly, the difficulties that the building industry has faced in recent years have made it possible to build houses much more cheaply than for many years. That means that we can expect the housing associations to continue to provide a significant number of houses for letting. Indeed, there is no doubt that the 153,000 houses in the next three years to which we committed ourselves in our election manifesto will be comfortably exceeded, conceivably by as much as 25,000.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. Does he agree that the fact that the Housing Corporation exceeded its targets last year has a great deal to do with the points that he has just made? Does he also agree that that will continue to play an important role in the funding and development of that part of the market in the years to come?

Mr. Hendry: My hon. Friend is undoubtedly correct. The other element, to which tribute has already been paid, is last year's housing market package. It did much to bring back into use some of the empty properties available in the private sector. I am glad to see that the package has the backing of the Liberal Democrats.

I understand the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) about housing benefit. We need to be careful that we do not create ghettos that are the only places in which people on housing benefit can afford to live. If we are to have a balance and if the amount of money that goes into bricks and mortar is to be squeezed, we have to accept that there is a limit on how much we can squeeze housing benefit. That point emphasises that there must be a right to buy for housing association properties.

It is proper that the increasing number of people who live in housing association properties should have the same right to buy that they would have in local authority housing, if they wish to exercise it. Of course some sectors such as warden-controlled properties or properties specifically for the elderly need to be excluded. However, increasingly housing association developments are suitable for a much wider range of population. It is proper that they should also be bought under the right-to-buy scheme.

I am also pleased to see that more attention is being paid to rehabilitation programmes. I have banged on endlessly in the House about the need to bring back into use the 850,000 empty properties in Britain. I am astonished by the recommendation from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for bringing back into use properties in the private sector.

There are 750,000 empty houses in the private sector. We all accept that that is too many. However, the new policy initiative suggested by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West would involve taking the properties back into public ownership under compulsory purchase. Assuming that the properties were bought at £20,000 apiece, which is a modest assessment, the hon. Gentleman has just developed a new Labour party policy that would cost £15 billion. No wonder he did not have the backing of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). It is a barmy, barking mad idea and one which is fundamentally hostile to all the principles of freedom to which Conservative Members adhere.

Why do Labour Members come up with every excuse in the book when considering why properties owned by Labour local authorities are empty, yet wish to introduce the most draconian powers that they can think of to tackle the empty properties in the private sector? If one is an incompetent local authority, one has the backing of the Labour party, but if one is an individual exercising one's freedom, one does not. The message is, "Do not let your granny die without selling her house first." The little politburo people from the Labour party will come round and say, "The house is empty. The old lady is dying. We had better buy it under compulsory purchase."

We can bet one more thing for certain. Under the new policy suggested by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, people would not get a market purchase price. They would get the least favourable price at which it was possible to buy the property. Then we would be looking forward to another Conservative Government at the earliest possible time to allow those properties to be bought back by the people to whom they rightfully belong.

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that in the acquisition of council property the district valuer decides the price level, which could affect either the owner-occupier or the tenant? Does he not understand that?

Mr. Hendry: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber when the hon. Member for Newham, North-West outlined his new policy involving compulsory purchase of empty properties in the private sector, although he did not elaborate on how his policy would work. Valuation may be done by the district valuer or it may simply be based on whatever price the hon. Gentleman cares to work out on the back of an envelope. Unless the hon. Member for Newham, North-West is willing to elaborate on his policy—sadly he is not in the Chamber now—we cannot know how it would work.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: In view of the confusion on the Opposition Benches about the compulsory purchase option canvassed by Opposition Members, does my hon. Friend agree that it is incumbent on the Labour Front-Bench spokesman to make clear how the policy would operate in practice or to say that the policy is not a policy of the official Opposition?

Mr. Hendry: I am sure that it is not merely incumbent on the Front-Bench spokesman. I am sure that the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) will wish to outline his approach and that of the Front-Bench team to that policy development. I hope that he has the backing of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East and will be able to say from where the £15 billion to which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West has just committed the Labour party will come.

Mr. Rendel: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the large number of empty houses in the private sector. He accepted

that it was too large and that he would like to do something about it. Does he also accept that some of the houses remain empty because the owners want to sell them but cannot find a buyer and that, therefore, one of the quickest ways of bringing those houses back into occupation is for the Government to continue to give money to the housing associations to purchase second-hand homes and put them back into the cheap rented sector?

Mr. Hendry: Clearly, we have a competition on the Opposition Benches for who can spend the most public money in the shortest possible time. Several initiatives designed to bring back into use empty houses in the private sector have already been introduced. To name just one, under the housing associations as managing agents—HAMA—initiative, housing associations can take over the letting and management of houses. So if people are worried about letting their property themselves, they can let it in a much more constructive and safe way than might otherwise have been the case.

A huge amount of money—the best part of £1 billion—went into the housing market package. Although I broadly welcome the package, one element that worried me was that too often housing associations went to a local builder and bought up all the houses on a newly built estate. The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) spoke of a desire to see those houses bought around the community. I welcome that, but it has not always happened. Too often, an entire estate is bought up, with the result that anxieties about the same sort of people living in estates can materialise.

I urge the hon. Member for Newbury to go back to Liberal authorities—particularly Tower Hamlets, which is one of the worst offenders in terms of sitting on empty local authority housing—with the same imagination and suggest that they do more to bring their empty properties back into use. Perhaps he could suggest some measures as draconian as those proposed by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. For example, if people see local authority housing left empty too long, perhaps they should be allowed to buy it back from the local authority.

Mr. Rendel: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that although Tower Hamlets council is desperately trying to bring back into use empty properties owned by the council, as a result of the Government's housing policies, the lack of finance coming through and the capping of local authority finances, it is impossible for the council to do so faster than it is now?

Mr. Hendry: The hon. Gentleman is overlooking some basic facts. If Tower Hamlets were slightly better at collecting rents and the council tax it would not have that problem. If the council had not achieved an indebtedness to which some third-world countries can only aspire, it would be paying far less in interest rates and could spend that money on services for the community instead.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My hon. Friend is being too generous to Tower Hamlets borough council. He has not mentioned its shambolic organisation of local services. Bureaucracy between the centre and the community, via all those neighbourhood councils, is slowing down lettings and administration and causing much of the problem.

Mr. Hendry: I understand my hon. Friend's argument. We know the sort of election tactics that the Liberal Democrats have had to resort to in Tower Hamlets to ensure that they continue to get their constituents' vote in spite of the way in which they are running the local authority.

In recent years, housing in my constituency has improved significantly. The housing condition survey shows that people in the country as a whole are living in better housing than ever before. I was delighted that my right hon. Friend the Minister was able to visit my constituency last week to see the improvements being made on the Fairfield estate, where, under the estate action programme, money has been used radically to improve living conditions in nearly 200 houses. The estate was built in one of the coldest parts of my constituency, which is one of the coldest parts of the country. Even a duffle coat was scarcely enough to protect the Minister from the elements. Houses on the estate have been radically improved with better insulation and new windows and that has been possible only because of the money made available to the local authority under the estate action programme.

I was especially pleased that my right hon. Friend the Minister used his visit to encourage people to take part in the rent-to-mortgage scheme, whereby they can change their rents into mortgages without paying a penny more. Their aspirations for home ownership can thus be met and it is an imaginative policy, for which my right hon. Friend should take much credit. People who aspire to ownership but are worried about the commitment involved in taking on a mortgage can gradually take over ownership of their property. I hope that my constituents will take that policy to heart.

I welcome the tenants incentive scheme to encourage people who live in local authority housing and housing association properties to take a cash sum to buy a property elsewhere. As the hon. Member for Newbury will appreciate, that is a boost to the private sector, as it will enable some private houses to be bought and will immediately make available additional houses in the social rented sector.

If we are to debate the subject sensibly—today's debate has been sensible—the distortions must be removed. It saddens me greatly that no organisation has done more to damage sensible discussion than the charity Shelter. I have been in regular contact with Shelter for some years, especially as chairman of the all-party group on homelessness and have built up a great respect for its work. However, the publicity material that Shelter is publishing now is in breach of its charitable status. There are clear guidelines on what it is acceptable for a charity to do and it is regrettable that Shelter has passed beyond that barrier. As that organisation receives £1 million a year in public funds, it has a direct duty—

Mr. Raynsford: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hendry: No. Shelter has a duty to ensure that it does not distort deliberately the facts and continually exaggerate. I have therefore written to the Charity Commissioners to ask—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not aware that Shelter is a housing association.

Mr. Hendry: Indeed it is not, but affordable housing is one of the issues that Shelter has been discussing most and it is also a core issue in the debate. If we want a sensible debate on affordable housing we must do without the distortions that Shelter has put about in its packs for

[Mr. Hendry]

schools and letters to subscribers. It is important that we draw those distortions to the attention of the relevant authorities. In view of your comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall not pursue the matter, but it is crucial that Shelter should be aware that its campaign has been rumbled and will not be further tolerated.

We must be aware of the amount of money that has been put into the Housing Corporation and housing associations. That money has enabled many more of our people than ever before to live in better conditions. It is a record of which the Government can be proud and I hope that it will encourage hon. Members to endorse the Select Committee's report.

5.54 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am disappointed by the contribution of the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) and especially by his attack on Shelter. It is pretty despicable to attack an organisation for exercising its right to free speech, which I thought was a fundamental principle in this country. His attack is appalling and I am certain that the hon. Gentleman's predecessors, who represented High Peak with such distinction, would not have sunk to such an activity. It was unfortunate that the hon. Gentleman introduced such a note into the debate, as it had been useful and constructive.

I hope that the Minister will take rather more notice of the contributions made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery). I would not normally agree with the views of the hon. Gentleman, but his contribution was a clear warning to the Government that major problems will result if they insist on pushing housing association grant down.

I must pay tribute to the Select Committee's advisers, who served us extremely well, and to its officials. I join the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) in also paying tribute to the Chairman of the Committee, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), who demonstrated that a Select Committee can deal with a politically controversial issue effectively without getting into the yah-boo of party politics. The Committee's report is a valuable contribution to the housing debate and the Chairman should take credit for that. Although I do not like praising Conservative Members, on this occasion I do so warmly.

In my constituency, the housing shortage is a fundamental problem. When I was first elected as the Member for the old constituency of Stockport, North, about 4,000 people were on the housing waiting list in the metropolitan borough of Stockport, but more than 8,000 people are on the waiting list now and the authority has fewer properties at its command because some have been sold. There are fewer homes to rent. Homeless people on the waiting list in Stockport spend far more time in hostels and bed-and-breakfast accommodation than they did for almost the whole time that I represented the constituency.

In Tameside, the situation is not as bad, because it has a larger stock of council dwellings and there is more private rented accommodation. During the years that I have represented that area, however, the position has got steadily worse.

One of the key facts in the report is that we are producing between 70,000 and 80,000 fewer dwellings than are necessary to meet the need. It does not matter how much the Government want to change their approach to homelessness; unless they deal with our failure to build sufficient houses, they will merely be changing the statistics and not the underlying reality. If, by the turn of the century, we are about 500,000 houses short, however much we change the definition of homelessness the position will get worse. It is essential that we build those houses.

The hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale explained to the Government how crazy it is to add so many building workers to the numbers of unemployed, rather than giving them the opportunity to produce the houses that we so desperately need. I do not mind how the Government do it and whether they use housing associations or council building programmes, but I plead with them to deal with the shortage of dwellings, because until they do so, they will not solve the problem of homelessness.

I should prefer the Government to go for an approach that involves both housing associations and local authorities in doing some of the building. In both Tameside and Stockport, the local authority and the housing association have developed some very good partnership schemes whereby the local authority provides the land and the housing association does the building. That is clearly appropriate for some of the bigger sites.

In respect of three areas of my constituency, however, I do not believe that that is the right approach. The first area is Haughton Green, which has a substantial Manchester overspill estate. It is an extremely well-run estate, built in the 1960s and consisting of high-quality dwellings that are extremely well looked after. A couple of the tower blocks have problems, but the rest of the houses are much appreciated by the tenants. That estate was built on a plan that involved a great deal of open space. Some of that open space is useful for young people to play on, but some of it is not really usable. It would be possible for Manchester to build a small number of dwellings to infill some of those spaces. Whereas it would be complicated to set things up so that housing associations could put two houses here and two small bungalows there, it would be very easy for Manchester to do that infilling. I only wish that the Government would allow it to get on and do it.

The same applies to the Yew Tree estate in Tameside. Admittedly, that estate was built over old pit workings and some of the open spaces on the estate are probably necessary because of what is underneath them. But much of the open space on that 1970s estate is not necessary, and a substantial number of infill dwellings could be accommodated. Again, that would be a complicated process for a housing association to undertake. It would be far more logical to let the local authority build.

The third area of my constituency is in the Stockport part of my constituency at Brinnington, where several blocks of flats have been pulled down. Again, it would be far more logical to allow the council to build replacement dwellings of the type that people want than to insist on the task going to housing associations.

When the Committee started its inquiry, one of the big issues was whether the Housing Corporation would insist on a super-league consisting of a small number of housing associations, not showing much enthusiasm for small housing associations. It appeared during the inquiry that the idea of a super-league had disappeared. In a sense,

however, the Government are bringing the idea back by the way in which they are changing the grant levels. As they bring the grant level down, they make life difficult for all housing associations. But at least the big housing associations—those with a lot of existing stock—can share out the problem by increasing the rents of some of their older properties to cross-subsidise newer developments. But many of the small housing associations—especially those that I thought that the Government wanted to encourage, to deal with the problems of ethnic minority groups and people with learning difficulties, for example —will be disadvantaged.

Small associations designed to specialise in providing accommodation for those particular groups do not have the big stock necessary for cross-subsidisation. For those specialist housing associations, the reduction in the grant level is particularly harsh. The Government are returning to the idea of the super-league by insisting that grant levels come down. Moreover, as grant levels come down, so the poverty trap gets worse.

The Government have been chided about family values. On one or two of the housing association properties in my constituency, the Government, by the way in which they are setting the rules, are doing everything to destroy the family and to make it difficult for people to create new families. When the housing association offers dwellings to the local authority as agreed lettings, the local authority tends to offer those dwellings to people who are on benefits, because it does not believe that in my constituency people who are in work can afford the rents. The dwellings therefore go to people on benefits—more often than not, to women on their own with one or two small children, probably following a failed marriage or liaison.

The woman may quickly become involved with someone else, but there is absolutely no chance that that man will move into the house because the rent that he would then have to pay is so high as to make such a move prohibitive. The man may visit on a pretty regular basis and in some cases may take a considerable amount of responsibility for the children, but it is not a state of affairs which anyone should be encouraging and it has been created solely as a result of the existing benefits system.

If the Government are concerned to encourage people to establish new households, they must examine that problem. They must recognise that major difficulties exist in relation to the present level of dependency on benefits of people in those circumstances.

I want to refer briefly to the role of the ombudsman. I do not believe that the ombudsman can have any credibility as long as he functions within the Housing Corporation set-up. I think that it is a mistake to go on setting up ombudsmen for insurance, for banking and so on. It would be far better to increase the powers of the national ombudsman to cover all those areas.

Certainly as regards the Housing Corporation, it would be far better for the powers of the national ombudsman to take in the Housing Corporation and the housing associations rather than keeping them separate. I have received a considerable number of complaints about housing association property provided for the elderly and about the promises that were made about housing associations managing such property, especially in shared ownership schemes, to take away the worry. In many cases, the charges for providing the services have caused a great deal of concern.

I do not want to trade questions about empty properties across the Floor of the House today. I do, however, want to make a plea to the Government about empty properties. On three or four of the council estates that I know well, individual properties have been empty for six months and, in one case, for over 12 months. Those properties were bought by tenants under the right-to-buy provisions. Relatively soon afterwards, the buyers got into mortgage difficulties and the properties were repossessed by the building society. They have remained empty ever since. They are proving virtually impossible to sell.

The building societies are extremely reluctant to go on knocking the price down to dispose of them; they are hanging on in the hope that, at some stage, they will get the asking price. Some of those houses are pretty dilapidated. One of them was more or less vandalised by the owner before he moved out. They are detracting from the appearance of the estate and are making the council the subject of criticism, as many people think that they belong to the council and that it is leaving them empty, not realising that the estate agent's board, long ago knocked down, is lying in the garden.

It would be a simple matter for the Government to give local authorities permission to buy back properties on council estates and put them back into use. That would not involve a great change of policy and it would make a lot of sense. I should like the Government to allow local authorities much more freedom over their capital receipts. If they cannot give them that general freedom, however, I plead with the Minister to let the council buy properties back—especially the very small number of houses that were bought from the council and which cannot now be sold—and put them quickly back into use.

The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) mentioned the question of living over the shop. I advise him not to get too enthusiastic about it because some of the worst property to let in my constituency is over shops. It is often pretty appalling accommodation. If one is to live over the shop, the accommodation must be properly renovated to a high standard.

6.9 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on his chairmanship of the Committee and on his report, which gives us the opportunity for the debate.

I should like to consider a number of paragraphs in the Government's response to that report, starting with paragraphs 31 to 34, on the role of the private rented sector. The report states:

> "The Government is keen to see a revival of the private rented sector . . . the Government will consider the case for further assistance to increase the supply of private rented accommodation".

When my hon. Friend the Minister replies, I hope that he will give some idea of the Government's further thinking on exactly what is being proposed. He will be aware of the proposals in my pamphlet. He might consider that the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, which is currently in Committee, represents a convenient opportunity to table new clauses to allow tenants to select a new landlord without that landlord necessarily having to be approved by the Housing Corporation. That approval denies choice to tenants who wish to opt for a new landlord. Why can they

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

not choose their own landlords? Why should they have to seek the approval of the Housing Corporation or anyone else? That restriction should be removed.

If new lettings of council houses were offered on the basis of the Housing Act 1988, under assured tenancies, councils' ability to sell rented accommodation, if they so wished, would not be restricted.

The Labour party's current document on housing states that the private rented sector

"badly needs a boost."

Exactly what the Opposition mean by that and what they intend to suggest has not been made clear. Although the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said that he did not mind how the shortage of housing was addressed, he did not suggest any positive ideas on how the private rented sector could contribute.

The size of the British private rented sector is well below that of other countries; it is half the average size in the OECD countries and under one quarter of that in west Germany. In Switzerland, the private rented sector accounts for 56 per cent. of all housing. The average useful floor space per head in Britain is 32 sq m in comparison with 36 sq m in the other 11 member states of the European Community. It is possible that the greater contribution made by the private rented sector in other countries in comparison with that in Britain has made it possible for those countries to provide more floor space per head.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thurnham: We are short of time, so I will not give way.

Paragraphs 39 and 40 of the Government's response to the Committee's report refer to housing benefit. I notice that a working group has been established by the Departments of the Environment and of Social Security to discuss that matter regularly. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister could tell me whether that working group is producing a report and whether, under the provisions of open government, mentioned elsewhere in the Government's report, its work might be made more available. It would be interesting to see exactly what is proposed for housing benefit. Would it be possible to consider it in a different way so that the growth of that benefit can be controlled?

Paragraphs 66 and 69 of the Government's response refer to special needs. I understand that some friendly societies would be interested in investing in housing for people with disabilities. It would be worth exploring that possibility further because of the current restrictions in financing such projects.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has departed, but he made a strong attack on Tower Hamlets, which probably stems from the fact that it was subject to 30 years of uninterrupted, complacent Labour rule, before electoral change. If Tower Hamlets was under a Conservative administration, some of the recent developments would be worth considering. It is interesting to note that the local authority has been broken down into seven neighbourhood units. Considerable savings have been made by the business services unit, which I visited last week. I was extremely impressed by the savings that have been made by breaking down centralised services and running them on a decentralised basis. Lessons could be learnt and it was suggested that the Government should set up an inquiry to consider what has happened in Tower Hamlets. I dare say that there would be much to consider on the political side, but we could learn positive lessons from the way in which the authority is run now that services have been decentralised.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: As a resident and council tax payer in Tower Hamlets, I do not share my hon. Friend's perception of Tower Hamlets as an efficient devolved administration.

Mr. Thurnham: As he is a resident of Tower Hamlets, I bow to my hon. Friend's greater knowledge, but I believe that lessons could be learnt about the way in which the business services unit is run. I would enjoy discussing with my hon. Friend some of the points that were made to me during my visit. I am grateful for that intervention, and I feel that I should now give the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) the opportunity to intervene.

Dr. Lynne Jones: The moment has passed by, but I wanted to intervene when the hon. Member made a comparison between our rented sector, including the private sector, and that of other countries, which is so much stronger. Perhaps that is due to the fact that in those countries renting is given parity of esteem with owner-occupation. Conservative Members give the game away when they talk about aspiring to owner-occupation as if that was somehow superior to renting. Until that argument is dropped, we will not be free of the ghettoisation of rented and social housing. Conservative Members should address that important issue.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Lady is looking at the matter from the wrong angle, because the issue is whether property is privately or publicly owned. The advantage enjoyed by the countries that I mentioned is that they have a large privately owned sector—whether it is privately rented or owner-occupied is subsidiary to the advantage gained by the size of that sector. What distinguishes our country is that we have a high level of socially rented accommodation. I accept that the national figure for such accommodation has come down to 21 per cent., but in my constituency in Bolton the number of council houses has only fallen from 26,000 in 1983 to 23,000 today.

Council houses represent part of the enormous assets of councils. I asked Bolton council officials for the total value of its assets. Although they did not have an up-to-date valuation, they estimated that, on the basis of insurance values, its total assets were worth £600 million. I estimate that housing may account for half of that figure. Substantial assets are held in public ownership and the issue should be how to get those assets transferred into private ownership.

The Mail on Sunday listed the debts of local authorities and compared them with those of third world countries. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish might be interested to learn that Manchester's debt, which currently stands at £1.3 billion, is second only to that of El Salvador. I advocate that more council houses should be sold to reduce that debt. The total amount of all local authority debt is £37.5 billion.

Mr. Raynsford: That has nothing to do with the debate.

Mr. Thurnham: It has everything to do with it, because the private sector represents the way in which to solve our housing problems.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thurnham: No. I have given way to the hon. Lady once.

The private sector has played a great role in Switzerland, for example, which has a socially rented accommodation sector of just 14 per cent., according to the latest figures that I have seen. Why do we have a social rented sector twice that level? I am satisfied that resources could be made available far more efficiently through the private rented sector than through the public sector.

6.18 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I welcome the opportunity to debate the report on the Housing Corporation by the Select Committee on the Environment. Some hon. Members on that Committee may recall that in December 1991 I asked whether the previous Chairman, Sir Hugh Rossi, would lead the Committee's debate on housing associations, with particular reference to their affordability and the impact of housing benefit. Therefore, I am especially pleased that a substantial piece of work on the Housing Corporation has been undertaken by the Committee under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), and I hope that it will not be another decade before the Environment Select Committee finds time to consider housing issues again.

Since the publication of the Committee's report, time has moved on for all of us. I add a word of welcome to the newly appointed chairman of the Housing Corporation, Sir Brian Pearse. Although we welcome the Committee's report and its unanimous consensus in its recommendations and compliment the Committee on its work, I must register disappointment at the thinness of the Government's official response. That response, published in October last year, seems to have deliberately played down, if not side-stepped, the thrust and urgency of the Select Committee report's recommendations—the need to tackle the problem of affordability of housing association properties, squeezed between reducing grant rates on the one hand and inevitably high and increasing rents on the other, caught between housing association grant cuts and now the threatened housing benefit cuts.

Although Ministers have tried to reassure us and suggested that people on no or low incomes have no reason to worry because, in the words of the Housing Minister, "housing benefit will take the strain", in recent weeks the threatening noises off from the Secretary of State for Social Security suggest that housing benefit may now prove to be the strands of a fraying rope. Housing benefit represents £8.7 billion of public expenditure and the Secretary of State for Social Security has made it clear, in articles that appeared in the newspapers on 3 March this year, that it is now to be targeted by his Department.

It is also appropriate that the debate takes place in the context of the estimates, because that supportive arithmetic is crucial to the survival of housing associations as well as to the ability of tenants to pay their rent. In other words, the funding arrangements are at the core of the discussion. I hope that the Minister will not give us that new evasive expression, "I hear what you say" but mutter under his breath, "but I shall not do anything about it".

Recently, the Housing Corporation published the report "The Next 3 Years: The Housing Corporation's Plans and Priorities 1994-1997", partly in response to the Select Committee's recommendations. That welcome document takes on board the need for regional development, with the newly established regional consultative meetings, the improvement of the tenants' guarantee and tenants' rights, continued support for tenant participation and the setting up of the housing associations ombudsman service—all positive responses, and all warmly welcomed by Opposition Members. The report also, encouragingly, says that this year's focus will be on care in the community provision. That is welcome, too.

However, I suspect, thinking of the ombudsman's service, that already many housing associations' tenants are writing to the ombudsman—as they are doing to Members of Parliament—complaining about their rent increases. Rapidly increasing rents are the main bone of contention, increasing at well above the inflation rate and pricing out those people who are not on middle incomes or who depend entirely on housing benefit. As the Select Committee report succinctly put it in paragraph 5,

"In considering housing association grant rates the Government will have to bear in mind the likely consequences of its decisions in terms of affordability, availability of private finance and benefit dependency".

The Minister will have to take seriously the words and reported comments of the Secretary of State for Social Security because he has been reported as saying that he wants measures to

"discourage local authorities from paying housing benefit for unnecessarily expensive property".

That is precisely the problem which confronts many housing associations, because their properties are proving expensive. Notably, in his chairman's foreword to "The Next 3 Years", Sir Christopher Benson remarked:

"There are occasions when given the nature of our relationship with the Department of Environment it is inappropriate for us to enter into open debate. These occasions are in the main in the period prior to annual decisions being announced on public expenditure."

Although it is easy to understand the difficulty that the Housing Corporation faces in publicly challenging the Government on setting housing association grant rates, it is not so easy to understand why the Housing Minister, in paragraph 2 of the Government's response, simply says:

"Many of the recommendations are primarily addressed to the Housing Corporation. The Government's response takes account of the Corporation's views."

If the corporation cannot take a public view on the arithmetic, I suggest that it is unacceptable for the Minister to push the Select Committee report back in the Housing Corporation's direction, thus fobbing off the key recommendations that the Select Committee spelt out—again I quote from the report:

"Unless the poverty trap consequences of the Housing Benefit tapers are addressed, or procurement costs fall, proposals to make further reductions in HAG rates should be dropped."

That is a strong statement. Although Sir Christopher Benson feels that he cannot comment publicly, the Minister cannot dismiss the recommendations as being primarily addressed to the Housing Corporation. The core recommendations of that consensus report are primarily addressed to the Government and to the Housing Minister and perhaps to that most powerful background voice of all in this connection—that of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

In spite of the Select Committee's unanimous and strong call for further HAG rate reductions to be dropped,

[Mr. John Battle]

on 4 August last year the Housing Minister went ahead and announced a HAG level for 1994-95 fixed at a national rate ceiling of 62 per cent. Either he did not hear or did not want to respond to the thrust of the Select Committee report, or he ignored it because he was overruled by the Treasury. He cannot simply pass on Treasury cuts and hope that the housing associations survive.

The Government plan to reduce HAG to 55 per cent. by 1995-96. That will again massively increase rents and in turn increase the housing benefit bill.

Last week, the Department of Social Security's annual report was published. It showed that rent allowances for private and housing association tenants are increasing by an average of 6.5 per cent. in real terms compared with 14.3 per cent. during the past four years. Yet figures from the National Federation of Housing Associations show rents increasing between 17 and 20 per cent. in 1993-94. As a result of rent increases of that nature, people will be priced out of housing associations and housing associations will be priced out of development entirely. They will be forced to cease to build and will have to live off their seed corn.

It is important that the question of the so-called benefit trap, poverty trap or work disincentives is clearly understood. The Select Committee report recommended

"that the Government instruct a Cabinet Committee or inter-Departmental working group to review the relationship between HAG rates and benefit entitlements and to develop a strategy for easing the problems faced by housing association tenants and others caught in the poverty trap."

In the Government response, the Minister stated:

"The Government maintains that in general it is a more efficient use of public resources to target subsidy on individuals through the benefits system, rather than on bricks and mortar through HAG."

We have heard echoes of that policy from Conservative Members today.

Although the Minister claimed, in his response to the report, that

"The Department of the Environment, Department of Social Security and the Treasury work closely together to ensure that the interaction between the different subsidy systems is understood and appreciated",

that is not what comes through. We believe that that approach is economic nonsense in the long term. Bricks and mortar are more efficient in the long term, and in housing we need to reinstate subsidies that go in the direction of bricks and mortar. I would rather direct towards the language of future investment. It is also difficult to believe that the Government have done the arithmetic.

I recall that, at the time of the deregulation of the private rented sector, the Housing Bill of 1988 was passing through the House. In Committee, I asked the Minister what impact he thought that high market rents would have on the Department of Social Security budget. He replied that he did not expect them to have any impact.

At that time, some of us were having to serve on two Committees simultaneously. The Social Security Bill was in Committee just along the Corridor, and I went to ask the Minister involved whether he knew that subsidised high rents in the private rented sector would absorb most of the social security budget, because they would absorb housing benefit.

Last week, the Downing street press office was telephoned about information in the newspapers concerning the intention of the Department of Social Security to target and cut housing benefit. Apparently, the press office responded to that serious inquiry by saying that housing benefit was solely a matter for local authorities, and was increasing because of high council rents. It did not spell out the fact that local authority rented properties are less expensive than housing association properties, which in turn are much less expensive than properties in the private rented sector. There seems to be great confusion at the heart of Government—a difficulty in understanding the link between housing benefit and rents across the board.

The real problem is not experienced by the pensioner on full state pension, without the £2 supplementary occupational pension that floats such people out of housing benefit; nor is it experienced by the unemployed person on full housing benefit who takes on a housing association flat. Let us suppose that an unemployed person on full housing benefit visits a jobcentre and is offered a job at £140 a week—such offers are still a reality. If that person's rent is £65 a week once housing benefit has been discounted, he may well feel that he must turn down the job because he will lose his benefit. Many people are now describing that position as a work disincentive.

The Social Security Bill Committee to which I referred earlier—the Committee that was sitting at the same time as the Committee considering the Housing Bill of 1988—spelt out that anyone who turned down a job offer would lose all entitlement to benefit. That is worse than being asked to choose between job and home: unless the matter is sorted out, people may well lose both. They are being caught between high rents and the difficulties involved in having to depend on benefit to cover those rents. That is because we have a Government who are addicted to a policy of high rents, and are unable to understand that that does not square with high unemployment and low wages unless a huge housing benefit bill is to be created. This year's bill is £8.7 billion, the projected figure for next year is £10 billion, and that for the year after is £12 billion.

According to the Secretary of State for Social Security, the only way out is for the Treasury to cut housing benefit. In practice, that means that people will be unable to make up the difference to pay their high rents, and will have to move out of their homes.

Interestingly, the Minister has revealed that the Government's own affordability formula assumes that working households without any housing benefit can afford to spend 35 per cent. of their net incomes on rent. That is contradicted by the work of the National Federation of Housing Associations, which recently adopted the following policy:

"Rents are affordable if the majority of working households taking up new tenancies are not caught in the poverty trap (because of dependency on housing benefit) or paying more than 25 per cent. of their net income on rent."

In other words, rents are not affordable when more than 50 per cent. of working tenants are caught in the benefit trap through dependency on housing benefit, or—if they do not receive such benefit—spend more than 25 per cent. of their incomes on rent. Yet an increasing proportion of housing association rents in new lettings exceed that crucial criterion.

Responding to recommendations that particular proposals for further reductions in HAG rates be dropped until the resolution of the problems, the Minister said—in paragraph 50 of the Government's response—

"The Government's decision was taken after consideration of a range of factors including the likely effect of lower grant rates on housing association rents, likely changes in procurement and borrowing costs, in income levels; the implication of likely changes in rent levels for housing benefit expenditure."

Does the Minister for Housing Inner Cities and Construction—unlike his Treasury colleagues—recognise that the incomes of those at the lowest levels are falling, and that, as a consequence, housing benefit must inexorably rise to cover the gap between incomes and rents? More and more of the disposable income of tenants who do not receive housing benefit will be absorbed by their rent.

On 1 February, on Radio 4, Anthony Mayer said:

"At a rent of £55, a couple with a child has to earn over £12,000 a year . . . to escape the poverty trap."

According to paragraph 53 of the Government's response, however,

"The Government took account of findings from the Housing Corporation which indicated that the effects on rents of lower grant rates would be offset by changes in procurement and borrowing costs and in income levels."

When the Minister appeared before the Environment Select Committee on 21 April 1993, he refused to comment on the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) about Housing Corporation advice to the Minister on HAG levels. He said that that was not a matter to be dealt with by the Committee. Since then, Anthony Mayer—who is chief executive of the Housing Corporation—has spoken to the committee members' conference of the National Federation of Housing Associations. He is reported to have said, on Friday 21 January, that the Housing Corporation board recommended retention of 67 per cent. HAG rates for 1994-95. I hope that the Minister will tell us why he rejected the Housing Corporation's advice when all the comments in the Government's response suggest that they were taking the Housing Corporation's findings on board.

At a private seminar for lenders, Anthony Mayer went on to reveal that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury had made it clear that the Government would do nothing to housing benefit that would compromise the position of housing associations, adding:

"If the Government did make significant cuts in housing benefit the result would be immediate catastrophe. I would advise you all to resign immediately. The pack of cards would fold very quickly."

In other words, there was a real danger that, as well as pricing out tenants, the removal of housing benefits would frighten away private investors and destabilise housing associations.

Already, housing benefit is regarded as an insecure political variable—an unreliable income stream, subject to the cuts imposed by the Secretary of State for Social Security. That is why private investors are now backing off from all but the largest housing associations—those that can pool larger amounts of rent.

It is difficult to discern where the Government's housing policy is headed. The Housing Corporation and housing associations are now caught in the centre of conflicting policies. Paragraph 68 of the Government's response stresses that the real strength of the housing association sector lies in diversity of management, particularly when an association can bring specialised management skills to bear, or can offer a localised base for effective and sensitive housing management.

We agree with that entirely; yet, in practice, Government policy pulls in the opposite direction. The Government are squeezing out special needs provision, and undermining the special needs management allowance with the Treasury cap on revenue support. That has led to a reduction in the supported housing association programme to 2,500 units for 1994-95.

Furthermore, at the recent Housing Corporation conference, the Minister announced the introduction of arrangements to promote competition for capital and revenue needs in regard to supported housing. That will pile more pressure on the special needs sector. Smaller associations, particularly in rural areas, are still locked in the impasse of what charitable organisations can do—not least because, in such areas, those on low incomes cannot take up what the Government are promoting as share ownership schemes.

Support has been withdrawn from self-build and co-ops. The Housing Corporation's capital support for housing co-operation developments has reached an all-time low: it is 1.54 per cent. of the Housing Corporation's approved development programme for 1994-95.

The crucial issues of affordability, high rents, benefits, housing association rates and the effect of driving away private finance, as well as the key issue of diversity, have been side-stepped in the Government's response. As a result, housing associations will be forced simply to recreate the worst conditions of the large local authority estates of the past. The fundamental problem is lack of Government direction, the absence of a cohesive housing policy. Britain needs more homes for renting rather than a further Housing Corporation cut of £500 million, as happened in this year's Budget. We do not need more incentives to buy through tenant incentive schemes. We do not need more shared ownership schemes. What we need are policies that will result in the provision of more homes for renting.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Does not the tenants incentive scheme demonstrate the lack of coherence in the Government's policy? The resources for that scheme have been increased massively, but there has been no evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy. When I was involved in the scheme, I found that many of the people taking advantage of it would have bought homes and, therefore, moved out of housing association property in any case. This is yet another example of the residualisation of the social rented sector.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention, which proves that the Government are facing two ways. On one hand, a Secretary of State announces that there is no further need to build homes in Britain—in the homelessness review, the Government have a line about future generations who will not thank us for building more homes—but, on the other, there is more and more pushing in the direction of expanding home ownership at the expense of the rented sector. That is why the Government are in real difficulty. On the question of housing association policy, they are between a rock and a hard place.

Labour believes that there is an absolute and acute shortage of homes to rent. We believe that unemployed

[Mr. Battle]

building workers could be used now to provide homes for renting. Capital receipts could and should be released for investment. We believe that housing associations, although they account for only 3 per cent. of the housing stock in Britain, have a dynamic and vital innovative role to play in the full panoply of housing provision and homes to rent. They ought not to be abandoned or priced out. Housing associations should be locally rooted and locally accountable to tenants and communities. They should be strengthened so that they may reassert their traditional role, including vital specialist provision. They should be allowed to develop and expand rehabilitation and to provide positive support for diversification. There is a positive vision for housing associations, but, referring to the Government's response to the Select Committee's report, I have to say that we are looking not for comment but for action.

6.42 pm

The Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction (Sir George Young): Like other hon. Members, I am grateful for the opportunity of this debate to acknowledge the work of the Select Committee on the Environment. As we discovered during a Supply day debate on housing a few weeks ago, this is a subject on which we do not always manage to achieve unanimity. However, the Committee, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), has produced a consensus report, which makes a very valuable contribution to the Housing Corporation's future operations in social housing. I congratulate the Committee on its achievement. Indeed, it has led to a moderate and consensual debate today.

To the extent to which the confusion referred to by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) has existed, one detected some signs of incipient tension among Opposition Members. On one hand, we had the Dunfermline decree that there should be no new public expenditure commitments; on the other hand, we heard the expansionist ambitions of several Opposition Back-Bench Members. I see some trouble ahead. One of my constituents said to me at the weekend, "What is the point in supporting the Labour party if it does not intend to spend any more than the Tories?" The incipient tension to which I have referred is demonstrated by the contrast between what the Opposition would like to do—

Dr. Lynne Jones: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir George Young: Sorry, no. I have been done out of a couple of minutes by the hon. Lady's hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West.

The Government's response was published last October. We indicated our acceptance of the majority of the recommendations and our intention to act on them. Many have already been implemented, and others are being taken forward. I shall try to deal with the key points raised by the Committee's Chairman. There will not be enough time to get through all of them, but I shall write to my hon. Friend about those to which I do not manage to refer and shall, perhaps, copy the letter to other members of the Committee.

The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) rightly invited us to put housing in a slightly broader social context. He referred to a constituent confronted with a rent of, I think, £70 a week for a new housing association property. There is a trade-off between rents and output. If we had not taken our decisions on grant rates, the hon. Gentleman's constituent might not have had any property to move into.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) made a thoughtful speech, which touched on the issue of affordability. He raised a number of questions—for example, deemed interest on savings—for which the Department of Social Security is responsible. He rightly identified the mistakes that we made in the 1960s and the 1970s—some of the developments that were undertaken with the best of intentions but with disastrous results. I welcome the work that my hon. Friend's wife does on the Housing Corporation and as the chairman of a very substantial housing association.

The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) referred to a conversation with his authority's director of housing. That officer is somewhat unusual in that his housing stock has been transferred. This is a policy on which the Government are keen, as it not only generates capital receipts, which can be recycled into investment in social housing, but enables the local authority to concentrate on its strategic and enabling role.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the difficulty, in the case of one estate, of promoting shared ownership. If he looks at our plans, he will see that that is not the only home ownership initiative. There is the tenants incentive scheme, which is very popular and has nearly always been oversubscribed, and there are the low-cost home ownership proposals, which do not involve shared ownership and represent a growing part of the Housing Corporation's programme. The objections to which the hon. Gentleman referred do not apply with the same force to these other aspects. The hon. Gentleman talked about the flats over shops scheme—something on which I am keen. The Government have put about £25 million of public money on the table to drive the policy forward.

My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) was right to refer to the financial management of housing associations. Where there are substantial reserves, the Government encourage local housing associations to plough the funds back into fresh development. My hon. Friend was right to suggest that those resources are meant for investment in housing. In the case of a non-charitable housing association, there is normally an associated right to buy. But that does not cover certain properties that are particularly suitable for letting to the elderly. I should like to write to my hon. Friend about this matter.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) raised a number of points. I should like to deal with one of them—the issue of transporting families from one borough to another. I have made it clear on a number of occasions, and I repeat, that one borough should not export its problems to another unless the latter has so agreed. Each borough should develop a strategy to sort out its own problems. If it has greater needs, it will be provided, through the allocation process, with greater resources with which to tackle them.

I enjoyed very much the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry). It was cold in High Peak the weekend before last, but the visit was very worth

while. My hon. Friend rightly focused on the key currency of lettings as opposed to new build. My hon. Friend was right to concentrate on the potential for bringing 850,000 empty properties back into use—not, as was proposed by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, by purchase, which would involve the expenditure of a very substantial amount of public money, raising the eyebrows of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), but by the promotion of management arrangements whereby the public sector would not have to own the properties but would have the benefit of letting them, using housing associations as an intermediary.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Will the Minister give way?

Sir George Young: If I am to do justice to the debate and deal with the questions that have been raised, I shall have to plough on.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said that the local authority housing stock had been diminished through the right to buy. One must put on the other side of the scales the increased nominations to housing associations through new lets and relets. One must look at the total picture. Last week, I had a chat with the ombudsman, Roger Jeffries. I was impressed by the way in which Mr. Jeffries was making progress with complaints and, in particular, by his work on the promotion of mediation as a means of bringing disputes to a satisfactory conclusion. That is a matter in which I am very interested.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) rightly reminded us of the importance of the private rented sector. The latest figures show that the decline has been arrested and that sector now accounts for a growing percentage of tenure, which I welcome. My hon. Friend had some radical new ideas on tenant ownership on which the Government are reflecting.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West made a rather alarmist speech. We have made it clear that we are reducing the housing association grant rate to get more units out of the given amount of public funds and it would be absurd to pursue those policies to the extent that one got no units because there was no funding. At the end of his speech, he worked himself up into a minor frenzy about the absence of housing policy. I suggest that he reads the editorial in the latest edition of *Roof* magazine, which contains some punchy criticism of any new thinking on housing by the Labour party. The editorial in *Roof* magazine does not usually spring to my support, so the hon. Gentleman might like to reflect on what thoughtful people who write about housing are saying about the vacuum in Labour party policy.

In the remaining time available, I shall deal quickly with some of the issues raised before I mention affordability. The Select Committee on the Environment referred to the constitution of the corporation's board and how appointments are made. Although it recognised that members of a public board could not be representative, it wanted a slightly broader mix of appointments. I am pleased to report that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West said, earlier this month we appointed to the board two new members with precisely the skills for which the Select Committee invited us to look. Derek Waddington has had a long career in local government and is currently director of housing in Birmingham, which is the largest housing authority in the country. We also appointed Roger Council, who is a welfare benefits adviser and a tenant of Yorkshire Metropolitan housing association. In 1992, he became the first elected tenant representative on its management committee. I am sure that both will both make a valuable contribution to the work of the Housing Corporation.

Last week, we appointed Sir Brian Pearse as chairman of the corporation from 1 April. I am grateful for the kind words of all hon. Members about Sir Brian. I take this opportunity to express my thanks to Sir Christopher Benson for his important contribution to the changes that have been carried through in the past four years. It has been a difficult and challenging time for the corporation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West invited me to give a progress report on regional committees. We were not persuaded that a formal structure of regional committees was necessary, but we agreed that a forum to provide for regional consultation might be helpful. The corporation has taken the idea on board and I am pleased to announce that the first round of consultative meetings with local authorities, housing associations and tenants will commence in each region from next month. The first meeting is to be held on 13 April in the west midlands and, thereafter, meetings will be held every six months.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West also asked about regional office boundaries. There are benefits to be gained from conterminous boundaries between the corporation and my Department. I can therefore announce that the corporation proposes, with our approval, to revise its regional boundaries from 1 April 1995 to bring them into line with those of the Government's integrated regional offices, except in Merseyside where the present boundaries will be retained. The Yorkshire and Humberside and northern regions will continue to maintain a joint office to cover both regions from Leeds, and the east and east midlands regions will operate a joint office in Leicester. In both cases, the corporation will structure operations to produce data to the two regions covered by each office separately. The changes will produce valuable operational benefits.

I deal now with grant rates, which were a recurrent theme in many of today's speeches. An important element of the Select Committee's work concerned the issues surrounding the HAG rate paid to support the corporation's capital programme. We have heard a great deal about the impact of falling grant rates on housing association rent levels and on the affordability of those rents. Even more has been said about how high rent levels have forced an increasing number of housing association tenants on to housing benefit and into the poverty trap, to use the words of Labour Members, or into the protective embrace of housing benefit, to use the words of my hon. Friends.

I remind the House that we have not heard about the many additional homes that have been created by the reduction in HAG rates. We have not heard about the many additional families who have been decently housed as a result of the decisions and who would otherwise be homeless or waiting in inadequate accommodation. Each reduction in grant rate means that more private finance is levered into the programme and the available public resources are made to stretch further.

Since 1988, when we decided to introduce the concept of mixed funding, a total of £2.6 billion of private finance has been raised to support housing association development, which is the equivalent of about 55,000 new homes. There is a real choice between, on the one hand, reducing

[Sir George Young]

grant rates and increasing the supply of housing and, on the other, keeping grant rates high which, will indeed reduce rent levels but at the expense of the number of new homes that we can provide.

At a time when development and borrowing costs have fallen fast, I make no apologies for taking the opportunity to use the savings to concentrate the funds available for housing investment on boosting output, especially as our benefit system focuses help on those people who might have difficulty paying their rent. I believe that it is a more effective use of resources—

Dr. Lynne Jones: Will the Minister give way?

Sir George Young: I can perhaps save the hon. Lady's energy by assuring her that I do not propose to give way.

I believe that that is a more effective use of resources than bricks and mortar grants which benefit all tenants, irrespective of income.

I deal now with the question asked by the hon. Member for Leeds, West. The Environment Select Committee specifically recommended that I should not cut grant rates for next year unless procurement costs fell further. All the signs are that procurement costs in 1994-95 will continue to fall. The Housing Corporation and the National Federation of Housing Associations accepted that, and it was clear from the corporation's model that I could set an average HAG rate of about 64 per cent. without affecting the affordability of the rents charged.

In the event, having considered the likely impact on actual rents and on the ability of associations to pool rents across their stock and to make further efficiency savings, I felt justified in reducing the average HAG rate to 62 per cent. In fact, the continuing fall since then in gilt yields has meant that financing costs are likely to be even lower than we anticipated, which will further reduce the rents that associations need to charge.

I also considered carefully the likely impact of lower grant rates on the availability of private finance. From our discussions with private lenders, and from the work done for the Housing Corporation by European Capital, I was confident that private finance would be available to support the development programme at an average grant rate of 62 per cent. In view of the number of bids for housing association grants received by the corporation—£4 for every £1 accepted—it seems that housing associations share my confidence and are coping well with the lower grant rates. The reduction of the average grant rate to 62 per cent. next year should result in an additional 2,600 new homes.

To put the debate on rents in a broader perspective, the average rent for all housing association tenants on 31 March last year, which is the last full year for which figures are available, was just £34 a week. Even excluding those who are still paying fair rents, the figure was only £38 a week. For new tenancies the average is £43 a week. It is important to keep that perspective.

We have heard a great deal about the poverty trap. As the House will know, benefit system policy is a matter for the Secretary of State for Social Security. The system is designed to ensure that maximum benefit is targeted on those who need it most and the rules ensure that people are better off as their gross incomes increase. Only a very small proportion of those receiving income-related benefits face marginal deduction rates at the highest level, some of which we have heard about this evening.

I assure the House that my Department and the Department of Social Security meet regularly in a working group that was set up to provide a forum to discuss, among other things, the relationship between policies on HAG rates and housing benefit. I and my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, who has been mentioned once or twice today, attended a seminar of private sector lenders last September when he said:

"Housing benefit rules may well change from time to time. But we have an enduring commitment to making sure that people can afford the rented housing they need."

Although the benefits review is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, I can tell the House that no conclusions have yet been reached, and hon. Members would be better advised to wait for a statement from my right hon. Friend than rely on press speculation.

I mentioned the ombudsman a moment ago. So far, he has received 234 complaints, of which 85 per cent. have been accepted and are already being pursued. We shall keep the matter under review.

The challenges facing the Housing Corporation demonstrate that it clearly has a sizeable task ahead. My view is that housing associations, their members and their officers have responded positively to the changes introduced in 1988. I am sure that they will face the next challenges with enthusiasm.

Social housing is a constantly changing environment in which innovation and co-operation must be the key words. Housing associations have a good record and I am sure that they will continue to develop and to work with local authorities and private landlords to make the best use of all the rented housing stock, not simply to meet housing needs, but to create thriving communities. As I have already said, we have given full consideration to the Select Committee's recommendations—

The debate was concluded and the Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings was deferred, pursuant to para (4) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates).

London Docklands Development Corporation Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

7 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Earlier today, I raised a point of order about the remarkable power that the private Bill, promoted by the London Docklands development corporation, would give to the Secretary of State for the Environment to dispose of the corporation to anybody he liked at any time and at any price. That seem to me to be a rather remarkable power to be included in a private Bill because it relates to as much as £1.2 billion of public assets.

In response to my point of order, Madam Speaker quoted a precedent from a private Bill which is now the British Waterways Act 1983. Our queries earlier today related to two points: first, the giving of the power to dispose of the whole or part of the LDDC and secondly, the fact that the Bill as drafted, and as apparently accepted by the authorities of both Houses, does not require any order or decision made by the Secretary of State to come before the House.

I have now checked the British Waterways Act 1983. It contains a schedule, covering virtually two pages, which lays down the detailed and difficult procedure, with many hurdles, that the Secretary of State would have to follow in disposing of any of the property of the British Waterways Board. It seems to me that the precedent that was quoted does not fully meet our objections. In the Bill as presently drafted, there is no requirement to bring any such proposition to the House, whereas under the British Waterways Act, which was quoted as a precedent, there is a requirement to bring such propositions before the House under a special parliamentary procedure.

I should, therefore, be grateful for your ruling again, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether it is appropriate for this public measure to be smuggled through as part of a private Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Madam Speaker has already given considerable thought to the matter. She gave her ruling earlier today and I have no intention of altering or querying that in any way. However, I point out to the hon. Gentleman that it is perfectly possible during this debate, if he so wishes, to deploy the arguments that he has put as a point of order as arguments during debate. I further point out to him that if the Bill receives a Second Reading and goes to the Committee on Unopposed Bills, that Committee will be able to consider whether there should be any amendments or any other alterations.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I may be able to assist the House before I move that the Bill be read a Second time. The clause to which the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has referred in this point of order and the one at the end of the statement this afternoon relates to the later transfer of functions from the LDDC. It is a perfectly proper matter of concern.

The hon. Gentleman may know—if he does not, this may be the way through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to ensure that the matter is on the record—that his point has been understood by the promoter, the LDDC. I should like to repeat publicly an assurance, given privately in writing to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) by the corporation, that it is entirely happy to amend the Bill to ensure that in relation to this power, there will be an opportunity for the House to consider and to vote on an order without which there could not be that transfer of power. I hope that that meets the concern about the processes. The matter can, of course, be pursued further in the debate on Second Reading.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for pointing out this matter. The importance of the clause had not gone entirely without notice for some months. However, I give notice further to the point of order that when the Bill goes, as it probably will and perhaps should, to the Committee on Unopposed Bills, there will be discussions relating to the amendment that the promoter is willing to accept and to other matters. I refer especially to the issue that has been raised and has come into focus only in the past week—the relationship between public and private legislation.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think that we can now make a start.

7.5 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

We come to this debate against the background of the passage of almost 14 years since the legislation was presented to and approved by the House which entitled the Government to set up the first development corporations. The flagship of those development corporations was envisaged then as—I say this at the risk of being accused of being either metropolitan or regionalist—and could still be said to be, the London Docklands development corporation. It was set up, by order, under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 for the purpose of the regeneration of docklands. I and other hon. Members have been involved since that period in the debates about that process.

The fact that, unusually, the Bill is being sponsored by an Opposition Member does not change my view or that of other Opposition Members who represent docklands' constituencies that elected or imposed quangos are not the best way in which to proceed. We could all dig up hundreds of columns of comment on the history of development corporations that make that point over and over again. At this stage, however, I do not want to dwell on what has been or on what might have been. Indeed, I regard it as my job tonight specifically to deal with what will be.

The Bill comes before us tonight because the LDDC has realised that it has inherited the responsibility for regenerating an area of docklands, but that it does not have the consequential logical powers to manage that estate in certain areas. The point of order relates to the same powers, but specifically to what happens in the post-LDDC era.

We are talking about the legacy of the Port of London Authority and the legacy of the regulations that went with managing the port, such as the byelaws and the other powers that were given to that authority, which was a

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

non-elected authority in its day. The reality of docklands now, as anyone who lives or travels there knows and as my colleagues who represent docklands know, is that it is not a working port any more. The Port of London has moved downstream to Tilbury and the docklands is a very different community. It is a community in which there is some marine activity—all Opposition Members would, I think, say that there is too little. There is a new airport and new businesses have come in to replace the businesses on the wharves and along the docks.

There is much new residential accommodation and there are significant new regions of public provision. One of the consequences of the closing of the docks at the Port of London end of the Thames near to Tower bridge and along the shores of our boroughs in Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham is that much of the space that was previously private has become public open space. Many of the views that people had in the past were of wharves, cranes and commercial dock activity. That has changed. The wharves have become offices or flats and walkways through the wharves and down to the edge of the Thames have become public amenities in a way that they never were before. That makes it an entirely different area to manage. It is for that reason that the docklands corporation, for the first time, seeks to introduce a Bill that will give it power to manage.

As the explanatory memorandum says the Bill contains, among other things,

"powers to enable the London Docklands Development Corporation . . . to manage and regulate certain lands and waters within or in the vicinity of its area".

I want to elaborate on the main purposes of the Bill and deal with other linked matters.

If the Bill passes through this House—it has already passed through the other place—the corporation will take powers that relate almost entirely to land and water within the boundaries of the LDDC.

Pausing there, we are still at that stage where the LDDC has not rolled back any of its frontiers. That is a matter which I shall allude to in a minute. But dedesignation, as it is called—a power that has been changed from a power originally to roll back the dockland corporation in one move to a power to roll it back in part—has not yet begun, although it is very much under discussion.

We are discussing docklands as it has become. It is a great expanse comprising 400 acres of enclosed water, about 25 miles of dock edge, all owned by the LDDC. That is a lot of water and dock edge, owned by one authority. That is why, to be honest, the big player here is the LDDC.

Technically today, the statutory controls reside with the PLA, but that has become irrelevant to the functioning of the activities in the region in question. As of tonight, the LDDC has no more powers to govern what goes on in docklands than those of a private landowner. It has regulated the region; it has been the planning development authority; it has sought to police what it has planned. Local authorities such as mine have sometimes resented those powers. The reality, however, has been without any statutory backing. It has employed former harbour masters, 20 water wardens and a degree of bluster, good will and hope to try to get its own way.

Another reality is that with every year that passes not only do more people live and work in docklands than was the case when the LDDC first came into being in 1981 but lots more people visit it on weekdays, as on a Sunday, to walk along from London bridge, for example, down to Hay's galleria, and along that and other riverside walks. They come to canoe, to sail and to take part in riverside sports or to visit places such as the docklands arena or even to appreciate the architecture, which in parts is as attractive by night as by day.

There are all sorts of new activities that act as a recreational magnet, bringing people from east London and beyond. These include a rowing club in the Royal Albert dock, and water sports centres in Millwall, the Greenland dock and the Royal Victoria docks. There is a water sports club in Shadwell basin. The London sea scouts have their headquarters in the East India docks. There are marinas, one on my side of the river in South dock and Greenland dock and one to be set up on each side of the river in the Albert basin. There are restaurants burgeoning all over the place. There are now even several floating restaurants. I have only visited one and when I went there for a public meeting it nearly sank, so it was not a good precedent for me. There will be, as there are now, historic vessels to visit and other docklands traditions will be retained by the restoration of buildings to their former glory. In addition, historic vessels will be restored to suitable sites.

There is some commercial traffic of course. Barges still take construction materials and excavated spoil in a good year to Canary wharf—in a less good year to other, lesser ventures. Some of the spoil will be from the Jubilee line extension, although some of that will go by road. We have tried to establish a decent riverbus service as part of London's integrated transport system. It has to be said, sadly, that two of those initiatives for such a service have sunk, but there are still people who want to put a third one afloat. I am sure that other hon. Members representing constituencies in the region will wish them well. We in the Liberal Democrats believe that a riverbus will really happen only when it is agreed as part of an integrated London transport structure that has a built-in and accepted subsidy that does not rely primarily on the private developer, who might be the beneficiary.

There are Sunday markets and there is even a plan for a floating market. Additional activities will attract other people.

What will the Bill do? If it is passed, it will give the corporation, instead of the PLA, general power to regulate and manage the areas designated in the Bill, subject to certain duties, some of which were inserted in the other place following negotiations with the London boroughs. These include, most importantly, a duty to secure a diversity of uses for the region and maintain public access to the waterside. One of the questions that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) asks most often in this place—certainly I have often asked it, too—is why, when the original legislation was passed, it was not made clear for whose benefit the docklands were to be regenerated.

It was a wonderful Bill for setting out objectives, but it did not have any specified clientele. It was a general regeneration. Many of us that thought it would be helpful—and would have agreed that it was necessary to stress this from the beginning—that it should be regenerated in particular for the benefit of the communities living and working there.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. As so often, one asks a question knowing the

answer. The hon. Gentleman well knows that during the long Committee stage of the original Bill, I moved amendment after amendment to achieve the purposes that he has mentioned, particularly to add national advantage, local importance and local advantage. The Government declined to act and the amendments were lost.

Mr. Hughes: When the hon. Gentleman was doing that, I was a mere candidate for the Greater London council. Although that was not an election I won, we did much better than we had before. One of the things that I was told, almost immediately after having taken my seat on St. David's day in 1983, was that the first piece of legislation that I should seek to understand was that which set up the urban development corporation in 1980. I was therefore given the full works and they remain on my shelf to this day.

I was aware of that debate, because that was the debate that the community was having in Southwark, the docklands, Tower Hamlets and Newham when the legislation was passed. That was a well-fought debate. The hon. Gentleman was pre-eminent in fighting that corner —I wish, like him, that he had won.

How will the Bill work? The main controls of the Bill will be by means of byelaws and they can be made for the purposes set out in schedule 3.

If Royal Assent is given, some parts of Bill will immediately come into effect, as is frequently the way with legislation. They include important provisions, for example, the control of obstructions on the waterside, the control of pollution, and the movement of vessels.

Therefore, there will be a control of activity on water and a control of activity adjacent to the water to which the public have access. It will be an offence to break those rules, just as it is an offence to break other principal and secondary legislation and byelaws, and, therefore, there is provision for an enforcement mechanism.

The Bill requires that before making byelaws, the docklands corporation is to consult the local authority—the borough council for the area in question—and to consult the Port of London Authority, the City of London corporation, which is the port health authority and the market authority for Billingsgate market, and the London fire and civil defence authority.

The way in which byelaws operate is adopted from traditional, statutory local government experience—the process contained in the Local Government Act 1972, which local authorities use for their own byelaws. One may object to the Secretary of State about the byelaws. He or she may hold a public inquiry and must confirm them. There is nothing unusual about the system and no additional, separate procedures are being sought. If the House agrees, as it has in the past, that that is the right way in which local authorities should proceed, the corporation asks that it is allowed to use the same procedure.

There are a few odds and ends to which I shall now allude. There are a number of miscellaneous clauses in the Bill. One provides for the extinguishing of certain navigation rights; another provides for the termination of the residual jurisdiction of the PLA, which would effectively say that it is no longer interested in or appropriate for the regulation of such activity; and another varies the boundaries of designated areas. It also deals with another matter, for which I know that the hon. Member for Newham, South and the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) have argued—I was with them when they did so.

They argued that there is and should be an annual report of the activities of the docklands corporation produced, sent to the Secretary of State, and made publicly available. I know that that is done already, but not in a compulsory and regulated manner. Opposition Members have had occasion to complain about the report, or to complain that it has come to our attention only after it has been the subject of a press conference or launch, which is entirely inappropriate.

The controversial matter to which the points of order alluded is the transfer of functions when the London Docklands development corporation ceases to exist. When I was asked to do this job, one of the questions that I asked my briefing team was what would happen when the LDDC went. It is all very well providing for its functions to be transferred, but to whom? It is obvious to me as a Member of Parliament and a democrat that it should go to some authority that is accountable. None of us wants a proposal for the handover to another authority which is not accountable.

Mr. Dobson: Such as Asil Nadir.

Mr. Hughes: Or, indeed, to Asil Nadir, who is not yet a public authority and seems certainly not accountable.

I shall outline what the Bill provides, make a comment that refers to the point of order and express a view. The Bill provides that there can be a transfer by an order of the Secretary of State about which he or she will have had to consult the borough council for the area concerned. I am reading expressly what I have been given:

"The Bill does not stipulate to whom the functions will be transferred, although it is the LDDC's favoured policy that functions should transfer to the same body as the land and management responsibilities will be transferred to."

I was asked, as it were, to say that that is a fairly Delphic statement and that it does not expressly say to which body the functions will be transferred. I am instructed that the reason that it does not expressly say that is that no decision has expressly been made.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The hon. Gentleman is on to an extremely interesting point to which, perhaps, we shall not get an answer in the debate. There is a difficult question to answer. If there is to be a successor body, which would then find that the land of the docklands area was no longer in its jurisdiction, and that it was in control only of the management of the docks and the water system, is it conceivable that that would be a sufficient task for a single body? If not, surely the logic points to the return of not merely the land in docklands to the boroughs of which they are part, but to the management of the water and of the docks in whatever local authority boundary they fall. Although it may appear to be a kind of a duplication of task, I am sure that it is one which the local authorities would be anxious to do and be capable of fulfilling.

Mr. Hughes: The right hon. Gentleman puts forward as his proposed suggestion one with which, as he would expect, I agree. The starting point must be that management and the regulatory authority are transferred to the democratically accountable three local authorities. If someone approached Members of Parliament or the local

[Mr. Hughes]

authorities in question with another proposal that they found acceptable, but which was different, I am sure that we would not stand in their way.

If, for example the three local authorities came to an agreement that requested a common, joint committee to manage the water area, as has been done in the past, that might be a practical way forward. It may be easier to have one authority managing all the water space than three authorities in terms of benefit and scale of advantage. However, the assumption must be, as has been our assumption, that the best place to start is the boroughs, but the right hon. Gentleman is right in saying that I cannot give him an answer. The reason why I cannot do so is that there is no answer yet to give. The Bill provides the route and the method, but does not provide the solution.

I must say to the right hon. Gentleman and to other colleagues that, if they find that an entirely unsatisfactory conclusion and if they want to know the answer before they allowed the Bill to leave the House, they must seek to get the answer, as I will, during the other stages of the Bill.

I link that answer to the point of order and suggest a way forward. I can assure the House that the debate about who takes over will come back to us. The hon. Member for Newham, South spotted the issue first and others have spotted it subsequently. They have spotted that, as the Bill stands at the moment, clause 22, previously clause 21, which provides for the transfer of the functions of the LDDC conferred on it by the Bill to another body by order of the Secretary of State, is exercisable by statutory instrument, but is not an order which the House has the power to prevent being passed. It does not require the approval of Parliament.

We often have debates like this. I have been on countless Committees that have debated amendments that this or that clause should come into force only if there is a negative or an affirmative resolution of the House to follow. The proposal that the docklands corporation makes through me to the House in answer to the point of order is that it will make those orders subject to negative resolution before the House.

Not only clause 20, but clause 22 will be open to that procedure. A resolution can be tabled which will annul those orders. We could debate the procedures here rather than off in a Committee somewhere and I hope that that will give us the peg on which to hang a debate. The right hon. Gentleman, his friends and I may want to try to push the LDDC to give us a more express answer before the debate and the other stages of the Bill. We may want to engage in thinking ahead rather than leaving it to later, which would be a perfectly responsible procedure to adopt. There is none the less, a promise that the transfer of functions will come before us and that it will be able to be the subject of an annulment procedure. I hope that it will allow us to stage that debate later.

I have two more substantive points to make. I am sure that other hon. Members want to speak. I shall make one point on behalf of the promoter and one more parochial point on behalf of my constituents.

The waters that we are discussing and which are managed by the LDDC are very deep. All of us who live alongside the river and know it well know the danger of the Thames. From my constituency experience, I know that it is difficult to manage safety. For example, what sort of fencing should we use to stop children falling into the water? Rigid fencing may be easier to climb and provide a child with a sense of security. A child may fall over such fencing quite easily. It might be better to have less rigid or flexible fencing about which children feel insecure. If a child were to cycle down a slope towards a dock edge, flexible fencing would act as a break and throw that child back from the edge. Such safety issues are complicated debates. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and other bodies have been involved in such debates over the years. There is potentially great danger in the docklands. The management of the docklands must be concerned principally with the safety of the user, whether on the water in terms of sport or business or those on the dock or water edge.

Swimming in the Thames and in the docks is also dangerous. One of my first duties was to present regatta cups from the end of a jetty. It was no surprise that I ended up going into Greenland dock as part of the process. I remember someone on the quayside saying, "They would never have done that to Bob Mellish." That was probably true. As I swallowed a mouthful of extremely unpleasant water, I realised why my swimming in the past had been carried out elsewhere. The Government have still not yet made the Thames clean enough to make it the obvious place for me or others to swim in.

On a more serious point, since 1981 four children and 10 adults have drowned in the waters that we are talking about. No matter how well managed the waters are, they will still be dangerous and they will still be subject to infection. For example, toxic blue algae blooms in the summer. We will not be able to get rid of that from the docks in the short term because those blooms come from the Thames which has many nutrients and is a tidal river. We will not suddenly stop the benefits of a tidal river in the docklands and nor would we want to.

On many occasions, young people have had to be prevented from diving off bridges and other structures into the docks. I have often recently seen youngsters diving off dock edges during the summer as they have done in generations past. In addition, hundreds of vehicles have been retrieved from the docks. In 1992 alone, 22 submerged vehicles were recovered from the docks in the Isle of Dogs including—and I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) is aware of this—a Rolls-Royce and a fork lift truck. Perhaps the Rolls-Royce was left there because it was worth more while regarded as insurance than after retrieval—

Mr. Dobson: Probably Asil Nadir's.

Mr. Hughes: I hear a recurrent theme. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has an obsession tonight of which he really must rid himself. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the person to whom he referred is not likely to return to take part in this debate.

The proposed byelaws would make such dumping and other forms of pollution an offence. They would also make it an offence to take part in unauthorised swimming and diving. The first point, preventing the docks' waters from being polluted, is very important. It will also help safety. The second point is also important, although we cannot guarantee that that byelaw will be 100 per cent. obeyed because stopping youngsters swimming and diving is probably one of the most difficult tasks known to human kind.

The by-laws will also keep competing users apart. In all three of our boroughs, docks have been set aside and licensed for sailing. Long stretches of water set aside for sailing can be tempting for other sorts of riverside use such as wet bikes, water skiing and other motorised vessels. There have been many incidents in respect of which people have intervened to stop the motorised and more dangerous activity from interfering, often potentially fatally, with the more passive forms of activity. Dangerous behaviour will be an offence. That is important and I hope that we will all welcome that.

Bad practices go on because people think that they can get away with it. For example, on occasions building contractors find it convenient to wash out their cement skips in the nearest stretch of water. One might think that it does not matter if one lets one's fuel from one's vessel, or from some other activity, into the dock. It is rather like the water and the wine in the well. One thinks that no one notices, but the next day one discovers that everyone has let their oil into the dock and the dock has become very unpleasant indeed. A spill in 1992 measured 1,000 ft by 200 ft. That was a pretty big slick of oil in the docks. People have also emptied other things into the docks, including portable toilets, fairly regularly. I am sure that we would not want that to happen and the regulations allow action to be taken in those circumstances, too. If there is a marina, it is important that people behave properly there for the surrounding users.

I want now to consider the process of the Bill to date so that we appreciate that the Bill has been tested and sounded out in relation to everyone who might have a particular interest. The Bill does not propose a unique power. It is not as if similar powers have not been requested in the House before. Other landowners have comparable powers. They include the National Trust and the water authorities. The British Waterways Bill included similar powers. Transport undertakers, airports and railway companies have similar powers. We are all aware of private Bill procedures in which similar powers have been included. Those bodies have powers to make byelaws and those byelaws often relate to water.

The Merseyside Development Corporation Act 1985 conferred byelaw-making powers on Merseyside which is a similar development corporation to the LDDC. That was a precedent for this Bill as well as for the idea that it would be a good thing to update the authority and make the powers and enforcement belong to the people who do the work. In addition, there has been a consultation process.

There has been considerable consultation with user groups, local and other public authorities, residents' associations and other bodies. More than 90 such bodies have been consulted on the Bill and draft byelaws. No one said that there should be no byelaws. No one has objected in general terms to the proposed byelaws either.

There have been long discussions with the PLA from which the docklands corporation seeks to inherit. It has no objection to the Bill or to the amendments already made in the other place or proposed to be made in this place. No petitions have been lodged in this House. There were two petitions in the other place, one from the borough of Tower Hamlets and the other from the Docklands Forum. Both were withdrawn following negotiations before the Bill reached its Committee stage in the Lords. Newham and Southwark local authorities have not lodged petitions or expressed any formal opposition to the Bill.

In essence, the Bill comes to us with one specific issue to which we have been alerted, which we must address and which will be amended. That has to do with the power to debate and decide who takes over from the LDDC. Otherwise, everyone who has an interest believes that this is the right framework.

Newham has been involved and has been quite active. However, it is happy. Southwark has been less active, but has expressed no opposition. As we have heard, Tower Hamlets petitioned on the Bill, but reached an agreement with the docklands corporation in June 1993. One of the things that were agreed in that negotiation was that Tower Hamlets would have to be consulted in respect of the successor body and, in establishing successor bodies, the LDDC agreed to use reasonable endeavours to secure local representation on them. Tower Hamlets got something out of that and I hope that that is welcomed across the political divide, because it is clearly better than the previous position.

The corporation has also undertaken to make representations to the Secretary of State prior to any form of transfer of functions recommending that adequate financial provisions be made for successor bodies.

It is in respect of that that I should like to make a parochial point. The Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction wrote to me recently, as he did to other hon. Members, saying that he was contemplating de-designation as a process.

One of the areas that he was contemplating de-designating first is that strip of the Southwark docklands from London bridge along the Thames eastward along the south bank roughly to the King's stairs adjacent to the Rotherhithe tunnel. That is the pan-handle of Southwark docklands.

There is a time and a place for everything. Perhaps before long, de-designation of that area and transfer to the local authority, should happen. I have been offered a meeting with the Minister. I shall take that up and discuss the detailed issues.

The issue that the community in Southwark is concerned about with regard to that area and the rest is that there should not be de-designation until we are sure that other public authorities have not only the power but the wherewithal to carry on and complete anything that is left incomplete. Equally importantly, they must have the finance to continue to maintain the jobs that have been started. For example, it is no good creating a lovely new park, a new water sports centre, the Surrey docks urban farm, the Lavender dock educational centre at the Pump House or any of the other things if we then say, "Thank you very much. It is yours now" and the Government do not provide, through the local authority or someone else, the wherewithal to fund them on an ongoing basis.

The precondition for me to say yes, go on and hand it back to Southwark, the precondition for the people of Southwark to say the same, and I suppose the precondition in many ways for the hon. Members for Bow and Poplar and for Newham, South, who represent the other parts of docklands, and for the Labour Front Bench, will be to say, "Fine, hand the docklands back to local authorities but do not give us the job without giving us the resources." That is a fundamentally important plea. I am all in favour of moving on, but I am not in favour of moving on without the resources to do it.

The Bill is a measure to bring the management of docklands up to date; a Bill which has no expressed

[Mr. Hughes]

objection outside this place; a Bill which addresses some of the real concerns about how to look after a large number of people in a dangerous area but one with huge potential; and a Bill which has now addressed the question of how we will proceed hereafter by saying that there will be further parliamentary debates about it. Much of the Bill is technical, much of it is precedented and some of it is new.

Tonight, in responding to the Bill, I hope that hon. Members will feel that they can contribute to setting the framework for docklands in the new legislative structure. I hope that the debate will be listened to outside and that those who represent the area, know it, work in it, love it and believe in it can, as a result of the process, get a docklands that is more people centred, more people safe and more people beneficial than in the past. I think that that is the motivation of the corporation in the Bill.

For people who are an unelected quango, they have been trying very hard. I have to say that in the Bill they are doing fairly well. But I will not be complacent. I will not let them off the hook. I want them to continue trying even harder. I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading tonight.

7.42 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I thank the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for his introduction to the Bill. As he said, the Bill is promoted by the London Docklands development corporation, which has been in existence since 1981. It proposes to give that body new powers to make byelaws relating to the former docks and the areas surrounding them. That is certainly necessary for the safety of people who live in the area and who might wish to work or take their leisure there. We do not argue with those propositions; indeed, we welcome them.

There is doubt among some of the organisations involved whether those duties should have been given to the London Docklands development corporation in the first place if it is a partly time-expired body and if it is intended that it should eventually give up its present role. Some of my hon. Friends may wish to deal with that aspect. There is another aspect to the Bill. It gives the Secretary of State powers to extend the role of the development corporation's byelaws outside the area covered by the London Docklands development corporation, which is a bit of a novelty.

Initially, I shall concentrate on what I regard as the big question about the Bill, which is clause 22. That clause empowers the Secretary of State to dispose of all or part of the London Docklands development corporation to anyone he likes. It seems that the Secretary of State will be able to transfer the entire assets of the London Docklands development corporation to any person, including, as I suggested, Mr. Asil Nadir in grateful thanks for his contribution to Tory party funds. I am not suggesting that that is the Government's intention, but they would be empowering themselves to do that under clause 22.

Disposing of assets on this scale is not a private matter and Labour Members believe that it should not have been included in a private Bill. The London Docklands development corporation has assets totalling at least £1,200 million. Any disposal of those assets, which have come to the development corporation as a result of money paid out by the taxpayer, should not be smuggled through as the subject of a private Bill. Obviously, it was something which the Government wanted done. The development corporation did not introduce the proposition. It was included because the Department of the Environment asked the corporation to include it in the Bill. That suggests a cavalier attitude on the Government Benches about the control of public funds.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I assure the hon. Gentleman that nothing is in the Bill at the request of my Department. Indeed, when I speak later, I shall argue that clause 22 is unnecessary. It may be a matter for debate in Committee. However, I assure the hon. Gentleman that nothing is in the Bill at the behest of my Department. I am totally neutral in relation to the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Dobson: Is the Minister telling the House that his Department was not consulted on the contents of the Bill and was not aware of clause 22 before the Bill was printed?

Mr. Baldry: Of course, we were consulted on the Bill, as indeed we are consulted on most private measures. The promoters of Bills use their common sense and consult the Government on whether we are likely to oppose the provisions of a Bill. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we tend to be neutral on the provisions of private Bills. I repeat that there is nothing in the Bill at our behest. I will certainly be arguing that clause 22 is unnecessary, for the reasons that I shall set out when I have the opportunity, as I hope I will in due course, of catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dobson: It opens up the possibility of a rather more neutral attitude by the Department of the Environment, as the sponsoring Department for one of these organisations, to suggest that it scarcely knew and certainly did not care that clause 22 was in the Bill. Certainly, the Department does not appear to have pointed out that it is an unprecedented clause and the propositions that have been put forward as precedents have never permitted the disposal of public assets on this scale without recourse to the House of Commons for permission for each such disposal.

If the Minister is suggesting that clause 22 be withdrawn, I am sure that that will whole-heartedly be supported by Labour. It would not have been a bad idea if the Minister's officials or one of his colleagues had suggested that in the first place. We would not have had to go to all the bother of tracking it down, making points of order and identifying clause 22 as a novelty in a way that apparently no one in the House of Lords managed to do.

Mr. Shore: We have just heard a remarkable statement on the most interesting question of consultation with different Government Departments. Does my hon. Friend think that there might have been some useful consultation with the Department of Trade and Industry? Surely it is odd that we should be debating this Bill, which seeks to regulate and control business activities in the docklands water area, when at the same time the House is considering the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, which at the stroke of a pen would enable the President of the Board of Trade to scupper the whole Bill. What guarantees do we have that that will not happen?

Mr. Dobson: My right hon. Friend makes a good point and the Minister may explain that the clause is unnecessary

because the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill will provide all the powers that are necessary. That would certainly be the logic of the position. This may be a minor effort at deregulation, and perhaps the London Docklands development corporation is seeking to ingratiate itself with its masters in putting forward the proposition.

It must be said that secret transfers of assets, secret subsidies and precious little role for elected representatives have always been part and parcel of the history of the LDDC. It is difficult to find out how much public money has been going into docklands because the Government and the LDDC have refused to disclose the full information. Time and again, Ministers have responded to detailed questions from Opposition Members by saying that the information was not available.

It is right that the House should look at the question of expenditure. As the Bill stands, there is a proposition that the LDDC can ask the Minister to agree to hand over all or some of the property, and also that the Secretary of State would be empowering himself to decide what to do. We must look at the priorities that the LDDC and the Government have been following in relation to docklands.

Mr. Simon Hughes: One of the benefits of doing this job is that one gets some information. I may be able to help the hon. Gentleman by giving him the figures that I have received for capital employed, which is cash expended by the LDDC from its setting up to 31 March 1993—the end of the past financial year. The total, from Government grants plus income from property disposals, rents, planning fees and miscellaneous sources, is £1,617 million.

Mr. Dobson: My own guesswork would have been wrong by just £17 million, and I hope that the rest of the figures that I quote on the basis of the inadequate public information will be equally accurate.

One of the problems with docklands and the question of large public subsidies is that the LDDC's activities are complicated by the existence of the enterprise zone on the Isle of Dogs. It is clear that billions of pounds of private and public money have been poured into London docklands and into the Isle of Dogs. The question arises, why are the people of the Isle of Dogs so dissatisfied with their circumstances that they recently voted in a Nazi to represent them on their local council?

That may be an example of the Government throwing money at a problem. The trouble is that they appear to have thrown and missed, because the money—instead of going to the people who needed it in docklands, the voters—has been snapped up by, generally speaking, a lot of foreign property speculators. In docklands, and on the Isle of Dogs in particular, thousands of people are living in bad housing and many of them are out of work. Many young people have poor job prospects and the Government have not thrown any public money at them.

The Government and the LDDC have thrown money at property developers. Of the LDDC's funds of £1.6 billion, which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey confirmed, roughly 75 per cent., or £1.2 billion, has gone into supporting and subsidising property development. To be fair, the LDDC has put money into housing and 16,000 new dwellings have been built in the area. However, only 4,000 of those have been for council or housing association tenants at rents that local people can afford. On the Isle of Dogs, 3,055 houses have been built, but only 583 are available for rent at rents which local people can afford.

Over the past four years, about £20 million has been spent on social housing by the LDDC in docklands. There is still a desperate shortage and that shortage of housing that has been exploited by the British National party to promote racial strife and violence. The LDDC claims—this is the sort of thing on which it spends its money—that, since it came into existence, 40,000 jobs have been created in docklands. However, only 13,000 of those were new jobs. The rest were transfers of jobs from outside. It is estimated that, of the new jobs, only 3,000 went to people living, not in docklands, but in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Southwark as a whole.

Meanwhile, 15,000 existing local jobs have disappeared as many existing employers have been forced or bought out because their continued existence was seen to fit in badly with some of the development that was going on. The jobless figures in 1981 were 3,500, and in 1993 were 5,500—an increase of 54 per cent. Those unemployment figures, and the large numbers of young people who were born, went to school and live on the Isle of Dogs and who cannot get a job, have been exploited by the British National party to promote racial attacks, particularly on Bengali people.

Despite the money that has been poured into docklands, jobs for people who have grown up there are scarce and are getting scarcer. The job prospects for young people are getting worse. Local people are living in rundown properties, and housing waiting lists have risen by one third since the LDDC came into existence. The number of homeless people has almost trebled to 4,800. That is still going on.

Just before Christmas, the Isle of Dogs neighbourhood proposed to transfer land at nil cost to the East London housing association so that it could be used to build housing for people living on the Isle of Dogs, and it urged the LDDC to do the same. Between them, that would have permitted the building of 450 new homes, most of them on the Isle of Dogs. The Housing Corporation agreed to that idea in principle. The LDDC has not just rejected that—according to my informant, it has not even replied to the suggestion.

Meanwhile, in many parts of docklands, and again particularly on the Isle of Dogs, residents have had to put up with a great deal of noise, vibration, dust, disturbance and—for a considerable period—the loss of their television signal because of office development and the transport connections that were being made for that development.

Office building has boomed, and Canary wharf on the Isle of Dogs is a supreme example. It is a symbol of the 1980s—an unfinished, half-empty office development. It is estimated that Canary wharf alone received £1,600 million in subsidies from the taxpayer. That is £1,600 million for speculative offices, and £20 million for housing for ordinary people. The land sale, the help with transport connections and the enterprise zone tax allowances added together give the figure of £1,600 million for the taxpayer subsidy for the building of Canary wharf.

All that has come from a Government who cannot find money for London's hospitals, for the Northern line, for homes for the homeless, for people trying to start a family while living with their in-laws and for fighting crime in docklands. They could, however, find £1,600 million to help a Canadian property speculator who was so incompetent that, despite getting £1,600 million of taxpayers' money, he went bust. That was the ultimate expression of the Government's inner-city policies.

[Mr. Dobson]

When looking at the people who may wish to decide to hand over part of the LDDC's property, or at Secretaries of State who may then wish to authorise that, it must be remembered that they tend to follow fashion. I have looked recently at the announcements that were made when the Canadian company Olympia and York was announced as the rescuer of the work at Canary wharf. An article in *The Times* by Barbara Amiel was entitled "The man who made the canary fly." Not to be outdone, *The Sunday Times* described the company as

"The quiet man who will make the canary sing."

A little later, after it all fell apart, we had *The Observer* headlines such as "This Canary Won't Sing", "Olympia and York's Leaning Tower of Debt" and "Nightmare in docklands."

Should anyone think that it was not an establishment set-up that gave us Canary wharf, I commend to them Ms Barbara Amiel's article, which said, referring to the Chelsea flower show:

"Corporate tents dotted the grounds. Robin Leigh-Pemberton, Governor of the Bank of England smiled at Lord Rippon. Lord Rothermere bowed to the Princess of Wales. Cabinet Ministers exchanged cautionary tales. An onlooker might have heard the contented voices of London's own, happy amongst themselves. In the middle of this and that, a small man with an ebullient smile dashed over to introduce himself to the president of Olympia and York, the construction company that was sponsoring the occasion. It was Mr. Brian Griffiths, head of the policy unit at No. 10."

They were all in it. They all believed that the developers of Canary wharf could walk on water. It turned out that they could not.

I believe that Ministers, the British establishment and the banks involved all demonstrated themselves to be a collection of hapless clowns in the backing that they gave to Canary wharf. Once it had failed, they decided to do anything to bail it out. Banks ran round like headless chickens, not trying to recover money from Canary wharf but closing down dozens of small businesses throughout the country and all over docklands in an effort to recoup the money that they had lost. The LDDC was wringing its hands. The Government extended the period of the special enterprise zone tax allowances to help bail it out.

Then the Government agreed to build the extension to the Jubilee line and helped Canary wharf obtain a £100 million loan from the European investment bank, also in an effort to bail it out. All the while, the people who live on the Isle of Dogs, the people who live in poor housing whose lives have been made a misery by the construction work, the people who find it difficult to find jobs, and the people who are disappointed and hurt that their children and grandchildren cannot find jobs, have been ignored by the Government, the LDDC and the developers. They are desperate for new and better homes. They are desperate for jobs for themselves and their children. They are outraged that billions of pounds of taxpayers' money has been poured instead into the marbled halls of the speculators.

It is the epitome of all that is wrong with Britain that when people move into the office block that is the most spectacular failure of a property development they will look down on the only part of Britain that has voted for a fascist to represent them in Parliament in recent times—not in Parliament, on the local council. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) laughs. He apparently thinks that it is funny that fascists represent people anywhere in Britain. In docklands we see people who are absolutely sickened by the way in which they have been treated and want to be treated better. They note the contrast between all the money that has been poured into the pockets of the property speculators and all the money that has not been provided to make their lives decent. The only people who speak up for them are those in the Labour party.

8.4 pm

Ms Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I grew up facing a grim dock wall in The Highway in east London. Although I was lulled to sleep at night by the sound of ships' horns, I had to climb to the third floor of my father's house to see the tops of cranes. If I wanted to look at the water I had to walk to Tower Hill gardens, which was 15 or 20 minutes away, or to King Edward memorial park in Shadwell. When the docks closed and my neighbours lost their jobs with the Port of London Authority and hit hard times, it was sad and bad for people in the district.

As time went on and the dock area became derelict, it was obvious that something needed to be done. The Government decided to take the project out of the hands of democratically elected bodies and set up an appointed quango, the London Docklands development corporation. If the people of the area were blighted by the closure of the docks, they were blighted a second time by the setting up of the LDDC. It has brought them no good. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has pointed out the failure of the LDDC to provide the desperately needed housing in the area. Seventy five per cent. of the housing that it built was for sale. The housing for rent was luxury housing that local people could not afford.

The Government and the LDDC bear a direct responsibility not only for the election of the measly British National party councillor—whom we shall get rid of—but for the racial antagonism and hatred that have developed in the area. Racial violence has grown while desperate people fight for the few resources in the area and the few houses that have been built. The affordable places that the Isle of Dogs neighbourhood built to house local people have not been built with the blessing of the LDDC. It took years before we were able to build Masthouse terrace because the LDDC caused delays. Then everyone wanted the few houses that were built. Yet it should have been possible to build thousands of homes for affordable rent. That vast area of land available could have solved the chronic housing problems of the area once and for all. The opportunity was wasted and those whom local people still call yuppies moved in while their own plight was worse than ever and no one seemed to care.

No jobs resulted from the setting up of the LDDC. The LDDC policy of property speculation meant that higher land prices forced out local businesses that employed local people. The unemployment rate in Tower Hamlets in the past few months has gone not down but up again. Jobs for local people were not created, despite all the money that went into the area. It has been estimated that every job that was created cost £45,000—what chronic mismanagement, what chronic waste of public money.

From 1981 to 1992, the LDDC received £1.6 billion grant in aid in addition to other concessions in the enterprise zone such as capital allowances, rates

allowances, tax allowances and so on. There was no trickle-down effect, as the LDDC and the Government had prophesied.

The whole Canary wharf project was madness. It was madness to build that huge edifice of offices isolated with no adequate public transport to reach it. When the Government sought to remedy the position, there was crazy mismanagement again. The docklands highway cost £650 million to construct. The Limehouse link is the most expensive mile of road that has ever been built. Despite assurances to the contrary, the docklands highway is used for commuter traffic to pass through Tower Hamlets. One only has to go to Tower Hamlets on any weekday evening to see that the traffic jams on the A13 are as bad as ever. Come any evening and see how that £650 million has been wasted. The Government held up the building of the Jubilee line extension for £400 million and insisted that the money had to come from private industry. The Jubilee line extension is still not started and yet the Government have thrown the money away on roads.

The St. Vincent estate was knocked down to build the Limehouse link and 500 homes went by the board. Rehousing those people is one of the sore points that caused the trouble that led to the election of the British National party candidate.

Mr. Spearing: As Member of Parliament for a neighbouring constituency I pass through my hon. Friend's constituency frequently. I noticed that the site that was occupied by the St. Vincent estate is not above the enormous tunnel. Was the estate originally demolished to provide for that tunnel and if not, why were those flats not refurbished, as those on the other side of the road have been, instead of making the area into a blank site?

Ms Gordon: That is a good question. Most local people think that the LDDC picked the route that destroyed 500 units of public sector housing because it wanted the land for office developments or to sell off for expensive private housing. It could have built the road along the foreshore or in a tunnel instead of building a cut-and-cover road and then it would not have had to pull down the St Vincent estate. The bottom fell out of the market, no one wanted office developments or luxury housing and the land remains unused.

Although I wrote to the LDDC on behalf of local people and said that they had discussed plans and wanted affordable housing, council housing and community centres and so forth on the site, the LDDC has no intention of building anything of the kind. It never consults local people and it never does what they want. That is not its way.

Let us look at some other aspects—beyond the pantomime of the Jubilee line extension, which the Government and the LDDC have postponed over and over again—that is irritating local people. Let us consider why the people whom I represent and I do not feel that we ought to give further powers to the LDDC, which has not managed well the powers that it has.

The docklands light railway extension to Lewisham has been on the cards for a long time. It will cause a lot more disturbance of the type that my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras described. Local people have literally been made to eat dirt—dirt and dust seeps into their houses and they suffer from the noise of pile driving. Does the Minister know what pile driving sounds like night and day? It can drive people mad. Local people have put up with that for years and now they are being asked to put up with more of it for the building of the docklands light railway.

Local people wanted that extension of public transport and could see that it had benefits—or some, if not all, did. Members of the Millwall park users group—the park will be taken over for a long time and people will lose that amenity while the railway extension is built—and other petitioners against the Bill spent many months preparing evidence for the House of Commons and House of Lords Select Committee. The Committee assured them and the neighbourhood that Island Gardens station would be built underground. I asked the Minister, in the Chamber, for a community trust fund to be set up with £1 million to compensate people for the loss of amenities during the years that the extension was being built. The residents could have controlled that trust fund and provided other amenities for the community, as a substitute for the football pitch, the park and all the other things that would be out of action.

In its wisdom, the House of Lords Committee decided that the primary purpose was to compensate local people by means of capital investment, which would enhance the area, rather than by handouts—it considered that the trust that I asked for was a handout—through a community trust or exceptional compensation payments. It also decided that the new underground Island Gardens station would be proposed as compensation for people in the area. Some people were satisfied with the proposal that the station would be underground, and that it would be properly staffed and that Millwall park would be levelled off and reinstated, which would improve the area.

After all their work and all those petitions and discussions, we have suddenly heard that the money is not there and that Island Gardens station might be deleted. Hon. Members might think that the docklands light railway is a great amenity for the community, but 25 per cent. of islanders do not live within reasonable walking distance of a station. If Island Gardens and Mudchute stations are not included in the Lewisham extension, another 25 per cent. of the community will not have the benefit of living within walking distance of a station on the direct line to Lewisham. The DLR primarily serves the business area and not the residential area. Many residents have a long walk to stations and the new proposal to delete Island Gardens and to let the community down, after having what local people considered were serious discussions, will make the position much worse.

A spur line is suggested for Island Gardens and Mudchute, but the local community has totally rejected that idea as trains would be infrequent and it is not what was promised or what they want. Everyone is asking when the trains will run in the evening and at weekends. They still stop at 9 o'clock at night and there are no trains on Saturdays and Sundays. People cannot go anywhere by train then. They have to wait in the cold for the infrequent buses.

So much for LDDC management and policies. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) will agree that it has taken a long time for the Beckton extension to come into use. We are promised it next month—

Mr. Spearing: It is a year overdue.

Ms Gordon: Yes, it is a year overdue—so much for the way in which the LDDC manages things.

What about access to the water? I spoke to the Docklands sailing club today. Its members told me that if they want access to the LDDC-owned slipway they have to obtain permission each time that they want to use it and to travel to pick up the permit, which is very inconvenient. When the club holds a big event and its small car park is not big enough, it has to pay £50 a day for parking at Arnhem wharf. That would be fine if the car park was decent, but the site is littered with bollards and large potholes. What will the LDDC charge other local groups for decent parking—the sailing club is a charity—which is essential? We had enough trouble when the arena opened and there were no car parks or toilets. We must ask such questions if the LDDC is to have more powers.

Since I became a Member of Parliament in 1987, I have continually raised the question of access to the waterfront with officers of the LDDC. They once gave me a briefing downstairs with maps and so forth and showed me all the areas where there is supposed to be access to the waterfront. Many buildings were allowed to be built only if public access was provided. My secretary, who lives on the Isle of Dogs, said, "Just a minute. That long piece of waterfront looks as though you can walk along it, but there is a brick wall across it and you can't walk along but have to go round and along the road." She pointed to another place that looked as though one could walk along, but said that one can only go so far before having to scramble through mud and dog mess to get across to the other part of the path.

When the tall ships came along the river there was a great fuss when local people tried to see them. They were stopped by jets of water that shot up from the ground and by guards on land that was marked down as public open space. I have raised the matter over and over again.

In one press release, Michael Pickard was seen doing some bolt-cutting to open some space, but that was symbolic. I asked the LDDC to put up signs on every piece of public open space to say that the public had access to it. I also asked for street furniture and benches so that in hot weather, in an area with little parkland—it will be worse when Millwall park and Island Gardens are taken up by the building of the docklands light railway extension—people can sit by the water, get a breath of fresh air and cool off. Did the corporation do that? No. There are a few signs now, but, by and large, nothing has been done. A paltry sum would have been involved. The corporation has had millions—billions—but it cannot do that little thing for local people.

Local people have little for which to thank the LDDC and have had little joy out of its control over the area. This is the time at which we should be considering documents and Bills in connection with the running down and closing of the LDDC and the handing over of its tasks to the elected local authority. It is a strange time at which to be discussing extending its powers, especially given that it has mismanaged everything that it has handled so far.

8.20 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I start by thanking the board members and officers of the LDDC who have answered some of my questions and met at least some of my objections—as best they can—since I started to examine the Bill. I make no secret of the fact that I doubted the need for the Bill and still have doubts about its contents. I agree, however, that there is a legal vacuum surrounding docklands, especially as regards the water itself and the areas immediately adjacent to it, and that that vacuum needs to be filled.

Originally, the docks were heavily policed, with a big wall, dock gates and high security. They fulfilled a special purpose under the dock companies and subsequently the Port of London Authority. The purpose of that area of water has now changed completely. It not now primarily an area for work but an area of public access, for leisure and recreation. We therefore need a different set of legal bases or byelaws for it.

The main question is whether a body set up temporarily, which is known to be going out of existence in the next few years, is the best body on which to confer additional powers by an Act of Parliament. That is why I have had doubts about the Bill, even though local authorities and others have understandably not opposed it. I understand, too, why recreational bodies such as rowing clubs and sailing organisations and the navigation authorities also see the need for byelaws, and I shall come to them in a minute.

Let us first look at the procedural problem, part of which we have discovered today and which has in any case become a little more acute for the reasons hinted at by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore)—that deregulation and the place of statutory instruments are now very much in the air as a result of the controversial Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill.

I shall not quote clause 22 extensively, but it deserves quoting in principle. Subsection (1) states:

> "Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or any provision of the Act of 1980, the Secretary of State, on the application of the Corporation, may by order at any time transfer to any person ("the transferee") with the agreement of that person all or any part of the undertaking."

I must confess that when, amateur-like, I first read the Bill, I thought that the undertaking referred to was the undertaking to abide by the background to the byelaws. In fact, however, the undertaking refers to what we in east London might call the whole shebang.

That is a very considerable power. In the autumn, I corresponded with the promoters of the Bill who agreed that it was a power in which Parliament ought to have some say. They graciously agreed—there was common sense in the decision—that that power and the power in clause 20 should be exercised only subject to the negative resolution procedure of the House.

Acting on my usual instincts, I asked for the minimum rather than the maximum. Perhaps I should have gone further. But at least Parliament was brought into the matter. Perhaps I have become inured to the way in which the LDDC has been operating in the past few years. Parliament has not seen very much of the activities of the LDDC; as we know, it has been a quango under the Secretary of State.

I am glad that that was agreed, but other factors have come into play since then. I am grateful for the fact that my attention has been drawn to two amendments to the original Act relating to the transfer of operations. The original Act was the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. I served on the Standing Committee that considered that legislation and fought for a long time to get some safeguards written into it. Section 165 says:

"Subject to this section, an urban development corporation may, by an agreement made with any local authority or any statutory undertakers and approved by the Secretary of State with the Treasury's concurrence:—

(a) transfer to the local authority the whole or any part of the corporation's undertaking, or

(b) transfer to the statutory undertakers the whole or any part of the corporation's undertakings which consists of a statutory undertaking".

That was common sense, because that was the sort of thing that might happen either during or at the end of the life of the LDDC. I am glad to say that subsection (8) of that same section says that

"Such a transfer shall be of no effect until it is approved by resolution of the House of Commons."

There we have a public and general Act relating to the transfer of property.

However, that provision was amended by section 180 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993, which adds after the words "local authority" the words "or other body". Thus, another public and general Act added to the powers of the Secretary of State and the LDDC to transfer—subject not just to the negative resolution procedure in this case but to an affirmative resolution that could require at least an hour and a half's debate.

I have a question for the Minister and, more particularly, the Committee to which the Bill will no doubt go following tonight's debate. Does the phrase in clause 22,

"or any provision of the Act of 1980"

refer to the Act of 1980, as amended? I assume that it probably does, in which case, the effect of clause 22 is far greater than some of us may have thought. If it is correct —quite honestly, I do not think any hon. Member could say a definite yea or nay at this stage—it means that clause 22 takes the place, at least in some respects, of the parts of the public and general Acts that I have quoted. That is a very important question. If clause 22 takes the place of those provisions, it means something highly controversial.

One of the matters that we have been discussing in the House in the past few weeks is the extent to which a regulation can change an Act of Parliament. In this case, we have a Bill privately promoted by a body set up by an order under the Secretary of State suddenly providing the Secretary of State and itself with enormously increased powers. That gives rise to questions that the Private Bill Committee may like to look at.

The Government may have seen the problem, too. They may not be too keen on the clause because it creates a closed circuit running something like this: Secretary of State; quango produced by order; quango produces private Bill to give more powers to the Secretary of State. That is not a democratically healthy circle. I shall leave it at that because the Minister and the Committee to which the occupants of the Chair have referred may have views on the matter as well. If, as I confess is the case, these matters have come to light only in the past week—although I was unhappy last October—parliamentary scrutiny has at least been shown to be effective. I do not think that anyone inside or outside the Chamber has been responsible for trying to pull a fast one. The problem has arisen at least partly inadvertently—if, indeed, the provisions have the effect that I fear.

That is the end of what I might call the procedural prelude. I shall now consider the LDDC and the Bill, particularly the byelaws contained in it. I will not consider the part relating to transfer, because I have already dealt with it.

I am not quite sure whether the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) sees the LDDC and its work in quite the same way as those of us on the north side of the river. I suspect that that difference is due to environmental considerations, because the Surrey docks have shown examples of what some people have said was needed. The late Lord Cross of Chelsea, who chaired the Select Committee of the Lords when the LDDC was set up, said that what was needed was lots of small houses, all with gardens, to rent at reasonable rates. He said that, unfortunately, we on the north of the river would not get them for a while, but that the LDDC might provide them. I suspect that a high proportion of those that it has provided —few enough—are probably in the constituency of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. I therefore forgive him for having what I might regard as a rosy-eyed view of the LDDC's activities.

Mr. Simon Hughes: There may be more of such housing on our side of the river, but we have never said that there is enough. On the contrary, many empty private flats are available for rent, but we could have fully occupied social housing, which is urgently needed and which would be willingly occupied.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for putting that on the record. It shows just how unsuccessful the LDDC has been, because the Surrey docks, by nature of their size, layout and the fact that most of the docks, apart from the green land on the south dock, has been filled in, offered the maximum opportunities for such development.

The Bill entrenches, if anything, the existence of the LDDC—that temporary statutory body which was hailed, particularly by the former Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, as something akin to a new town corporation. It was the very opposite. New town corporations took lots of parcels of empty private land and put them together for housing and industry, based on a properly planned infrastructure. They created different zones for this, that and the other. The LDDC, however, took over vast areas of publicly owned land—railway land, dock land and gas land —and split it up for private development. It did not ensure that the necessary infrastructure existed.

I accept that the area has miles of roads and tunnels. Millions have been spent on roads, but the railways—

Ms Gordon: What about the docklands light railway?

Mr. Spearing: The DLR was first suggested by the dockland joint committee—the much abused but constructive committee of the Greater London council and the boroughs. In 1978, it published a booklet entitled "Bus, Underground or Tram?" The supertram was chosen. That option was the first proposal for public transport, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) has said, the Beckton extension in Newham will be the last to be opened. We hope that it will be opened next week and that it will work.

Even if the system works, journeys are long. A person first gets on at Beckton, but to get to the Bank—the expensive extension on which Canary Wharf was predicated—he must change at Poplar. He must then change at Canary Wharf. Two changes must be made

[Mr. Spearing]

because, in about 10 miles of railway, the electrical system is different. The DLR was the first plan, but it will be the last to be implemented.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar said, many people are employed in small workshops and small industries in docklands. The firms and their proprietors said that the development would fetch a lot of money—I do not blame them for that. They saw it as a capital gain. They either closed their existing firms or, if they wanted to keep going, they had to take sites a long way away. That meant that firms missed the local connections and local people, particularly those in the Canning Town area. Some of the firms have survived, others have not. Some of the industries that came to docklands have, however, brought their workers with them, particularly those who are left in the print industry.

The LDDC was not entitled by statute to set up a community, but it should have provided schools. In my constituency, the south of Newham, south of the A13, which covers a distance as great as from Earls Court to Blackfriars or from the south of Chelsea embankment to the middle of Hyde park, there is no secondary school. Despite the houses and gardens that have been built in New Beckton—those properties are full not of yuppies, but of hard-working local people—no secondary school exists. In the past five years, the three Members who represent Newham have visited Ministers to try to obtain that school, but the Government will not give us one.

I know that the provision of that school is not the responsibility of the LDDC, but the Government have tried to set up the area as a model. The LDDC has not done in Newham what it has done in other areas. We may not have Canary wharf in Newham, but nor do we have what we want. The LDDC has not achieved the regeneration of the community or the regeneration of families—that is what it is supposed to be about.

A suitable legal and constitutional structure does not exist. We have not had that under the LDDC and, given the way in which the transfer of responsibilities is envisaged, it does not look as though we will have a satisfactory structure in the future. The Bill is, perforce, an unwelcome necessity, because the LDDC must have some statutory duties to cover itself and those of us who are responsible for the law. If someone drowns in the dock or there is a need for policing, an authority must have some powers to offer some public order.

I was pleased to note that officials of the LDDC tabled a new clause for the Bill when it was considered in the Lords to provide it with some obligations. Clause 5(1) states:

"It shall be the duty of the Corporation, in formulating or considering any proposals relating to its functions under this Act, to have regard to the desirability of securing the use of the designated areas for a diversity of purposes which may include sporting, recreational, cultural, commercial, energy-related and navigational purposes."

It is a duty to "have regard" not a duty to do and it "may" meet that obligation. At least the obligation is included in the Bill, which is a good thing.

The designated areas are largely water. On the map that has been provided with the Bill, the land areas are, understandably, of limited size because the great bulk of the area is made up of the docks. Clause 7 says that the corporation, as part of its functions under the Act, should

"have regard to the desirability of securing and maintaining public access to the waterside."

The clause refers not to the river, but to the docks, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar has already mentioned.

The two big remaining docks are the West India docks, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar, and the Royal docks in my constituency. They are 2.5 miles long and probably represent the biggest area of impounded water of its type in the world. They have 15 miles of deep water quays and represent an inestimable potential for London. They are a much underestimated resource. They are, however, expensive to maintain.

One of the good things that the LDDC has done is to re-establish the George V lock. It has also built two new swing bridges and a third is probably to come. It has resuscitated the West India docks lock and built new swing bridges within that system. The wharves are partly the responsibility of the landholders and partly the responsibility of the LDDC. It has told me that, before it is wound up, the wharves will be put into a fit state.

This is a harbour, however, and it is an expensive one to operate. When 10,000 to 15,000 tonne ships were coming into the Royals, lined up on each side—we have all seen the pictures—the costs of maintaining those docks and the West India docks was pooled and was a levy on the cargoes. It was relatively easy to do. However, if the docks are used for recreational purposes, as they will be, the money for them must be collected somehow.

I understand that £1 million a year could be needed for the dock systems. If that money is to be raised solely from the holders of the land around, the choice by the LDDC of the applicants for the local plan, especially in the Royal docks area, will be constrained by the question of who is to pay for those harbour costs. If we still had the Greater London council, which used to manage things such as Crystal Palace sports centre, Kenwood or whatever, it would have been an all-London facility, but, alas, we do not have that agency, which could have taken such administration in its stride.

We have proposals for housing—alas, not a high proportion of the type of homes that my hon. Friends and I wish for. There has been much talk about an urban village, but the housing constraints, debated this very afternoon in the House, mean that it will be difficult to achieve the balance of community that everyone locally wants and the housing that the people in need of housing in east London, from Newham and elsewhere, want.

The Victoria dock is currently used, under the initiative of the Newham borough council, as a magnificent sailing reach, open to the south-west prevailing wind. I do not think that anything should be put in place that would materially affect that magnificent sailing stretch, but there are proposals for bridging and for other crossings of that water.

The rowing course in the Albert Dock is well used, but there may be an opportunity to make extensions, and to create a course to Olympic standards. The course is already used many times a year by the Poplar and Blackwall club on the Thames for youth and national rowing, and it is something of which London can be proud. The pontoon dock could make a small harbour for learning for canoeists and all types of water activity that is not suited to the larger and longer reaches.

The LDDC has created an organisation known as the Royal Docks Management Authority—RODMA for short.

The borough council and I want to know how that organisation will fit in with those recreational demands, and how the money will be raised. I have had no convincing answer to those questions.

In docklands we have part of London's maritime heritage—a heritage of which we can be proud. There are possibilities for working areas of dockland as it was. HMS Warrior was built on the River Lea, only a few hundred yards from the Royal docks, at the old Thames ironworks. That water should be used for all types of purposes, as should the surrounding land. For example, there is a possibility of the university of East London setting up an area on the north side of the Albert dock.

However, the Bill will do very little in those respects. It does not give much vision. It fills in the legal vacuum of the byelaws, which is necessary, but, if we are to judge the future on the performance of the past, we shall not build on firm foundations. The Bill may be passed, with or without clause 22. I believe that there are some fundamental constitutional question marks over that clause. We need something much more radical and practical, and something that will provide the people of east London—indeed, the people of Greater London—with a better statutory and financial basis for the future of the Royal docks and the whole of the dockland area. It is the western extremity of the much-trumpeted Thameside corridor, which is, if not a jewel in the crown of the Government, at least something which they claim. Those claims will not be made manifest without more thought and a much better Bill.

8.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): It may be helpful if I make clear the Government's approach to the Bill. Our remit is straightforward. It is to ensure that the provisions of the Bill accord with public policy generally. We have considered the Bill. It has been amended in another place —I understand to take account of the concerns of the boroughs—and we are generally content with its proposals.

The Bill is of a comparatively short compass. It acknowledges that the docks can still hold dangers for the general public and that in those circumstances there is a need for an effective regime to regulate the conduct of people in and around the dock estate, to ensure public health and safety, to prevent pollution and to secure the reasonable and quiet enjoyment of the dock environment.

That is what the corporation's Bill seeks to achieve. It is a thoroughly sensible Bill and it is slightly disappointing that Opposition Members have chosen to impair the speedy progress of the Bill, especially given its primary aim of ensuring the safety of the public in and around the dock estate.

Mr. Dobson: Can the Minister tell us in what way we have impaired the speedy progress of the Bill? All that we have done is to ask questions and raise points and get the promoters of the Bill to accept an amendment that the Government should have sought when they were consulted in the first place.

Mr. Baldry: Given that the hon. Gentleman has spent most of today trying to get the Bill ruled out of order—

Mr. Dobson: No, I have not.

Mr. Baldry: Absolutely. If the hon. Member looks at his point of order and the points that he made earlier, it seems strange that he is now indicating that he wishes the Bill to have a speedy passage.

The hon. Gentleman sought to raise an issue suggesting—

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister give way again?

Mr. Baldry: Perhaps if I answered the point that the hon. Member initiated, he could then respond to it.

Mr. Dobson: Would not it have been better if the hon. Gentleman had not missed what had gone on earlier because he was not in the Chamber at the time?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman argued that the Bill should be treated as a hybrid Bill because—

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like the hon. Member to identify any point at which I have said anything in the Chamber about this being a hybrid Bill. The only matter that has been challenged is whether it was appropriate to have what would be better in a public general Act in this private Bill.

Mr. Baldry: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that is not arguing that the Bill is a hybrid Bill, I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman's definition of a hybrid Bill might be. It was clear what the hon. Gentleman's point of order was this afternoon. It was to seek to prevent debate on the Bill. That was the reason why he got to his feet and that was the sole reason why he came to the House. He sought to do two things this evening; one was to pursue that point and the other was to make an election address which doubtless will be used by his party in Millwall. Apart from that, he has not added much to the sum of human knowledge.

However, the hon. Gentleman did raise a point, to which I am seeking to respond, that clause 22 sought to create a new power. I shall deal with that point from the perspective of the Government and it is a matter that the sponsors of the Bill may wish to take on board in Committee. As far as I am concerned, clause 22 does not create a new power. Under section 165 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, as amended by section 180 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993, urban development corporations' undertakings can be transferred to any local authority, statutory undertakers or any other body by agreement between the parties with the approval of the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of State can, by order, transfer urban development corporations' property rights and liabilities to himself. It could therefore be argued quite strongly—indeed, I would argue it if I were on the Committee—that clause 22 may be unnecessary as transfer of the powers to make byelaws for which it seeks to provide could be dealt with under the 1980 Act. As I have said, the Bill's sponsors may wish to take up that point in Committee.

I am saddened by the general tone of the debate. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) introduced it in a measured, responsible, positive and constructive way; subsequently, however, we have heard rather negative and destructive speeches. Labour Members have queued up to denounce the work of the LDDC: none could bring himself or herself to say a single decent thing about any of its achievements since its inception.

[Mr. Baldry]

Let me explain why I find that sad. There are 12 urban development corporations in the country, all of which I have visited—as have my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction and many other Ministers. All the corporations are now in cities and the areas involved are not under the political control of the Conservative party; they are often controlled by Labour.

I am bound to say that in every other area Labour has managed to develop a strong sense of partnership with the development corporations. As my right hon. Friend and I embark each year on the review of the corporate plans of the various corporations, the point made to us in many other areas is not, "This development corporation is imposing terrible things on our area", but, "We welcome what the corporation is doing for our city: we appreciate the opportunities that it offers. We would like its life to be extended, because we see that the whole partnership approach is bringing enormous benefits to our area." It is sad that Labour Members do not appreciate the benefits that the LDDC has brought to their areas and constituents.

Ms Gordon: The Minister seems to be unaware that a fascist was elected to the council in the enterprise zone —the very area over which the LDDC has control, into which it has put so much money and work. The area is seething with discontent. Even if the LDDC's main aim was to promote business, businesses would run a mile from an area of racial violence and constant trouble.

When Labour Members have approached the LDDC asking for help for certain projects and explaining what the community wants, their requests have been largely ignored. Tricks have been pulled like the one involving the docklands light railway: our proposal for a community trust was rejected and we were told that our compensation would be an underground station at Island Gardens. But it has become clear that, with a stroke of the pen, the projected station is to be abandoned. That is our experience —a bad one. Perhaps other areas have had better experiences of urban development corporations.

Mr. Baldry: With respect, I consider that completely fanciful. First, all the local authorities concerned are represented on the development corporation. I am not a stranger to the boroughs concerned; I visit them frequently and meet borough leaders. I am sure that if they had the concerns to which the hon. Lady refers, they would make them clear to Ministers—but they do not. This kind of rhetoric, vocabulary and syntax in references to the LDDC is confined to Labour Members. I do not know whether that is because they feel that, as the development corporations were established by a Conservative Government, they cannot bring themselves to say a decent word about them; but I suspect that that is the only possible reason.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) expressed anxiety about the future of the area once the LDDC's life ended. It has always been accepted that the corporation's existence was finite: it was always part of the agreement with Parliament that, because of the scale of the regeneration that was needed, the corporations would need to take certain powers, but that in due course they would cease to exist and those powers—planning powers, for example—would have to be returned to the boroughs.

My right hon. Friend and I would be more than willing —certainly, I would—to meet hon. Members who represent constituencies within the LDDC area to discuss a succession strategy. The development corporation is already beginning to work on such a strategy. It knows how much money it has to invest during the remaining period of its existence, and it is engaging in constructive, positive discussions with the boroughs concerned. I am more than willing to discuss the future of the docklands area with Labour Members: I am determined to drag them into the real world and to discuss the achievements and potential of the area for their benefit and that of their constituents.

Mr. Spearing: That invitation illustrates the vacuum that exists: if the debate does nothing else, it will have done that. Let me assure the Minister that visits from successive Ministers—including the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction—have been cordial, on a personal level; but the resources have been available to the wrong people, in the wrong places, in the wrong way.

The Minister said that no appreciation had been expressed. I think that, in my speech, I thanked board members and staff who are constrained by instructions from the Secretary of State and by existing laws; I also said that the LDDC had done a good job in regard to locks, swing bridges and docksides—thanks to a chairman whom I will not name, but who is now being appointed to yet another quango. I hope that he will do well, but I fear that he will not.

Mr. Baldry: I think that the only vacuum has been Labour Members' lack of appreciation and understanding of the LDDC's contribution to the regeneration of the docklands area.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said that he could not find the figures showing how much public money had been invested in docklands. During the 13 years of its existence, the LDDC has invested some £1.6 billion of public money, but it has used that money to lever in substantial sums of private money —£6 billion. Every penny spent by the corporation is accounted for. Each year, it publishes its corporate plan and discusses it with local authorities.

The LDDC's deputy chairman, Lord Cocks, is a former Labour Member: indeed, I seem to recall his being a Labour Chief Whip. There is ample cross-party involvement. Everyone seeks to ensure that the money being invested is put to the best possible use for local people. Indeed, throughout its existence, the LDDC—like every other development corporation—has sought to work in partnership with the three local authorities, with private developers, with housing associations and with other statutory bodies.

Mr. Dobson: If the hon. Gentleman is committing himself to a burst of open government, will he tell us the cost of capital allowances for individual enterprise zones and for individual developments within them?

Mr. Baldry: I shall gladly answer any parliamentary question that the hon. Gentleman cares to table, provided that it has been deemed to be in order. He will not expect me to be able to answer off the top of my head specific questions such as the one he has just put to me.

The thrust of the hon. Gentleman's earlier remarks was that there was something covert and unspecified about the way in which development corporations operate. That is not true. Development corporations have money voted by Parliament. This is part of the inner cities vote of my

Department. It is perfectly transparent and perfectly accounted for each year in the corporations' plans. Indeed, it is in the interests of everyone that the expenditure of these bodies be revealed, as it can then be demonstrated clearly that, through the partnership approach that we advocate and promote, it has been possible to lever in substantial sums of private money for every pound of public money that is provided. The public-private partnership has been very much to the benefit of docklands and the rest of that part of London. It has enabled us to provide new roads, railways, tunnels and other facilities.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that for a very long time after the war vast parts of London constituting what is now the docklands development area were left derelict despite administration by Labour Governments and Labour councils? It was in response to that waste that, in the late 1970s, people like Lord Mellish, with Conservative support, argued passionately for this approach, which was put in train by the Conservative Government. In Salter road in Bermondsey, one can now see a transformation that is heart-warming by any standards.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend is right. Everyone recognised that the rundown of the docks and the urban decay, compounded by poor housing and inadequate community facilities, presented an enormous challenge. But the challenge was matched by the potential. The opportunities that were provided were unmatched anywhere in Europe. The London Docklands development corporation has helped to meet the challenge and secure realisation of much of the potential.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman talks about a public-private partnership. Will he tell us the cost of the capital allowances for the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone? One of his predecessors—the right hon. Gentleman who is now Secretary of State for Wales—simply refused to give this information. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that such information will be available?

Mr. Baldry: I thought that I had already answered that question. I have told the hon. Gentleman that I am more than willing to provide him with as much information as possible and that I shall certainly answer any parliamentary question that is considered by the Table Office to be in order. I have made it clear several times this evening that it is in the interests of everyone that the fullest possible information about what is happening in docklands be provided.

It is desirable that we demonstrate clearly to the House and to the world at large the success of the partnership approach. It is very sad that the Labour party still has difficulty grasping the concept of partnership between the public and private sectors. What has come through clearly in the speeches of Opposition Members is that the only government they consider worth while is that which they control. It appears that they still regard public-private partnership as total anathema.

Opposition Members have complained of the insufficiency of new housing in docklands. It is clear that they have been walking around with their eyes closed. In docklands, more than 16,000 new homes have been completed. A good 20 per cent. of them are for low-income families. The development corporation has worked with 11 housing projects—some of them for shared ownership and some of them for local authority homes. Environmental improvements have been made to 3,500 homes in 40 housing estates. The corporation has supported a whole range of initiatives right across the boroughs involved. Substantial sums of public and private money have gone into new office and other developments.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras made scathing comments about jobs. The fact is that the number of jobs has increased from 27,000 in 1981 to 55,000 today. That is a very substantial increase and all the projections indicate that the number will quadruple to well over 200,000 by the year 2001. The docklands development corporation has also been investing substantially in skills of and for local people, again working in partnership with local authorities and other agencies. It has invested about £76 million to assist docklands schools and post-16 colleges; it supports training schemes and more than 5,000 training places have been sponsored in a range of occupational skills; and schools have been helped in a variety of ways. I am glad that boroughs such as Newham and Tower Hamlets have worked closely with the development corporation on memoranda of agreement and the Accord programme and on a range of community projects such as the recently opened North Woolwich children's centre in Newham and the health centre for family care in Wapping. Currently, 84 voluntary and community groups receive funding support from the corporation.

Mr. Dobson *rose—*

Mr. Baldry: No, I shall not give way.

I could go on almost all night explaining the achievements in docklands: new jobs, new housing and a substantial number of small businesses and work spaces. I could talk about the extension of the Jubilee line to docklands and of the docklands light railway to Lewisham, which is another private finance initiative levering in money from the private sector to add to money raised in the public sector. I could talk until dawn, but that would still not impress Opposition Members, who are convinced that nothing good could ever come of the development corporation. They are determined for theological reasons never willingly to acknowledge that the corporation can do anything good. People who live in the area—

Mr. Dobson *rose—*

Mr. Baldry: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman several times. People who live in the area have seen the new offices, the new housing and the new businesses and jobs that have come to docklands as a result of the Government's substantial investment in the LDDC which has been supported by the private sector. I only hope that in time Opposition Members will understand that the solid foundations laid by the LDDC will continue for many years to come, to be built on for the benefit of docklands and, more important, for the people who live there.

The Bill is a sensible measure. I am saddened that its progress through the House has not been speedier. It is intended to add to the safety of those who live and work in the docklands area, and the Government wish it a speedy passage.

9.6 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall speak for a second time.

I wish first to pick up on one or two of the Minister's comments, for which some of us are grateful. The Minister cannot complain that progress has been slow. So far, today's debate has lasted two hours and seven minutes. Since the Bill received a First Reading, there has been no delay other than that which was necessary while the Bill went to the Examiners, and it has won the first slot available for private Bills since then. We are all seeking to make good progress. As the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, we welcome the fundamentals of the Bill regarding the making of byelaws and the governing of water in the area, and the Minister has heard no criticism about them.

If I were to divide the debate between the two sides of the House, I should say that on the Minister's side the argument is that everything in the docklands garden is rosy and that on this side people are saying that everything is not. The objective evidence tends to support the views expressed by those on this side. Of course, there are good things in docklands and the Minister was fair enough not to criticise me for saying otherwise. However, the most telling point from this side of the House is that, despite all the money being invested, there will never be a satisfactory result unless the people themselves are allowed much more opportunity to decide about that money. People will never be happy if they are told how their money is to be spent and if an undemocratic committee makes the planning decisions. The people themselves have a view. In the east end, in Bermondsey and Rotherhithe, people have very strong views and are perfectly able to express them given half the chance.

Mr. Dobson: As the Minister would not give way, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I wanted to urge the Minister to urge the LDDC to agree to produce and to publish figures that showed how many of the remaining jobs in docklands, how many of the jobs transferred to docklands and how many new jobs in docklands had gone to people living in docklands. Until the development corporation does that, it will not be trusted in terms of jobs by local people. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees.

Mr. Hughes: I agree entirely. One of the points with which we must deal is how we reconcile European legislation and local labour agreements. It is no good the LDDC making general points when all the results of its efforts do not go to the local community. Speaking for my constituency—the position is not dissimilar in Tower Hamlets—I point out that we have some of the highest unemployment in the country. When people see work being done and new jobs being created on their doorsteps, and when they cannot have those jobs, there is bound to be discontent.

I now turn to the central technical and drafting point of the debate—clause 22 and "the undertaking" referred to there. If we look at the definition clause, clause 2, we find a definition—perhaps I should say an only slightly illuminating definition—of "the undertaking". The amended definition reads as follows:

"'the undertaking' means the undertaking of the Corporation in connection with the designated areas, as from time to time authorised, or any part thereof and includes any functions conferred on the Corporation by or under this Act".

It is probably the case, as the Minister said, that the Local Government, Land and Planning Act 1980 gives the Government the power to hand over undertakings to whomsoever they will under various proceedings. The Bill seeks to deal specifically with the byelaw provisions and to decide where they go. That is my understanding, which seems to be consistent.

None the less, if we are giving byelaw powers to the LDDC, it is logical for us to want to know where those powers and the other substrata powers will go in future. We can have that debate in Committee. If the Committee is satisfied that there is no need to have different legislation and if we are happy with the substantive Act, we shall be happy with the Bill. None the less, that is a proper matter for debate. The crucial issue is where the powers, whether byelaws or substantive powers, will go.

Mr. Dobson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if, in his wisdom, the Minister had decided that clause 22 is unnecessary, it might have been sensible if he or his officials had given that view to the LDDC? Most of our debate tonight would then have been quite unnecessary and the Minister might have been able go to his supper rather earlier.

Mr. Hughes: We shall never know why that did not happen. The Minister accepted that there has been consultation. Private Bills are sent to the Government so that they can give their views on it. The Government might have spotted that point earlier. Perhaps no one grasped the issue at an early stage.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing out that the definition clause was amended. However, it is still ambiguous. The undertakings established by the Bill are undertakings of obligation rather than undertakings of business. The definition clause says:

"'the undertaking' means the undertaking of the Corporation in connection with the designated areas, as from time to time authorised, or any part thereof and includes any functions conferred on the Corporation by or under under this Act."

The word used is "includes". That does not mean that the clause excludes everything else. The clause includes the words "in connection with". Land within, say, a few hundred metres of the dock could well come within that definition. All this needs tidying up in a big way.

Mr. Hughes: Not only the hon. Gentleman, but I and others share that view. In terms of explicit, clear drafting, the definition clause does not get us much further than it would have done if it had not been included. There is a little exercise for us all to do. The moral of the story is that we must all go away with two tasks in terms of drafting. First, we could all try to make a better hash of what we are trying to do in clause 22 and try to ensure that things say what they are meant to say. Under clause 5 we have an addition, by amendment, giving a general duty as to designated areas. It may be, now that the promoters have accepted the principle of the general duty and been more specific, we could make an improvement on that, too, to make sure that we meet the needs of the people for whom the Bill is being promoted.

Let me now deal with the more factual questions that have been raised. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), both in his speech and in interventions, dealt with the provision of services for docklands—housing, job creation, infrastructure and investment. We have dealt with figures setting out how

much money has been spent in docklands and there is a perfectly acceptable and agreed breakdown there. It is correct to say that the £1.6 billion includes only £155 million for social housing, so social housing has not been the core commitment. In single subject heading terms, the core commitment has been roads and transport. All dockland Members of Parliament would say that we need more housing investment and in particular more such investment to meet the needs of those who are either inadequately or badly housed or not housed at all.

An inspection of the Isle of Dogs figures or the Bermondsey figures shows that the nature of houses built is such that there is a significant mix. This was done for social mix purposes. In the Isle of Dogs, the owner-occupied figure is 30.1 per cent., private rented housing is 11.3 per cent., housing association housing is 10.9 per cent. and council housing is 47.7 per cent. The need is clearly for significantly more social housing.

It is quite possible to talk about demand for private housing until one is blue in the face, but it is true to say that there has not been that demand recently. Using the test of need, it is plain that we need more social housing at rents that people can afford. There is a need for more shared ownership and for cheap owner-occupied housing. What we do not need is a lot of luxury housing that lies empty year after year because no one can afford it.

Mr. Dobson: Does the hon. Member have any figures showing how much of the money spent on social housing encompasses new spending for entirely new housing or for rehabilitating existing dwellings and how much was spent on houses to replace those knocked down for other purposes by the development corporation?

Mr. Hughes: The short answer is no. But it is a good question. Not very much housing has been knocked down. The only significant estate that I am aware of that was knocked down was for the purposes of the Limehouse link. Otherwise, there have been some that were knocked down as part of general improvement schemes, including south of the river, that were much less controversial.

I urge all hon. Members who have an interest in this issue to appreciate that if there are any unsatisfactory or unresolved issues, now is the time to tackle them. There are two reasons for this. The first is that we have the Bill before us and, therefore, have the corporation a bit more by the short and curlies than is usually the case. Secondly, de-designation will start soon and after that it will be too late. I invite them all to compile their lists. I will make my list, we can aggregate them and we will go to see the Minister, his right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction and the corporation officials to get what we can. I say specifically to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) that I include in that list what seems a perfectly reasonable request to make a bid for a station on the docklands light railway at Island Gardens. I had to battle for three years to get underground stations in Bermondsey and Southwark on the Jubilee line and eventually we got them. We need to join the hon. Lady's battle.

There are also small but important matters to consider, such as the need to ensure that we do not price local community groups such as the docklands sailing club out of using facilities because unreasonable rents are charged for the use of the slipway or for the car park. All those are perfectly reasonable requests, for which we have to go into bat.

Mr. Heald rose—

Mr. Hughes: Just one second. I want to deal with the hon. Lady's other point.

I profoundly agree with the hon. Lady on the question of access to the waterfront. I have a pair of cutters ready sto cut open a gate which is meant to be open, but is locked. I will do so. I do not mind who arrests me for it because it is meant to be open space, it was promised to be so, there is no planning permission to stipulate that it be shut off and we must ensure that the LDDC delivers that promise. In my case, this involves King and Queen wharf and the hon. Lady also has good examples. We must ensure that the advantages to the public, not only of the steps to the river which they always had, but of the new opportunities, are theirs for the taking. It is no good losing all the business and all the docks and still not being able to get to the river. Let us take advantage.

Mr. Heald rose—

Mr. Hughes: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, who was once my opponent before he went to another seat.

Mr. Heald: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and I am quite willing to concede that he thrashed me on that occasion. When he talks of property left idle because it is luxury property, does he agree that what has happened in the Dockyard ward in his constituency is a huge transformation and is, generally speaking, for the good? Does he agree that the mix of housing and industrial and retail use in that ward is well balanced and that the LDDC has achieved a great deal?

Mr. Hughes: I agree that there are many good things. There has been support for community groups, a lot of new-build housing, refurbishment in the Old Amos estate which was falling down and new road building. Unlike the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), we have had new schools built in areas which needed them.

Mr. Spearing: Has the hon. Gentleman had new secondary schools?

Mr. Hughes: We have not had new secondary schools; we had new city technology colleges. They were much more controversial, but that is a separate point.

Mr. Heald: I campaigned for them.

Mr. Hughes: Some of us campaigned against them, but they came in all the same.

Many of these new things are wonderful, but the point that I was making earlier was that, if one pulls the plug by de-designating without the resources to ensure that the Surrey water, the footpaths and the pump houses have the resources, we shall be left with a lot of potentially brilliant estates, which will become run down and not be the sort of public wealth which we want it to be. That is a crucial issue for us in the Dockyard and Riverside ward on our side of the river and we are first in the de-designation priority list.

That links with the hon. Lady's final point about the timetable for running down. I do not know whether she has seen the published timetable for de-designation, which the Government are working towards. It begins with south of the river in the current year, mid-1994 for Bermondsey

[Mr. Hughes]

Riverside, 1995 for Beckton and Wapping, 1996 for the Surrey peninsula in Southwark and Limehouse and Tower Hamlets, 1997 for Isle of Dogs, South Poplar and West Leamouth in Tower Hamlets and 31 March 1998 for the Royals and what are described as the remainder—East Leamouth and the riverside belt in Newham.

That is the timetable, but it is still flexible and I understand that the hon. Lady, like the rest of us who share those views, have been invited to talk to the Minister about that. We need to do so and ensure that the timetable reflects the views of the local authorities, the local communities and ourselves. In my case, I shall make it absolutely clear that we are not yet ready to agree because we do not think that the package deal is yet in place.

To return to the points about employment made by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, yes, there have been a lot more jobs created, but he is right to say that every new job is not a net increase in jobs. Many jobs have been lost. There has been a net increase, but even a net increase of jobs does not necessarily mean jobs for the locals. I use that term generically because we are all aware of the issues. The issue is that, in areas of high unemployment, jobs on one's doorstep are the best. That was the merit of the docks in the past.

The hon. Member for Newham, South referred to the general duty. I have alluded to that point and we may want to beef it up in clause 5. He also referred to the importance of the maritime heritage. We must ensure that we maximise that. He also emphasised the need for appropriate infrastructure. We all echo his plea and hope that the houses will not be built without ensuring that there are schools, roads, parks and community facilities to support the people in the area.

The Minister was challenged in respect of his thesis that the docklands has been a wonderful development. Whatever we may think about how it was created, it has done many good things. I am aware that I am now entering controversial territory, but I hope that there will be agreement about my next point.

I am not making a party political point, but one of the reasons why a British National party councillor was elected in the Isle of Dogs was that if one lives in a community where one cannot get a job or a decent home or have all the facilities, and if on one's doorstep there are people with luxury jobs who earn huge salaries and live in luxury housing which they sometimes do not use for half the year and who are clearly living a totally different life, one thinks that the democratic process is letting one down.

Underlying the debate about byelaws, the important debate is that of the future of democracy in docklands. If the Minister has not heard adequately from the three councils concerned, in the case of Tower Hamlets, what the people need, he should talk also to the neighbourhood councils, including the Isle of Dogs and the Wapping neighbourhood councils, where elected representatives will tell him what the people need.

Ms Gordon: I want to tell the hon. Member and the House about a meeting in my constituency at which two sections of the community nearly came to blows—it was touch and go.

The King Edward memorial park, a little local park which is one of the few small areas of open waterfront, was, according to the plaque, given to the people of the area in perpetuity. A development company made a bid for a large part of that park to build a luxury tennis centre. Local people with money, who had lately moved into expensive housing in the area, attended the meeting. The older residents opposed the proposal because they wanted to keep access to the whole of their park in which there were knock-about tennis courts where the kids played after school which were well used and there was no charge.

The wealthier people who had moved into the area said, "There isn't a decent tennis centre closer than Islington and it's about time we had one." The elderly residents were worried about their park. That meeting nearly came to blows. The development company had thugs seated around the auditorium. That is the kind of thing that is happening. People feel that they are being pushed out and that they have to fight for the few amenities that they have, let alone to gain more amenities from the LDDC.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Lady is right. The Bill is clearly trying to improve the conditions of people who live and work in and visit docklands. I understand that, and that is why I am promoting the Bill. However, docklands as a whole will be judged by whether it improves the amenities in all respects for those who live and work in and visit the area.

As we are probably in the last few years of the docklands corporation, unless the Government understand that a fundamental change of attitude is still required so that people do not come in, make profits and leave, and do not simply put in their money for their own leverage and results, and unless the Government understand that we still have some of the largest problems in the country—and that means ending and narrowing the social divide—the history of docklands will be only partially successful. It will leave a legacy of discomfort, dissatisfaction and disrepair.

Mr. Spearing: I endorse what the hon. Gentleman said about the planned de-designation timetable, which is controversial in terms of the agreements on planning, particularly for the Royal docks. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a factor which the Minister might bear in mind—I am sure that there will be conversations about it—in that the proposals for a single regeneration budget for London and a senior regional director in a multi-ministry team, undoubtedly in Canary wharf, will have great significance because included in the Secretary of State's non-statutory notice was the fact that the whole of the operation of the London Docklands development corporation will come within the purview of that team and a controversial senior civil servant, who has yet to be appointed?

Mr. Hughes: I agree with that comment. We need to watch this space and ensure that we do not lose out in that respect.

I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading. However, hon. Members must not think that it is the end of the battle for docklands to be as the people of docklands need them. That battle goes on. I hope that increasingly the Government will respond. But they will respond well only if they listen well and hear what the people of docklands north and south of the river say.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed.

9.31 pm

Sitting suspended.

It being Ten o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates), put the deferred Question on supplementary estimates, 1993-94.*

CLASS VII, VOTE 1

That a further supplementary sum not exceeding £213,686,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1994 for expenditure by the Department of the Environment on subsidies, improvements and investments, payments to the Housing Corporation, payments to commute loan charges on grants to local authorities including the urban programme and urban development grant, and other sundry services.

The House divided: Ayes 170, Noes 33

Division No. 163] **[10 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gryffs, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bex'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Lewis, Terry
McCartney, Ian
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Maxton, John
Miller, Andrew
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spellar, John
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put forthwith the Questions which Madam Speaker was directed to put pursuant to paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 53 (Question on voting of estimates, &c.).*

ESTIMATES, 1994-95 (NAVY) VOTE A

Resolved,

That during the year ending on 31st March 1995 a number not exceeding 59,550 all ranks be maintained for Naval Service.

ESTIMATES, 1994-95 (ARMY) VOTE A

Resolved,

That during the year ending on 31st March 1995 a number not exceeding 157,155 all ranks be maintained for Army Service, a number not exceeding 125,000 for the Individual Reserves, and a number not exceeding 66,500 for the Territorial Army.

ESTIMATES, 1994-95 (AIR) VOTE A

Resolved,

That during the year ending on 31st March 1995 a number not exceeding 78,450 all ranks be maintained for the Air Force Service, a number not exceeding 19,250 for the Royal Air Force Reserve, and a number not exceeding 2,500 for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

ESTIMATES, EXCESSES, 1992-93

Question put,

That a sum not exceeding £355,824,479.56 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to make good excesses of certain grants for Defence and Civil Services for the year ended on 31st March 1993, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 198.

The House divided: Ayes 162, Noes 33.

Division No. 164] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gryffs, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Berry, Dr. Roger
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Lewis, Terry
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Maxton, John
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spellar, John
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cyer and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Question accordingly agreed to.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1993-94

Question put,

That a further supplementary sum not exceeding £2,148,689,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges for Defence and Civil Services for the year ending on 31st March 1994, as set out in House of Commons Papers Nos. 199, 200 and 261.

The House divided: Ayes 160, Noes 23.

Division No. 165] **[10.30 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gryffs, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie

Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Tony
Martlin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townend, Cyril D. *(Bas'ph'th)*
Trend, Michael
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Wood and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dowd, Jim
Eastham, Ken
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Gordon, Mildred
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Lewis, Terry
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Maxton, John
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the three foregoing Resolutions relating to supplementary estimates, 1993-94, estimates, excesses, 1992-93 and supplementary estimates 1993-94 by the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Michael Portillo, Mr. Stephen Dorrell, Sir John Cope and Mr. Anthony Nelson.

CONSOLIDATED FUND (NO. 2) BILL

Mr. Stephen Dorrell accordingly presented a Bill to apply certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the years ending on 31 March 1993 and 1994: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 59.]

Homosexual Offences (Prosecution)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10.41 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Madam Deputy Speaker, may I first thank you for relinquishing your bed tonight to be with me. I have some dreadful bug and I should have been in my bed tonight. However, what I have to say is most important, so I shall struggle on. I also thank the Solicitor-General who executes his responsibilities with the highest level of integrity.

My local newspaper revealed that 21 homosexual men were arrested committing acts of gross indecency in a public toilet that my children pass on their way to school every day. I congratulate the Essex police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Government on their policy and action in prosecuting those perverted men and protecting my community. All public toilets in my constituency now have to be closed at night—locked up—and one of them was taken entirely out of use on police advice to stop the homosexual act that I understand is called "cottaging".

The reduction in the age of consent and the profound experiences of my constituents suggest an urgent need to review prosecution policy for homosexual offences and that is why I am raising the matter tonight.

I will defend the right of homosexuals to live without discrimination and in dignity—indeed, I welcome loving and caring relationships between all people—but there can be no equality between natural sexual intercourse and buggery, which is wrong because it is medically dangerous, social destructive and unnatural. It is against nature's laws. We must protect immature teenage boys from exploitation by homosexual men who tend to be more promiscuous than their heterosexual counterparts and live within a corrosive subculture.

Section 12(1) of the Sexual Offences Act 1956, as amended in 1967, gives that it is a felony for a person to commit buggery with another person or an animal, with the exception of consenting males who have attained the age of 21. Crown prosecutors must be concerned with two criteria in deciding whether to prosecute any offence, including buggery. First, there must be evidential sufficiency and, secondly, the prosecution must be in the public interest.

I will show that the public interest is best served by an uncompromising prosecution policy and by setting out the various issues and arguments covering equality and life style, immaturity, freedom, health and health education, promiscuity, the buggery lobby Stonewall's tactics and many other issues.

I will start with discrimination. The law as it now stands does not in any way criminalise homosexuality itself or discriminate against homosexuals. It simply prevents the sodomy of teenage boys, all women, small children and animals. The proposed reduction in the age at which buggery would be legal would increase discrimination, on the basis of gender, by making buggery legal with a teenage boy, but keeping it illegal with a woman of any age in or out of marriage. That would indeed be discriminatory.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Why should there be an age of consent for an act of perversion at all?

Dr. Spink: My hon. and learned Friend makes his point most succinctly, and I thank him for that.

I come to the quite different argument of equality. Stonewall has predicated its case on the falsehood that there is equality between the sex acts—the point that my hon. and learned Friend has just raised. Of course, all sexual acts are not equal. The acts of incest, paedophilia, necrophilia, bestiality and buggery have been outlawed over centuries in every civilisation, and for good reason.

Let me briefly review the argument of the prosecution policy for offences of forced buggery. Such offences are tried on indictment. If the victim is a woman, the maximum punishment is life. If the victim is a teenage boy aged 16 to 21, it is only 10 years. That is discrimination on the irrational basis of the gender of the victim. I know of no other crime where the sentence is determined by the gender of the victim. I want life for male rape.

I come now to the life style argument by quoting Christian Action Research and Education, which said in a letter on 7 February:

"Engaging in homosexual acts at a young age involves much more than sleeping with someone; it has now become a decision to adopt a particular lifestyle. The all-embracing power of the homosexual sub-culture in our society should not be underestimated."

An 18-year-old boy who consents to a homosexual act is initiated into a lifestyle that will separate him from the mainstream of society. For vulnerable and lonely teenage boys, homosexuality can offer immediate warmth and acceptance. There is a sense of identity and comradeship, but there is a price to pay—childlessness, instability, disease and now the mortal danger of AIDS. That price is not something which many teenage lads are properly able to evaluate, and that brings me to the immaturity argument.

Even at 18, boys can be sexually and socially confused. In the letter of 7 February, CARE stated:

"We do not believe homosexual orientation to be fixed and absolute, and note that emotional feelings towards those of the same sex are not uncommon, particularly in adolescence . . . The main role of the law in this area must be to protect individuals and especially young people from any exploitation."

Those are sound words, and I agree with them entirely.

The British Medical Association acknowledged in 1976 the

"slower rate of biological development"

of teenage boys. That comes from the Library research paper, 94/12. Moreover, in 1979, the Home Office Policy Advisory Committee on sexual offences stated:

"Many young people aged 16 are still at school or have just started work . . . They are all to some extent at risk of seduction by homosexuals, especially those in authority over them. Some boys may be confused about their sexuality and a boy who is so confused is particularly open to exploitation. The majority of us do not think that it is a sufficient answer to say that a 16 year old boy is strong enough to repulse any unwanted homosexual advances: the fact that the boy consents to homosexual advances does not mean that he is unlikely to be harmed."

Clearly, any reduction of the age of buggery would put teenage boys who are just below any new age at risk and under greater pressure from the "don't knock it until you've tried it" pro-buggery lobby. Stonewall stated in its "Case for Change" of September 1993 that if 18 was passed it would be back again for 16 and in the meantime it would insist on a policy of no prosecution for the buggery of 16 and 17-year-olds.

Prosecution policy sometimes accepts the existence of grey areas. It is known as the penumbra effect and currently operates with regard to sodomy. There is a general policy of non-prosecution for those over 18. I do

not want to see any such penumbra effect for 16 and 17-year-olds. I ask the Solicitor-General to clarify Government policy tonight. Prosecution policy must uphold a law that has been passed through all its stages in this House and another place and given Royal Assent. It would be a contempt of Parliament for a waiver to be given in those circumstances.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): I have a very simple question. Why does my hon. Friend think that the solution to two 18-year-olds consenting to have sex together is to send them to prison?

Dr. Spink: My concern is to prevent those two 18-year-olds having sex that would be medically dangerous and would take them into a life style that they might regret when they became older. I want the age of consent to remain as it is at 21 because I truly, honestly and sincerely feel for those young people. I have a number of young children myself.

I turn now to the unworthy argument, "They do it anyway so why not legalise it?" Some teenage boys abuse dangerous drugs and solvents. I do not want to legalise those practices because, as with buggery, they put our lads at greater risk. Those lads deserve our love, our care and our protection from predatory older men and from themselves. We owe it to them, to their mothers and to their fathers.

I reject the voting age argument and the argument that people fight for their country at 18. One cannot indulge in drugs, in incest or in bestiality at 18 or bugger a woman at 18. Why should one be allowed to bugger a man at 18?

Let me deal now with the feeble-minded freedom argument. Absolute individual freedom is not possible in a civilised society. We all know that. Laws restrict individual freedom—even the freedom to damage oneself or consenting others in private.

While we are on intellectually sloppy arguments, let me put to bed immediately the argument that says that we are out of step with the continent. If that be so, so be it. The continent is out of step with nature. As for the case in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, and articles 14 and 18 of the convention, we can face that challenge if we so wish.

The Church Society stated in January:

"There is no culture that accepts homosexuality as natural. All world religions consider it immoral."

However, I shall not moralise tonight in any way. *[Interruption.]* I have not done that. My arguments for animating prosecution policy are purely medical and social and based on my concern for young people. The medical arguments are the strongest, so let me address them now.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Spink: Madam Deputy Speaker, may I explain that it is the convention that hon. Members do not give way in an Adjournment debate unless it has been previously arranged. I have given way on several occasions, but I am using time up.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. May I point out that interventions are always at the discretion of the person who has the Floor.

Dr. Spink: I am indebted to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The medical arguments are the strongest. Hon. Members should look into the darkened, hollow eyes in the white shrunken faces of the young AIDS victims just down the road from here in King's College hospital. Then they would not relax prosecution policy, or legalise, and therefore promote disease-ridden practices of buggery.

Buggery is not like heterosexual intercourse. The receptor organ is entirely different and designed, not to protect, as in the female organ, which is 20 cells thick, but to damage by facilitating the exchange of fluids direct into the bloodstream through the one-cell-thick epithelium. We have gay bowel syndrome, parasitic colon diseases and hepatitis A. Buggery spreads venereal diseases. It spreads blood-borne disease such as AIDS and hepatitis B—a sobering thought even for the responsible sodomite, but not for the generally more promiscuous teenage boys who cannot evaluate the risks. Here I am relying on evidence from the British Medical Association, which stated in January that

"unsafe sexual behaviour and HIV infection have both increased among homosexual men after a period of decline and that recent figures for new HIV transmissions show that younger men are disproportionately affected."

Project SIGMA found that homosexuals under 21 are more likely to engage in receptive anal sex without protection. Those under 21 are more likely to be HIV positive and to contract rectal gonorrhoea than the over-21s.

I come now to the important health education argument —the key argument of the pro-teenage buggery lobby. That lobby argues that, to promote safe sex education, buggery should be legalised.

The Education Minister stated in answer to my written question:

"The new arrangements for sex education introduced by the Education Act 1993, which will come into force in September 1994, require maintained secondary schools to provide sex education".—[*Official Report*, 26 January 1994 ; Vol. 236, c.290.]

That sex education would include clear information on safe sex in a proper context for all children and young people.

Library research paper 94/12 states that in any event

"It is well documented that among"

homosexual

"and bisexual men knowledge of HIV risks is generally accurate and universally high."

The Health Education Authority stated in January 1994 that

"much of the"—

sex education—

"restriction is self-imposed by health educators and that there is no restriction on aiming health promotion at young"

homosexual

"men under the age of 21, nor on limiting education in schools aimed at the purpose of treating or preventing . . . disease."

The law therefore needs clarifying, not changing.

On balance and in the light of the evidence, I reject the health education argument. In a nutshell, children will get safe sex education at school, they universally and accurately know about safe sex and such education is now legal. Many homosexuals still—unbelievably—indulge in unsafe sex, in full knowledge of the dangers, and in any event, safe penetrative anal sex is an illusion.

The editor of *Rubber Chemistry and Technology* has written:

"I find absurd the popular notion that condoms allow anyone safely to engaged in sexual relations with HIV carriers . . . The AIDS virus is 450 times smaller than sperm, therefore the effectiveness of condoms is seriously impaired by the well

[Dr. Spink]

established fact that latex rubber contains inherent structural flaws which are at least 50 times larger than the HIV virus."

There is food for thought.

Allow me, Madam Deputy Speaker, to show you this full-page picture of a suggestive nude male and a seductive nude lady. The headline asks, "Which do you find more attractive? " The man or the lady, I suppose. The advertisement continues:

"To help you sort out your feelings, it's quite likely you could have a sexual encounter or two with a member of your own sex.

Of course, this should still involve safer sex"—

interestingly it does not mention safe sex, only safer sex—

"This could include massage, body rubbing, or mutual masturbation.

Penetrative sex can be more risky. But it is unprotected anal sex that's the riskiest of all . . . So if you do try it, you should always use stronger condoms . . . if you practise safer sex"—

again safer and not safe—

"you know you're doing everything you can to protect yourself and your partner."

Nowhere does it hint at the possibility of saying no to what is an illegal act. The advertisement seems to be promoting the act.

That advertisement was published in a weekly football magazine for young boys, by the Health Education Authority using public funds. My constituent Mr. Waterton was right to complain of the shock and upset that the advertisement caused his children and those of his friends. Hon. Members will be astounded by that irresponsible advertisement.

On disinformation, I recall that Sir Ian McKellen told me during a live television debate that 97 out of every 100 practising homosexual men do not know about—or have never had any education about—safe sex and condom use. That obviously false assertion typifies the pro-buggery lobby tactics of spreading disinformation and confusion.

Mr. Fabricant: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Spink: But some of their tactics have been more subtle and they have been aided by a biased or intellectually sloppy media. They talk only of some ephemeral equality, and never about the buggery of teenage boys, which is the only issue that is on the table now. They put up Sir Ian McKellen as their spokesman —a gentle, acceptable, lovable, media-wise operator. He is not some outrageous queen. He would not frighten the horses. He is the kingpin in the seductive, well-oiled homosexual propaganda magazine, but his actor's mask fell when he said that a case could be made for no age of consent.

I turn to homosexual promiscuity and the impact that that has on homosexuals' life expectancy, which is significantly lower than that of their heterosexual counterparts. In Essex, 21 homosexual men have, so far this year, been arrested indulging in acts of gross indecency in one toilet. That practice is happening in hon. Members' constituencies up and down the country even as I speak. Mrs. Edna Adams, a great Dorset dignitary, told me last week that a pair of jeans hung in a tree in Arrowsmith road indicated that the children were not safe because the homosexuals were out.

The promiscuity evidence is explained and developed in the book "The Sexual Dead-End" by Stephen Green MA, but I will give an example. Danneckers' survey found that 80 per cent. of young homosexuals had more than 20 sexual partners and one in seven had sex with more than 50 men in the previous year.

My seventeenth and final argument concerns public opinion. The buggery lobby, Stonewall, commissioned a Harris poll which found that 74 per cent. of the population approved of teenage buggery. Gallup, in its much more independent "Social Trends" poll four months earlier, found that 74 per cent. disapproved. It goes to show that if one pays the piper enough, he will play any tune that one wants. The truth is that the Great British public want homosexuals to live without discrimination but they do not want the buggery of teenage boys. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Fabricant: Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

Dr. Spink: In 1977, their lordships refused to give a Second Reading to Lord Arran's Bill to lower the age for buggery from 21 to 18.

Mr. Fabricant: Will my hon. Friend give way on buggery?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already made the point very clearly. May I also point out to the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) that this is a half-hour debate. The custom is to allow about half the time to the hon. Member raising the subject and about half the time to the Minister.

Dr. Spink: I am indebted to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I made an arrangement with the Minister, and I shall stick to it if I may.

The Lords threw out that Bill. One Member of the original Wolfenden Committee, the Marquess of Lothian, argued that boys between 18 and 21 were still at risk of exploitation. Those comments appeared in *Hansard* of 14 June 1977. Even the libertarian Lord Kinsey concluded that teenage lads experience considerable personal conflict over their homosexual activities and try to make heterosexual adjustments. I beg their lordships to do their duty again.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the Solicitor-General, for listening so attentively to my arguments. Does the Solicitor-General recall that, while he was on sabbatical, Lady Thatcher said:

"any such proposal would give totally the wrong signal at this time. It would give offence to many people and worry many more and would give us great problems in the future. I would be very much against reducing the age of consent."—[*Official Report*, 15 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 391.]

Her words were prophetic. As Lady Thatcher indicated, any relaxation of prosecution policy would give totally the wrong signal. The overwhelming medical and social evidence shows that we need a red light not a green light to the buggery of teenage boys.

11.3 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): I am answering the debate as the second Law Officer of the Crown, not as the Member of Parliament for Brighton, Pavilion, in which capacity I voted on the amendment to the age of consent that the House debated on 21 February this year.

I want to make it quite plain to my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) that I do not propose to follow him in discussing the relevant merits of any

particular age of consent. I am here to deal with current prosecuting policy on the basis of present law and nothing else.

I thank my hon. Friend for his tribute to the work done by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service. In view of the extensive area that my hon. Friend has covered, I shall go straight to a number of the principal points that he has raised.

First, the CPS deals—and, in the nature of things, can only deal—with those cases brought to its attention by the police. The police set their own operational priorities; no politician, however senior, has any business or power to direct the operational behaviour of the police.

The second matter that I must make plain is that the prosecuting policy in this country is not a matter for the Government at all. It is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions, as the head of the CPS, under the superintendence of the Attorney-General, as the first Law Officer of the Crown. No Minister, however senior, has any right to intervene in the execution of that policy.

There are three main offences to which prosecuting policy refers: buggery, gross indecency between males and solicitation of men. It is significant to observe that, in a number of respects, special safeguards operate before proceedings can be instituted. For example, in relation to buggery or gross indecency, where one or more of the men is under the age of 21, prosecution cannot be instituted without the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Secondly, there is a time limit on the institution of prosecutions in those cases other than where the victim is a boy under the age of 16. In those other cases, the prosecution must be brought within 12 months of the offence being committed.

The maximum sentence for buggery in particular and, to a lesser extent, gross indecency reflects two main considerations—age and consent. The maximum sentence is life imprisonment and, depending upon age and consent, it descends to two years' imprisonment. As Lord Justice Lawton said in the case of Willis, in an ordinary case of buggery by a mature man with a boy under the age of 16, in the absence of mitigation or aggravation, the correct sentencing bracket is between three and five years. The maximum sentence for gross indecency varies between five years' and six months' imprisonment.

As my hon. Friend has said, the CPS applies two tests before it institutes proceedings. They are exactly the same tests as are applied to any other offences. First, it decides whether the evidence affords a realistic prospect of conviction; secondly, if that prospect exists, it decides whether the prosecution is in the public interest.

I will glide quickly over the evidential test and go straight to questions of public interest, which I imagine will be of primary concern to most hon. Members.

My hon. Friend said that if one of the offences that I have mentioned had been committed, a prosecution ought to follow, as night follows day. The answer to his point was given as long ago as 1951 by Lord Shawcross, then the Attorney-General, who said:

> "It has never been the rule in this Country—I hope it never will be—that suspected criminal offences must automatically be the subject of prosecution."

Successive Attorney-Generals have followed that injunction from that day to this. Of course, broadly speaking, the graver the offence, the less likelihood there is that the public interest will allow of any other disposal but prosecution.

However, in deciding where the public interest lies we take into account a number of matters. They may include any of the following seven—first, the age and relative ages of the people involved; secondly, whether there is an element of seduction or corruption; thirdly, whether there is any breach of trust; fourthly, whether there has been any exploitation of position or influence; fifthly, the likely sentence; sixthly, the prevalence of a particular offence in an area; seventhly, the prevalence of annoyance or distress to the public.

Therefore, my hon. Friend will understand that there is a difference between offences committed in private and those committed in public as far as the incidence of public interest factors is concerned. The latter two categories—the sixth and seventh considerations that I mentioned—are likely to hold greater weight if the offence takes place in public.

The factors that I have dealt with are set out in the eighth paragraph to the "Code for Crown Prosecutors", which is a public document and a copy of which is in the Library.

My message for my hon. Friend is this. That is the way in which current prosecuting policy works. Those are some of the public interest factors that we apply. Each case is considered on its merits. It is considered without fear or favour, without affection or ill-will, and on mature reflection he may come to the conclusion that—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eleven minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 15 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 3) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Job Clubs

1. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of job clubs.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): May I begin by apologising to the hon. Gentleman and the House for the absence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, who is attending the job summit in Detroit.

Next year, job clubs will be able to help 260,000 people, an increase of 20,000 on this year's record 240,000.

Mr. Lewis: Can the Minister be more accurate about the efficacy of job clubs? Will he look at the north-west where there is less than a 50 per cent. placement record, which seems to be a bad investment considering the millions of pounds that are being put into what is really a cosmetic system?

Mr. Forsyth: Job clubs are among the most effective measures provided by the Employment Service. They have helped over 580,000 people into work. The hon. Gentleman must be aware, for example, of people like the 50-year-old lady in his constituency who had been unemployed for 18 months and who found work as a result of being helped by a job club. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would be more keen on the work carried out in his constituency than he is on that question.

Mr. Ashby: The trouble with job clubs is that they are geared to the lowest common denominator. Will my hon. Friend try to change the way in which job clubs work so that they can help those in the higher echelons who are seeking to get back to work and who are currently hindered by the benefit rules as well? Could not the benefit rules also be altered so that they could assist people to get back to work?

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Job clubs are not homogeneous—they cater for different groups. Some job clubs provide help for people who have literacy and numeracy difficulties; some help executives who have been displaced; and others specialise in ex-offenders. My hon. Friend asked about the benefit system. He needs to address that question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. I believe that job clubs are very effective. They are extremely popular with those who participate in them. The Employment Service is to be congratulated on its success, which has been emulated around the world.

Unemployment

2. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of people unemployed in the United Kingdom, including those who are unemployed who are not in receipt of unemployment benefit.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): The claimant measure and the International Labour Organisation recommended measure both show falling unemployment in the United Kingdom at about 2.8 million.

Mr. Evans: The Minister has just answered a question that I did not ask. Is not that a classic example of what the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster described to a Select Committee as telling terminological inexactitudes to the House?

Is the Minister aware, from answers that have been given to me by her Department and the Department of Social Security, that the true number of people without a job in Great Britain exceeds 4 million? Is not it time that the Government accepted and acknowledged that mass unemployment lies at the very heart of the country's economic, social and financial decline?

Miss Widdecombe: If the hon. Gentleman has a figure of more than 4 million, perhaps he should tell that to the Leader of the Opposition and, indeed, the shadow Chancellor because, at Harrogate on 16 November, the Leader of the Opposition referred to 3 million unemployed and, on 9 December, the shadow Chancellor referred to nearly 3 million unemployed.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Does my hon. Friend agree that falling unemployment will not be assisted by interference in the labour market from Brussels?

Miss Widdecombe: The consistent policy of this country is to have as flexible a labour market as possible. We believe that that has promoted employment and the increase in the civilian work force in employment. It ill becomes the Opposition not to take notice of that. Their policies would cause tremendous job losses, yet they appear still to be proud of them. They do not acknowledge the success of a flexible labour market.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Minister accept that a large number of the people who are not registered for unemployment benefit are young parents—particularly young mums—who cannot find nursery places for their children? Will the Government follow the example of the French Government and set about providing nursery places throughout the country to facilitate work?

Miss Widdecombe: We know that, according to the British social attitudes survey, of those mothers whose

children are still of dependent age and who do not work, only some 6 per cent. cite child care costs as being the principal reason.

Mr. John Greenway: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the number of people who are employed in this country is much higher than it was when the Government came to office in 1979? Does she agree that the European Community and interference from the Commission are more likely to add to unemployment than any Government policy?

Miss Widdecombe: I have pleasure in confirming that there has been a rise in the civilian work force in employment. It is also true that that rise has taken place in most Labour constituencies, but that Opposition Members still tend to bemoan the levels of unemployment without looking at the positive side. As I said in response to an earlier question, the Government intend to preserve the flexibility of the labour market and to ensure that the opportunities for employment continue to increase.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Minister address her mind to the evidence that is being given by the Secretary of State at the G7 meeting in Detroit today? Will she confirm that the figures on unemployment in "The UK Approach", the document produced by the Government, are wrong? Does she accept that her Department's statisticians now recognise that the unemployment rate is certainly half a million more than is recorded in the document? That would take Britain from having below 10 per cent. unemployment to having over 10 per cent., and that is wrong.

The Minister has responsibility for training the unemployed. On the same page of the document is a statement about changing the training structure in this country, but there is no statement about how many apprenticeships have been created. Will she confirm that the number is 150,000 fewer than in 1979 and that the document is no more than a tissue of lies that is being given to the rest of the world?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman has used decidedly unparliamentary language about the document.

Madam Speaker: Order. Had that been the case, I would have asked the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the remark.

Miss Widdecombe: It is beyond question that the figure of 2.8 million has not merely been produced by the Government's claimant count but is the International Labour Organisation's own definition. Is the hon. Gentleman seriously saying that the International Labour Organisation has conspired with the Conservative Government to produce a figure that would specifically benefit the British unemployment rate? The figures that I have cited appear whichever measure is used.

On the subject of apprenticeships, the hon. Gentleman will be well aware of the multiplicity of training schemes, including apprenticeships. He will also be aware of our initiative on modern apprenticeships. Why has the hon. Gentleman never managed to welcome modern apprenticeships?

Mr. Brazier: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the independently collected ILO figures show that unemployment in Britain is below the EC average? Will she also confirm that the figures show that the level of employment within the available work force as a whole is now the second highest in the EC?

Miss Widdecombe: I have pleasure in confirming that we have the second highest number of people in work in the EC and that we have lower than average youth unemployment. In many other trends, particularly part-time work, we are one of the EC leaders. Will the Opposition welcome that as well?

EC Directives

3. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on EC directives on employment-related issues which are being opposed by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government will continue to resist any Commission proposals that reduce competitiveness and destroy jobs.

Mr. McFall: The British Government have opposed European directives on working time and the protection of young people at work. Britain is the only European country that has no legal pay protection. Is the Minister proud of an employment agenda consisting of long hours, low pay and inadequate protection for people as young as 14 or 15?

Mr. Forsyth: Is the hon. Gentleman proud to be a member of a party that would stop teenagers being able to—

Mr. McFall: Answer the question.

Mr. Forsyth: I am answering the hon. Gentleman's question. He asked me about the young workers directive. The hon. Gentleman supports his socialist friends in the European Parliament in their attempt to stop teenagers having jobs as paper boys and Saturday jobs. That is a disgrace.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As the Government have made it clear that they are opposed to the 48-hour week directive, will the Minister let us know when he expects to hear from the European Court about whether we have to apply it or not?

Mr. Forsyth: As my hon. Friend knows, we have made it clear that we are challenging the working time directive. It was introduced under article 118A, which is a health and safety measure. That is an abuse by the Commission of the powers under the treaty. We have made a vigorous case in defence of our right to set proper standards in Britain. We believe that standards for working time are best negotiated between employers and employees.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Minister boasts about creating jobs. Why is it that Italy can create six times as many jobs as the United Kingdom, Germany four times as many and France twice as many, yet those countries still give their workers proper employment and social protection rights? Why is the Government's definition of competitiveness screwing down wages, sacking workers and giving them a worse deal than workers in any other country in Europe?

Mr. Forsyth: In Britain, take-home pay is among the highest in the Community as a result of the policies that the Government have pursued. As for the point about other European countries, the hon. Lady must know that they

have a smaller proportion of their working population in work than the United Kingdom. That is because of the success of our policies. While we are on that matter, will the hon. Lady tell the House at some stage how we are expected to pay the £20 billion bill that introducing a 35-hour working week would cost employers in Britain? That is what she and her party have signed up to in the manifesto for the forthcoming elections to the European Parliament.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is my hon. Friend aware that the announcement by the Social Affairs Commissioner, Mr. Padraig Flynn, that it is his intention that 10 million legal immigrants to countries in the European Union should have the right to work in the United Kingdom has caused alarm and anxiety to the British public, not least to the 2.75 million people who are out of work now? Will he make it his business to see off that provocative proposal?

Mr. Forsyth: I am aware of several initiatives that the Commission has proposed which have caused anxiety to those of us—particularly in the Conservative party—who wish to ensure that our country remains competitive and that we offer good job prospects for the future.

Training and Enterprise Councils

4. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to make the TECs more accountable to the communities they serve.

Miss Widdecombe: TECs already consult widely in planning and publish their plans and annual reports. Their performance is open to public scrutiny through the comparison tables published by the Department.

Mr. Prentice: If the TECs are to made more accountable, will the Minister join me in unreservedly condemning the decision of my local training and enterprise council, East Lancashire TEC, to refuse to appoint any elected member from the local district councils and instead to appoint the chief executive of Hyndburn? He has many excellent qualities, but being elected is not one of them. Does the Minister take any responsibility for the mushrooming number of quangos and the anti-democratic culture that they spawn?

Miss Widdecombe: I am rather surprised at that question because ELTEC has the leader of Lancashire county council on its board.

Mr. Paice: But is it not the case that more than 90 per cent. of our work force is in work and that, however important it may be to provide schemes for the unemployed, TECs should be accountable to the businesses that employ those 90 per cent. and on which we primarily rely for the well-being of this country?

Miss Widdecombe: That is why it is important that TEC boards consist of leaders of the business community; that they are involved in partnerships; and that they are delivering training locally according to local business needs and local business perceptions.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: The Minister will have seen the highly critical report that was published by the London School of Economics on the performance, management style and use of resources of TECs in England and Wales. One aspect that worries many Opposition Members is the proposal in that report to halve the number of TECs and thus to make them much larger and less responsive to the needs of their communities. Do the Government intend to respond to that report?

Miss Widdecombe: The report by the London School of Economics was based on much outdated material, and much of the material was gathered when TECs were at fairly early stages. Therefore, many of its criticisms were not well founded. We have no current intentions of changing the present TEC structures.

Sir Donald Thompson: Will my hon. Friend pay tribute to the Calderdale and Kirklees TEC in my constituency? Does she agree that, had Labour local politicians tried to help their communities for the past 15 years, rather than blindly opposing any Government policy, TECs would perhaps not have been necessary?

Miss Widdecombe: The answer to that is yes on both counts.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The House knows that many questions have been asked about the accountability of TECs as regards Astra Skills Training Ltd. Precisely why was the Department of Employment prepared to account, and to pay, redundancy payments on civil service terms, to TICC Ltd.'s former employees at the point of bankruptcy, but not to make the same offer to those people who had given many years of service to Astra and lost literally tens of thousands of pounds because of the actions of this Government?

Miss Widdecombe: In the case of TICC, at the point of liquidation, the employees still enjoyed civil service redundancy rights because their terms had not changed. In the case of Astra, the employees themselves had twice agreed to a change of terms.

Foyer Initiative

5. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what initiatives his Department is taking to support the foyer initiative to co-ordinate accommodation, training and employment policies for young people.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has contributed nearly half a million pounds to the foyer initiative through support for the employment and training elements of five pilot foyers, secondment of staff and funding for publicity material. In addition, the Department of the Environment, through the Housing Corporation, is providing several million pounds' worth of capital and revenue support.

Mr. Hendry: I thank my hon. Friend for that statement of the degree of Government support for the foyer initiative. Can she confirm that an analysis of the foyer programme shows that up to 60 per cent. of previously homeless unemployed youngsters have ended up in accommodation and in work or training? Does not the foyer initiative show, at its most effective, the way in which Government Departments are working together and co-operating to tackle a range of problems that confront young people?

Miss Widdecombe: I am delighted to confirm to my hon. Friend that so far foyers have been successful. According to the Young Men's Christian Association report, 567 young people have taken part; a third have

begun training; more than half have begun job search; and 180 have been placed in permanent jobs and 74 in temporary jobs.

Mr. Clapham: The skills levels among the British work force are about 40 per cent. of those of our major competitors. Obviously there has been a lack of investment since 1979. Why are the Department and the Government failing to pick up the aid package that is on offer from the EEC?

Miss Widdecombe: I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that that there has been no lack of investment. What is more, the investment is not only Government investment. About £20 billion comes from the private sector. If Opposition Members are seriously worried about skills shortages, do they welcome national vocational qualifications, general national vocational qualifications and modern apprenticeships—all measures which the Government have taken to improve the skills level in this country?

Works Councils Directive

6. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had recently with the European Commission about the European works councils directive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State restated the Government's firm opposition to the proposal when he met Commissioner Flynn on 28 February.

Mr. Jenkin: Will my hon. Friend confirm that under the Single European Act we had a veto over that directive and that under the Maastricht treaty we no longer have a veto, so the directive may proceed in the other 11 countries with damaging consequences for British jobs and British industry? Does he agree that, given the fourth framework directive on social Europe and the continuing court judgments imposing social Europe on this country whether we like it or not, we need to address the issue of social Europe at the intergovernmental conference in 1996 to protect British industry and jobs?

Mr. Forsyth: No, I do not agree with the first part of my hon. Friend's question. It is clear under the social protocol that agreements made by the Eleven will not apply to the United Kingdom. A text that appears to be rather ragged in that respect has been circulated for consultation, but the United Kingdom means to ensure that the terms of the protocol set out under the Maastricht treaty are observed. On the 1996 conference, I agree with my hon. Friend that the whole question of European competitiveness and the impact of some of the proposals that have been put forward as social measures will need to be addressed.

Mr. Grocott: May I give the Minister an opportunity to put to the test his eccentric theory that the lack of worker protection in Britain brings jobs to Britain? Will he make a firm prediction that, because of the lack of worker protection in Britain, the takeover of Rover by BMW will mean fewer jobs in Germany and more in Britain? If he believes that, he believes anything.

Mr. Forsyth: As the hon. Gentleman will know, Britain is getting the lion's share of inward investment from the United States and Japan into the Community because of the labour market policies that we have pursued and our general economic approach. He describes as eccentric the theory that excessive protection destroys jobs. He may like to read some of the speeches currently being made by Spain's socialist Prime Minister, who says that, in order to create more jobs, it will be necessary to remove some protection from the workers. So that eccentric theory is well understood by politicians across the political divide. Only the British Labour party is stuck in the time warp of the 1950s and 1960s.

Mr. Waterson: Does my hon. Friend agree that that is just the sort of petty bureaucratic regulation that is so favoured by Opposition Members and rightly opposed by British employers? Is it not simply an attempt to introduce the social chapter by the back door?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Government favour worker involvement, participation and consultation. What we are against is their imposition by statute. If they are done voluntarily, they will work; if they are imposed by statute, as proposed in the European works council directive, they will be inflexible, destroy competitiveness, make it less easy for business to respond to market needs, and therefore destroy jobs.

Mr. Barron: If the Minister really believes that, will he explain why Germany, which has had workers' councils and workers' directives for decades, has a £20 billion surplus in world trade while we have a £13 billion deficit?

Mr. Forsyth: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has noticed it, but in Germany unemployment is going up. It has broken the 4 million barrier and is at its highest level since the Weimar republic. In Britain, unemployment is falling. We are unique in that respect and the hon. Gentleman should recognise that our policies have created the opportunity for unemployment to fall so quickly during a recovery.

Child Care Grant

7. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made with making the out-of-school child care grant self-financing.

Miss Widdecombe: The out-of-school child care grant provides financial and other help for the start up of new after-school and holiday child care schemes. Training and enterprise councils may fund individual schemes for up to 12 months, after which they are expected to become self-financing. It is still too early in the cycle of the schemes to obtain reliable information about how far they are succeeding.

Mrs. Gorman: While I welcome whole-heartedly the Government's determination to ensure that children have somewhere to go after school instead of running round the streets and perhaps getting into mischief, does my hon. Friend agree that it would be easier for those schemes to continue if parents could treats the costs as tax deductible expenses and if those parents who have to work to support themselves and their families could be given assistance without losing wages or benefits?

Miss Widdecombe: Our view is that it is not for the Government alone, either through tax relief or other measures, to fund such schemes, but that they must be

funded by partnerships of employers, volunteers, the employees themselves, Government and other local interests.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: Does the Minister recognise that at a cost of £30 a week in school time and £60 a week in the holidays, such provision will not help families in areas of deprivation, particularly if the Government insist on the schemes being self-financing after one year?

Miss Widdecombe: I believe that people in areas of deprivation will benefit substantially from the £28 disregard that we introduced into family credit. The hon. Lady says that the cost is a prohibitive factor. It is worth recording that on the basis of partnerships and other provisions that we have introduced since 1988, nursery places are up 150 per cent., places with registered child minders are up 40 per cent. and more than 90 per cent. of three and four-year-olds spend some time each week with their peers in some form of provision.

Maternity and Paternity Leave

8. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to improve the employment rights to time off for maternity and paternity leave.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All women will soon have a new right to 14 weeks maternity leave.

Mr. Hinchliffe: As someone who was refused paternity leave from this place, may I press the Minister to take the issue seriously and to pull his finger out? When the Government profess to believe in the International Year of the Family, why are they so mean minded about parental leave? Why are we light years behind most other European countries on this matter?

Mr. Forsyth: I am not sure who refused the hon. Gentleman his paternity leave. If it was his Whips, I suggest that they adopt a rather more enlightened policy in line with the Labour party research document that was published in 1990.

Mrs. Gillan: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although our maternity provisions are excellent in the United Kingdom, it is still quite ridiculous that mothers who are cleared to adopt babies cannot get the same maternity provisions as natural birth mothers? I am referring to my constituent Dr. Estelle McAndrew who is cleared to adopt a baby, but cannot get the same provision as she would if she were giving birth to a child.

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend raised this matter in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill Committee. As she will know, only a small proportion of adoptions—I believe under 9 per cent.—involve children under the age of one year. Without getting into the technicalities, there are clear differences between adopting a child and giving birth and the period immediately before and after that, which is why we thought it appropriate to make provisions for statutory leave.

Employment Statistics

9. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to improve the accuracy of employment statistics.

Miss Widdecombe: We have introduced a number of improvements over the past two years. Further improvements, based on completion of the inter-departmental business register are in hand.

Mr. Flynn: Has the Minister noticed that, in the meaningless propagandist fantasy of Government employment figures, the record number of part-time workers are counted as full-time workers, that the number of self-employed are estimated and out by at least 1 million and that more than 1 million people are counted twice? Can the Minister answer a question without blaming the last or the next Labour Government and confess that the employment figures are a tissue of Waldegraves?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman—as is consistent with Opposition Members—is extremely selective in the sources that he quotes and, as usual, misses completely the fact that in addition to the growth in employment figures we also published the labour force quarterly survey, which gives all the breakdowns that he has just mentioned. We published it, he can read it; I suggest that the Labour party does so.

Mr. Gallie: Is my hon. Friend aware that many early retired people are forced to sign on to ensure the continuance of their national insurance contributions? Does she believe that, in many instances, such people are not seeking work and are falsely inflating the unemployment figures?

Miss Widdecombe: It is undeniable that we include figures in our claimant counts that the International Labour Organisation does not include in its count. It is also true therefore that of course the figures are inflated by the numbers that my hon. Friend suggests. Nevertheless, it is right that people should sign on for national insurance credits. It is also right that there should be more than one measure. As I have to say yet again, all the measures show the same figures and the same trends. That means that they are the best possible guide to what is happening in Britain.

Parental Leave

10. **Ms Corston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made on implementing parental leave.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Arrangements for parental leave are a matter for voluntary agreement between employers and employees.

Ms Corston: Can the Minister explain why the British Government have consistently blocked the European Union parental leave directive? Is not that a disgrace in view of the fact that Britain is the only country that does not provide some form of family leave and that the Equal Opportunities Commission calculated that the cost of 10 days' paternity leave would be the same as one quarter of a day's holiday for the entire work force? Would not that be money well spent?

Mr. Forsyth: I beg to differ with the hon. Lady. Britain is not the only country that has had trouble with the Belgian text of the directive on parental leave. The hon. Lady is also wrong to suggest that Britain is alone in not providing parental leave. There is only one— *[Interruption.]* The hon. Lady keeps shouting "family leave", but her question is about parental leave. She will

know that only Denmark offers paid parental leave to both parents. Other countries have different arrangements and most allow only one parent to have leave. Policies differ as to whether it should be paid. We believe that the issue is best taken forward voluntarily. Some employers, such as Abbey National, have very enlightened policies, in contrast to what we learn about the Chief Whip's Office. That is the way forward.

Mr. Rowe: Did my hon. Friend hear the other day the personnel director of Boots explaining that it was profitable to the company to provide such a facility because it was much better than having a disgruntled work force? Is not it much better for firms to make their own calculation as to whether it is profitable for them to provide such a service rather than have it forced on them?

Mr. Forsyth: I should explain, in case I find myself taking leave, that I was referring earlier to the Opposition Chief Whip's Office and not the Chief Whip's Office. I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend says. One of the advantages in going forward voluntarily is that flexible policies can be adopted. I mentioned Abbey National as an example of an employer who allows five-year career breaks, provides help with child care and allows flexible working hours. That is the way forward—not to try to write rigid regulations, particularly at a European level.

Hereford and Worcester TEC

11. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the performance of the Hereford and Worcester training and enterprise council.

Miss Widdecombe: Hereford and Worcester training and enterprise council is regarded as an effective TEC. It has performed very well on most of the indicators published in the 1992-93 inter-TEC comparison tables.

Mr. Luff: Does my hon. Friend recall visiting Worcester last month, when she was told about the important role of Hawtec, together with the chamber of commerce and local authorities, in establishing a business link in the county, and when she made awards to Hawtec for its success with both Investors in People and BS5750? Does not that underline what she has already said about the excellent performance of Hawtec?

Miss Widdecombe: Indeed, I am delighted to repeat the congratulations that I offered when I visited my hon. Friend's training and enterprise council. That TEC is certainly an excellent example of what can be achieved; it is particularly gratifying that it managed to succeed with both Investors in People and the BS5750. My hon. Friend has reason to be proud of his TEC, and the TEC has reason to be proud of him.

Full Employment

12. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy as regards the attainment of full employment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government have a wide range of policies to promote employment growth and reduce unemployment.

Mr. Mackinlay: Does not the Minister understand that the Government's employment figures disguise the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of people in part-time work who seek and need full-time work, but are at present denied it? Does he not realise that many flagship employers, including Marks and Spencer, now employ part-timers in preference to full-timers as a matter of policy, and that many young men and women who have left school are denied the opportunity of job satisfaction and a career, despite their zeal and their skills?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. The labour force survey shows that 75 per cent. of those in part-time work are in such work because they want part-time jobs. It is disgraceful for Opposition Members, who seek to present themselves as the champions of women, to denigrate part-time work, which has enabled many women to take a place in the work force while continuing to fulfil their responsibilities for child care and so forth.

The survey shows that only 13 per cent. of those in part-time work would prefer to be in full-time work. A part-time job is better than no job at all, but if Opposition Members had their way they would regulate part-time jobs out of existence.

Mr. Oppenheim: Why do Opposition Members continually miss the point about unemployment? Do they not understand that labour market regulations and directives add to industry's costs, and cost employees their jobs? Why do they not consider the experience of Spain, where—with all the benefits of a socialist Government and the tightest labour market laws in Europe—nearly a quarter of its work force are out of jobs?

Mr. Forsyth: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. At the time of the Chancellor's Budget in March 1993, the Leader of the Opposition said that the test for the Government would be the test of whether unemployment fell. Unemployment has fallen month after month; it has fallen by 200,000 since January 1993. Opposition Members should recognise why that is happening: it is happening because of the success of our labour market policies.

Mr. Cryer: If the Government's policies are so successful, can the Minister tell us when they will achieve the unemployment level attained in April 1979, under the last Labour Government? The figure then was 4.1 per cent.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman should know that more people want to take their place in the labour force; that we have the highest proportion of women in work in the European Community, apart from Denmark; that we have a higher proportion of our people in work; and that we are creating more jobs. If we embraced the policies of Opposition Members—the minimum wage, the social chapter and other measures that would destroy jobs—we would never reach the goal that the hon. Gentleman has set himself. This Government have been more successful than any other Government in Europe in tackling unemployment; that is why unemployment is falling in Britain and rising everywhere else.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that the change in the benefit system and the introduction of incapacity benefit represent a great drive by this

Conservative Government to tide people over until they are fit enough to return to work? We do not intend people to be invalids for life.

Mr. Forsyth: The vast majority of unemployed people want to return to work and the Employment Service is doing better than ever in helping them to do so. That is a tribute to its innovative approach. I believe that unemployment will continue to fall, because of the success of the supply-side reforms that we have introduced into the economy. If Opposition Members had their way, we would be condemning millions of our people to the dole with their minimum wage proposals and other social chapter measures.

Youth Unemployment, Leicester

13. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of youth unemployment in the city of Leicester; and what it was in March 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: In the Leicester local authority district, unadjusted claimant unemployment among 18 to 24-year-olds fell from 6,762 in October 1983, which is the earliest available date for such disaggregated figures, to 5,501 in January 1994.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister know that since her Government took office the number of unemployed young people in the county of Leicestershire has nearly doubled? Does she accept the ultimate misery of youngsters who have no jobs, cannot get jobs and have no prospect of ever securing jobs?

Miss Widdecombe: What I accept is what must be the ultimate misery of the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituents in having a Member of Parliament who never brings them the good news and who never brings them hope. Why does not the hon. and learned Gentleman point out that unemployment in his region is down by 7 per cent? Why does not he point out that the number of young people waiting more than eight weeks for a guaranteed youth training place has fallen from 70 to three in one year? Why does he not welcome the fact that, in the context of the European Community, we have a lower-than-average youth unemployment rate? Why does not he welcome all this, and why do not his hon. Friends join in the welcome?

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Ms Eagle: On top of all the tax increases that he will impose in April, how can the Prime Minister justify the new insurance premium tax, which will hit hardest those who live in areas of high crime, such as my constituency? Is not the truth that, while Labour is tough on crime and on the causes of crime, the right hon. Gentleman's Government are tough just on the victims of crime?

The Prime Minister: We seek to be tough on the people who perpetrate crime. I believe that that should be the ambition of every hon. Member. We have raised taxes for the reasons that I have previously set out in the House, and we have chosen to spread the load in the way that we think is most appropriate. Those are the measures that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor set out. If the hon. Lady opposes tax increases, I trust that she will indicate where she would cut expenditure.

Mr. Dicks: In the light of the mortar attacks at Heathrow airport, which is in my constituency, will my right hon. Friend tell the IRA that there is no place for it at the peace table, and will he institute a shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland to enable the security forces to eliminate all IRA terrorists in the Province?

The Prime Minister: The attacks on Heathrow airport demonstrated once again the IRA's callous disregard for the safety of ordinary members of the public and its disregard for the words that its own members utter from time to time. The whole House will regard the IRA's action as totally despicable. It is certainly the case that it cannot bomb its way back to the negotiating table, either now or at any stage in the future. However, I am not sure that I can endorse the particular measure that my hon. Friend proposes.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister think it satisfactory that, in the space of a single year, the amount spent on cars by health service trusts has increased by 65 per cent. to a total of nearly £25 million?

The Prime Minister: One of the purposes of health service trusts is to enable their managers—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Members listen, they will get their answer. One of the purposes of trusts is to enable managers, across the whole range of their activities, to determine how best to use the resources at their disposal. The growth in the number of trusts, the improvement in services and the rise in the number of patients treated demonstrate the trusts' increasing success.

Mr. John Smith: Perhaps we should test the situation by individual examples. Is the Prime Minister aware that the St. James's University hospital trust has increased its car bill by more than 200 per cent. and that in the case of Kingston hospital the increase is 250 per cent? Is that the Government's order of priorities? Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that most people in the country want to see money spent on patients and not on cars?

The Prime Minister: The overall priority, on which the right hon. and learned Gentleman would be best advised to concentrate, is whether more patients are being treated, either in individual hospitals or in hospitals in general. I cannot carry in my head the details of individual expenditure in every health authority, and neither can the right hon. and learned Gentleman. What I can say is that it is right to devolve responsibility rather than to centralise it, as he would do, and that it is right to take action administratively to increase and improve the patient service that is offered. More patients are being treated and they are being treated better, with a wider range of operations and treatment than ever before.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the Prime Minister understand that hardly a day goes by without further evidence of waste and inefficiency in the health service,

introduced as a result of the Government's changes? Does not he appreciate that, whatever he can or cannot hold in his head, it is the daily experience of both patients and staff that the health service is being undermined by this gross misallocation of priorities?

The Prime Minister: I do not recall the right hon. and learned Gentleman ever mentioning any of the inefficiencies in expenditure that occurred prior to these reforms. He was perfectly prepared to condone them at that stage; we are trying to put them right. That is the reason for the changed management structure and devolvement of responsibility. The right hon. and learned Gentleman's question shows that he remains an unreconstructed centralist and is unwilling to trust people with devolved responsibilities.

Mr. Sykes: To turn to far more important matters, is my right hon. Friend aware of the widespread pleasure and relief in Scarborough, Whitby and other seaside resorts following the Government's action yesterday to curb the rising tide of benefit hostels on our English coasts?

The Prime Minister: It is certainly true that that is the case in Yorkshire, but the problem is in Blackpool, Bournemouth and many other parts of the country as well. My hon. Friend and many of my other hon. Friends have campaigned extremely hard to have it solved. I believe that the announcement made by my hon. Friend the Minister of State yesterday will be welcomed by hoteliers, residents and taxpayers who feel that they have been taken for a ride for too long. Not only will it prevent the problem spreading, but the licensing scheme that we are examining may also deal with the problem that currently exists.

Q2. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Alton: With only 3 per cent. of people north and south of the Irish border expressing any support for the pursuit of violence, does not the Prime Minister believe that this vindicates the patient approach that he has taken towards the pursuit of peace in Northern Ireland? In that context, does not he believe that he should raise with the Taoiseach the use of the political defence as a way of justifying murder and terrorism and as an argument against extradition in the Irish courts? Will he also consider the possibility of the creation of an interlocutor or mediator to pursue the course of peace in Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the support that he has consistently given to our attempts to secure peace in Northern Ireland. I agree with him that the extradition arrangements need to be strengthened. That is why I welcome, in particular, the new Irish extradition Bill which will make the arrangements between our countries more logical and more straightforward.

As I indicated a moment ago, on the hon. Gentleman's first point there will be no negotiations with Sinn Fein before a permanent end to the IRA's violence. I do not intend that we should be shifted from our present course. I believe that it has the overwhelming support of people in the island of Ireland and that it has huge support both in this country and abroad. The Taoiseach and I intend to press ahead with our talks in the hope that we will be able to find a peaceful future for Ireland.

Q3. **Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Fox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that British interests in Europe have always been better represented by Conservatives than by socialists or Liberals? Will he assure the House that the protection of British interests in Europe will lie at the heart of our position in the current negotiations on the widening of Europe and on qualified majority voting?

The Prime Minister: I do believe that it is important that this country plays a full part in the European community and exercises its influence both on behalf of the people in this country and on behalf of Europe as whole. We have sought for a long time to have enlargement, and we are very much in favour of it. The negotiations are very nearly complete. The present discussions between the Twelve are about the institutional changes that will accompany the enlargement. Like many other states, we attach importance to qualified majority voting, but I think that it is right to consider very carefully the effect on QMV of an increase in membership. What we need to ensure is that democratic legitimacy and the rights of minorities are sustained within the European Union. That is what my right hon. Friend will be seeking to do in his negotiations.

Q4. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Miller: Does the Prime Minister agree that the short-term policies of banks and financial institutions undermine the recovery of manufacturing companies such as Rover? Does that reflect a lack of confidence in his Government, or is it nothing to do with him?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman will see from most of the statistics now being produced that manufacturing industry is in fact recovering and it is recovering rather well. It is increasingly—*[Interruption.]* There is no point in the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) waving his finger. If he will give me time, I shall get to his question if he can bear to be patient for a second. Banks are seeking to provide resources for appropriate lending. The question of lending to Rover is of course something that Rover pursues with its own bankers and not with anyone else. *[Interruption.]* It is interesting to see that the hon. Gentleman would have Government Ministers determine individual bank loans to individual companies. I am pleased to see another indication of the centralism that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was attempting to shrug off a moment ago.

Q5. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Given the importance of the construction industry to the economy as a whole, does my right hon. Friend agree that the latest figures for private orders are excellent news for British firms and British jobs?

The Prime Minister: Construction orders are now at a very high level; higher than they have been for some years. New housing starts are still up and I trust that they will continue. Confidence is growing and a large part of this is, of course, related directly to the economic policies that enabled us to reduce interest rates—I am perfectly happy to accept responsibility for that.

Q6. **Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Simpson: Is the Prime Minister aware that last year in Nottingham, 1,090 households faced repossession and that, in the same year, the city was allowed to build a grand total of only 12 houses for rent? Is there any practical advice and help that the Prime Minister is able to offer to the 99 per cent. of households caught in the terrible truth between his rhetoric and repossession, or is it yet another matter that is not of his concern?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that, as the economy recovers and interest rates have fallen, the number of repossessions is also falling and falling quite distinctly. What of course is also necessary in providing rented accommodation is that local authorities, notably Labour local authorities, should fill up the property that they have and not leave large numbers of voids and empties in many parts of the country.

Q7. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend accept the need to reduce public borrowing? Is he aware that Ealing Conservative council has now repaid £75 million of the £158 million borrowed between 1986 and 1990 by the then Labour council, and that Birmingham, Hackney and Manchester have debts higher than many third world countries? *[Interruption.]* All Labour-controlled councils.

Hon. Members: Name them.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friends are tempting me to name them, but I fear that it would take up the rest of today's Question Time and all of Thursday's. I congratulate Ealing on reducing its debt. However, my hon. Friend was being characteristically generous in naming only three Labour authorities. He could have named substantially more. I know that the Labour party has a lot to say to us from time to time about third world debt. It is about time that it did something about fourth-rate Labour authorities that build up debts as large as, if not larger than, third world debt itself.

Contaminated Land

3.30 pm

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require those who were responsible for polluting land to be responsible for its restoration and decontamination; and for connected purposes.

The Bill is designed to ensure the remedying of contaminated land under the general principle of the polluter pays. The need for and the benefit of such legislation should be plain to all: the improvement of our environment in the immediate locality of the sites involved, the removal of obstacles to the redeveloping of derelict and contaminated land and thereby relieving pressure on green belt and virgin green field sites, and the insurance of not handing to future generations the responsibilities of our actions in a totally unreasonable and irresponsible manner.

My Bill would require a monitoring of current processes to ensure that contamination is avoided and minimised. It would require the treatment of contamination as it arises or, where appropriate, in a reasonable time scale of a site being vacant or a polluting process ceasing to operate. It would require the establishment and maintenance of a register of contaminated land to ensure that full information was available to potential purchasers, developers, local authorities and the public.

The necessity for such a Bill should be clear. The Government have repeatedly mouthed the slogan of "the polluter pays" and time and again they have run up to the fence and refused to jump it. In January 1990, the Environment Select Committee said:

"it is the responsibility of the polluters to restore land on surrender or to ensure that clean up will take place."

It called for a code of practice to be implemented by the industry within two years and, failing that, for legislative action to be taken. Almost four years later, the Lords Committee on remedying environmental damage said that when one considers Government policy,

"It is quickly apparent that the polluter pays principle is providing no more than general indications of what might be desirable policy."

The Government's recently released consultation paper "Paying For Our Past" shirks the issue entirely and effectively advocates the continuation of the status quo. It states:

"If unnecessarily early steps to treat land have to be taken, this may positively jeopardise wealth creation . . . Contamination on most sites can be safely left until an opportunity such as redevelopment arises."

That, plus the Government's deregulation initiative, should be understood as the clearest of signs that the Government will maintain the status quo. The green veil behind which they have sought to hide their policies has been exposed and has fallen, and we can now see clearly that the vested interests which caused many of the problems on the sites, and which in some cases continue to cause them, are to be protected.

The realities of the Government's protecting of the vested interests and of the status quo can be seen all over the country. I could give so many instances that I do not have time to mention them all. In Armley, in Leeds, the residents of 258 properties face average bills of £7,500 to clean up asbestos pollution. A former factory has been clearly identified as the cause of the pollution, yet residents have been told by the local authority that if they do not clear the pollution the council will clear it at their expense.

The failure to enact section 37 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 caused a huge rush among waste disposal operators to return their landfill licences, thereby avoiding all responsibility for the damage done to the sites over the years when profits were derived from their operation. The liability has thus been transferred back to the public purse. The Government's failure there has imposed a direct and considerable burden on the taxpayer.

In my constituency we have Foleshill town gasworks site—57 acres of derelict land, some of which has been derelict for 20 or 30 years. That is 57 acres of disgrace, danger and mess for the people who have to live around it. The site cannot be properly protected, and children gain access to it and play dangerously there. Criminal elements, too, gain access and get up to all sorts of activities such as breaking up cars. The heavy metal deposits on the site are a grave danger to the health of nearby residents. Moreover, the potential opportunity to create 2,500 jobs in a constituency in which 6,000 people are unemployed continues to be missed because of an over-long negotiation between British Gas and the Government about who should accept the responsibility.

Some issues that arise from that example are outside the scope of my Bill, but I can mention some of them. For instance, who is responsible for the pollution on such a site? British Gas was publicly owned until recently. Now that it is a private company, is it to accept responsibility for the pollution, or did the Government frame the privatisation legislation so as to transfer the asset into the private sector while leaving the liabilities with the taxpayer in the public sector?

Another issue that is causing problems affecting the site in my constituency is an unholy row between the Department and British Gas on grant allocations in central Manchester, where it is alleged that British Gas has managed to claim £4.4 million for site redevelopment to which it was not entitled.

It seems that the old maxim, "Tell Sid," which we heard at the time of privatisation, will soon become, "Keep a close eye on Sid" if the lesson of central Manchester is learnt. Meanwhile, the people of Foleshill continue to suffer that appalling situation in my constituency, and the consequent lack of opportunities. That and the many other examples from all over the land should prove that legislation such as my Bill is required.

The Government have signed up to such documents as, "Agenda 21" and "Sustainable Development—the UK Strategy". Those documents stem from the Rio summit and, as has been shown, the Government are effectively sustaining the status quo and their policy is totally at odds with those stated aims. My Bill will be at odds with their policy; it will be at odds with the thrust towards deregulation in this sector. It will seek to take effective action, to prevent, cure and monitor contaminated land and to relieve the green belt by, wherever possible, bringing it back into economic use at the expense of the polluter.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Robert Ainsworth, Mr. Geoffrey Robinson, Mr. Jim Cunningham, Ms Estelle Morris, Mr. Jon Owen Jones, Mr. Cynog Dafis, Ms Ann Coffey, Mr. Robert Litherland, Mr. George Howarth and Mr. Harry Barnes.

CONTAMINATED LAND

Mr. Robert Ainsworth accordingly presented a Bill to require those who were responsible for polluting land to be responsible for its restoration and decontamination; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 May 1994, and to be printed. [Bill 74.]

Points of Order

3.40 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your guidance on a matter that has been brought to my attention. In Thursday's debate, the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), without informing me that she would name me, accused me of dishonourable conduct. She made the entirely untrue accusation that I bought, sold and profited from council housing. Through you, Madam Speaker, I request the hon. Lady to withdraw her accusation because I have never owned, bought, sold, lived in or rented a council house in my life. The accusation that she made about me is entirely wrong.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I noticed that the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) was named. I had intended to name another hon. Member. I went to the *Hansard* office and corrected the matter immediately.

Madam Speaker: The matter has been resolved. I am most grateful.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am sure that you read the Order Paper every morning and that you will have noticed that I have tabled an early-day motion concerning more than 100 people in the Campsfield detention centre who are seeking asylum in this country and, to get their cases heard, have gone on hunger strike. I am sure that you will agree that that is an important and urgent matter because their lives are at risk in the long term. Have you had any intimation from the Home Secretary that he takes the matter seriously and plans to make a statement to the House about the plight of those poor people, who have come to this country to seek safety from oppression abroad?

Madam Speaker: It is a little early in the week to draw attention to early-day motions. No Minister has informed me that he or she wants to make a statement on the subject that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Orders of the Day

Local Government (Wales) Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

3.42 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Local government reorganisation has been debated extensively. The Government have consulted widely, issuing three documents and subsequently publishing the White Paper on Wales on St. David's day last year. Each of those papers generated many hundreds of responses, which have been placed in the Library.

We established the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government so that representatives of both counties and districts could advise us. Groups of local authority workers worked with the Welsh Office to consider the practical implications of our proposals. More recently, working groups have been considering how to manage the transition to the new structure. I and my ministerial colleagues have had many meetings with Members of Parliament, councillors, professional organisations and members of the public. I am grateful for the positive co-operation of so many local councillors and their officers and much of the good advice from Members of Parliament.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the Secretary of State accept that, after having all that consultation with local government organisations and Members of Parliament, he still proposes a Bill that is actively opposed by 32 out of the 38 Members of Parliament who represent Wales, as is shown by the amendment on the Order Paper? Can he confirm that in the Cabinet in the autumn he offered to withdraw the Bill but that that offer was swept to one side on the basis that a consensus existed in Wales? Is not it clear now that there is no consensus in Wales for the Bill, and will the Secretary of State now withdraw it?

Mr. Redwood: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's premise. As the reasoned amendment makes clear, there is strong support for the idea of unitary authorities in Wales. Labour Members have different arguments. They wish to see an additional assembly on top of the unitary authorities that we are proposing. I know from my discussions with hon. Members on both sides of the House that there is a lot of support for the thrust of having unitary authorities, and quite a lot of support on the ground for many of the boundaries that we have proposed. Later, I shall make some additional amendments which I think will be welcomed by Labour Members.

As the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) knows, the Cabinet discussions are private. However, I can assure him that I vigorously defend the interests of Wales. I have no difficulty in recommending the Bill to the House this afternoon.

As I said, we have had plenty of opportunity to debate the proposals in the Welsh Grand Committee and during debate on the Queen's Speech. The Bill has been fully considered in another place and we have another all-day debate today. The Government have listened carefully to representations. In response to the consultation, I have made a number of changes to the boundaries proposed in the White Paper. I have included all of Delyn in the new Flintshire, which has been welcomed by many Labour Members; restored the communities of Ystradgynlais and Tawe Uchaf to Powys; returned Coychurch Lower to Bridgend; reunited the community of Llanelly Hill with the rest of Breconshire in Powys; and moved the communities of Cynwyd and Llandrillo to Denbighshire. I have always chosen to move territories that test Welsh pronounciation to the extreme. I have accepted a number of amendments in another place—most importantly, agreeing that any joint authorities etablished under clause 31 should be composed of local councillors.

The aims of local government reorganisation in Wales are to create good local government close to and accountable to local people based on a strong sense of community identity, and to establish authorities that can operate efficiently, buying in services where that is better.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Secretary of State gives way to a Scot who apologises that he must flee to the fiasco of the Committee dealing with the reform of Scottish local government, which meets every Tuesday and Thursday from 10.30 am to 1.00 pm, 4.30 pm until 7.30 pm and then 9.00 pm to 1.00 in the morning. If he looks at the report of our proceedings, he will see that it is a fiasco. What is the cost of Welsh local government reform?

Mr. Redwood: A range of costs have been estimated by a consultant. I believe that the cost will be modest. I do not believe that there will be a large number of redundancies, so the result is that there will not be large capital costs for the transition. I will be working closely with local government to ensure that we do not need a lot of additional administrative office blocks, for example, which are some of the other costs that some people have proposed.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The right hon. Gentleman mentioned redundancies. May I tell him that my constituents who work in Alyn and Deeside district council and Clwyd county council are anxious about the future and about whether they will have a job once the Bill is enacted and the measures are in place. What reassurance can the Secretary of State give to my constituents who work in local government that they have a future?

Mr. Redwood: Most local government workers will have a good future in the new unitary authorities. If they are delivering services—if they are teachers or care workers providing a front-line service—I envisage them being transferred in their entirety in practically every case. I hope that that is the sort of reassurance for which the hon. Gentleman wishes. When it comes to senior management and administration, there will need to be some competition for the posts that are required in those local authorities.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): If one of the main aims of this reorganisation is to bring local government nearer to the people, can the Secretary of State explain how that is possible in south Meirionnydd when it is proposed that there should be a centre at Caernarfon, which is 110 miles and a good two-hour drive away? Is that bringing local government nearer to the people?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman's area may well be one which would want to take advantage of the decentralisation proposals. That would mean that some of the functions could be carried out closer to his own constituents in Meirionnydd, and I will give more information on that if I can make progress with my speech.

The aim is to have just one council in each area which is close enough to people to represent them, strong enough to command respect and able to decide for itself and get on with the job. No one will be left in doubt who is responsible. Each constituent will be able to turn to one council through his own local councillor for help, redress and service. The present system divides responsibility for planning and economic development between county and district.

Closely related areas, such as social services and housing, and trading standards and environmental health are given in part to the county and in part to the district council. A local developer may take a planning application to his district, only to be told that the highway issues are for the county, which in turn must advise the district. An elderly person who is seeking help may be shunted from county social services head office to area social services to district housing. I believe that we can do better than that, and the proposals will provide a clearer service for all.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I recognise that, as an English hon. Member, I am looking forward and beyond local government reorganisation in Wales. There are to be 21 highway authorities, and I accept that there will be co-ordination in some planning matters. Is my right hon. Friend confident that 21 highway authorities will have the competence to be able to carry forward co-ordinated routes? Will we find that, on the boundaries, there will be a change from salting to non-salting, or roads not meeting? How will those be co-ordinated?

Mr. Redwood: The principal routes are trunk roads, for which I and the Welsh Office are responsible directly to the House. In other areas, there will be agreement between local authorities on the ground and, of course, the Welsh Office will offer guidance and some strategic information which may help in the development of a proper highways strategy.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): The Secretary of State talked about people being shunted from county social services to area social services in a critical way. Does not the right hon. Gentleman understand that area social services offices are out-stations of county social services? Is he proposing now to abolish area social services offices?

Mr. Redwood: Of course not. I was drawing attention to the difficulty that constituents have when they first go to headquarters, are then told quite properly to go to an area department and are then told that it is a housing matter and that they must go to the district. We are producing a rather simpler procedure which will help the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituents and others.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The Secretary of State is showing an abysmal ignorance of how local government works. When people go for help from social services, they immediately go to the local offices. They do not go to county hall for a walking aid. They go through their local offices. The Secretary of State's argument surely defeats the object of the exercise of creating unitary authorities. He is arguing that the proper relationship between what people can have and the best way of delivering the services can be achieved by two-tier local government, which we will get at the end of the day anyhow.

Mr. Redwood: That is not what I said. We are moving from three points of contact either to two or to one, and that to me is an improvement and simplification in the services. It will make it better for individuals, and it is common sense. Many who now go direct to their area office still have the tension of wondering whether they will be dealt with by the area office or by the housing office. That will go under the proposals which I am putting forward.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Does my right hon. Friend agree that a particularly compelling example of the point that he is making is the responsibility for land drainage and for flooding? At the moment, the county authority has the responsibility if the water comes from a highway while the borough or district authority has powers but limited duties. Is not the confusion in the mind of the person whose house is flooded quite impossible?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend has chosen a good example. There are many such examples, but I shall not bore the House with more of them. The case rests, and it is a strong one.

In building a new structure of local government, the Government wanted each council to represent a community, to enjoy the loyalties of local people and to be sufficiently strong to manage services well. The pursuit of the objectives has resulted in a varied pattern of authorities proposed for Wales—varied in geographical extent and in populations.

It has also led in some cases to vigorous argument about the need for smaller or even occasionally for bigger councils. I cannot respond positively to every demand of community identity. If we did, we might well return to the days before 1974 when there were 181 local authorities in Wales, few of which were big enough to do a good job. Nor do I intend to seek larger units on the ground that they may produce more economies if that means an unacceptable erosion of loyalties.

Following the debates in Parliament and in Wales generally, I have decided that there is a good case for a unitary Merthyr and a unitary Blaenau Gwent. Although I am reluctant to increase the number of authorities in the Bill, I understand the differences between Merthyr and its proposed partner in Blaenau Gwent. I understand Merthyr's long, proud history and its former status as a county borough. Its size, which is comparable to that of Cardiganshire and Anglesey, also works in its favour.

Mr. Rogers: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) will also want to intervene. I find the Secretary of State's statement amazing. I congratulate Merthyr on becoming a unitary authority, but the same arguments that he put for a unitary authority in Merthyr could be put for Rhondda. Rhondda is the only authority that has not changed since the local government structure was set up last century. What is the difference?

Mr. Redwood: The arguments on size, history and former status do not all apply in the same way to Rhondda. As I have just explained, I cannot continue indefinitely creating many more authorities because they would not be

[Mr. Redwood]

sufficiently strong, firm or large to do the job. Merthyr is a special case. I am granting it unitary authority status because I can see the force of the argument.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for, on this occasion, being a listening Secretary of State. He has listened to the universal representations that he has received. The proposed Heads of the Valleys authority had no supporters whereas there was an alternative consensus such as he described. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and others who joined in making the representations.

Twenty two years ago I returned to the House in a by-election in the very year that the then Government abolished the county borough of Merthyr Tydfil. It is a great pleasure to be here when we are about to restore it.

Mr. Redwood: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks. I think that it is the right decision and I look forward to his support when the amendments are tabled. We intend to move amendments to add the northern Rhymney valley to Caerphilly and to create the two new unitaries that I have described, bringing the total number of authorities up to 22.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): While I welcome the Minister's statement that unitary status will be given to Blaenau Gwent, may I ask him to comment on the decision to take the Llanelli community into Powys, especially in view of the recent referendum? Although the result of the referendum was not in favour of Blaenau Gwent, only approximately 15 per cent. voted for the Llanelli community to go into Powys.

Mr. Redwood: As the hon. Gentleman said, the result certainly was not in favour of Blaenau Gwent. There was a stronger feeling that the community should not be in Blaenau Gwent than for anything else. I have responded to that feeling.

I have revised my original proposals for 1,100 councillors, following consultation. The Standing Committee may wish to discuss my present proposal for 1,260 councillors for the new authorities. There will be an additional 15 for the extra council that I have announced today.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): While I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith), may I ask the Secretary of State to explain why Cynon Valley is not to be a unitary authority? In the original proposals of his predecessor, Cynon Valley was to be a unitary authority. What has changed in the meantime? Why has he not changed his mind on that issue, as he has on the other two areas?

Mr. Redwood: I have not amended the White Paper proposals of my predecessor in this respect. I think that they were right. I have described the special circumstances that apply to Merthyr which, as the hon. Lady will understand only too well, do not apply to her area. That is where the matter rests.

Mr. Rogers: The right hon. Gentleman's memory is selective. The original proposals made by his predecessor showed Rhondda borough as a unitary authority. The proposals were later amended when the Secretary of State made the amalgam of the Glamorgan valleys, which he has now altered simply by name. Will the Secretary of State explain why he is setting up one authority with a population of a quarter of a million, and saying that that is the right size for a unitary authority, when next to it—I do not carp about the fact that Merthyr has received selective treatment—he is setting up an authority with a population smaller than two of the authorities immediately adjacent? Both Taff-Ely and Rhondda have larger populations than Merthyr.

Mr. Redwood: I think that it is Opposition Members who have selective memories. The White Paper was published by my predecessor and I have not changed the White Paper proposals in the areas in which Opposition Members are now asking me to change them. I think that my predecessor's judgment was right. It is a balance between the sense of community and the scale and size of the authorities in the way that I have described. I believe that we have now come to the right judgment in the light of the decisions that I am proposing today.

Mr. Carlile *rose—*

Mr. Redwood: May I be allowed to finish with one set of interventions before coming to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile)—who, I seem to remember, did not want to allow me to speak at all to the House when we last debated the subject on the Floor of the House? I will offer him a courtesy that he did not offer me when we last debated the matter.

I have already made the point about Merthyr. Its former status, its sense of community identity and the special unpopularity of simply putting the two communities together across the Heads of the Valleys swayed my judgment, which makes it different from some of the other cases that we are examining.

I will now give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Carlile: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman because I wanted to ask him a question in the context of his current remarks. Bearing in mind the consideration that he has given to Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent, what special historical and community circumstances apply to Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent, the decisions on which are welcome, that do not apply to Montgomeryshire?

Mr. Redwood: I have already dealt with that. The hon. and learned Gentleman obviously was not listening. If he were a better advocate of his case, perhaps we would be making more progress. He should be aware that Merthyr Tydfil was the only county borough whose former historic status was not recognised in the White Paper proposals —that is one of the points that is of importance—whereas several historic shire counties unfortunately have not had that recognised in the form of separate unitary status because of size and service delivery problems, of which the hon. and learned Gentleman should be well aware.

As to the issue of councillor numbers, the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales will, following implementation, conduct further electoral reviews of each of the new authorities. Some areas will be reviewed before the second elections in 1999, and the whole of Wales will have been covered by the time of the third elections to the new authorities in 2003.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Will the Secretary of State explain to me, and to the House, why he wants to delay the Boundary Commission's review? I can give him examples in the proposed Pembrokeshire unitary authority of wards that, under his proposals, will have two members and 4,000 electors, yet there will be another ward with fewer than 800 electors with one member. Surely those anomalies should be tackled at the earliest opportunity and not delayed for six or more years.

Mr. Redwood: We are simply trying to come up with a practical proposition for the local government Boundary Commission, but I am happy for my hon. Friends to consider that matter again on our behalf in Committee if that is the wish of the Committee. However, we need a realistic timetable that provides a sensible work pattern for Wales.

I am currently considering responses to my announcement that elections to the new authorities could be held on 6 April 1995. That would allow a full year for recruitment of senior staff and for planning the provision of services. I think that that is long enough, but I will consider all responses carefully, including those of people who want May rather than April, and I will welcome the further views of Members in the debate and subsequently in Committee.

In some cases, the new unitary authorities contain towns and historic shires that retain a strong sense of identity. To take account of that, the Bill proposes, in clauses 27 and 28, special arrangements for establishing area committees where those are requested by not fewer than 10 members from those areas. Where those arrangements are invoked, it would be for councils to come up with their own decentralisation schemes. That means that if Powys or Carmarthenshire proposed suitable schemes in respect of Montgomeryshire or Llanelli, local councillors could make their own decisions on matters such as housing allocation, planning applications, local social services, local roads and amenities and leisure facilities.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Is the Secretary of State saying that those would also apply to the Cynon Valley, Rhondda and Taff-Ely administration that he wishes to create? If it does, where does it make sense? In Taff-Ely we have created, since 1974, a cohesion out of what were two very different boroughs. It has taken 20 years to create that. The borough has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Wales. It is a go-ahead borough which has been a success. Why does the right hon. Gentleman insist on coming up with that second-best method of running local government when a perfectly good unitary authority already exists? Where is the sense in it?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman has forgotten that this is an enabling power. I am leaving the decision where I hope that he wants it—with local councils. If elected councillors, on behalf of their electorates, believe that they need those special local responsibilities, they have them in an area committee. If they believe that they do not need them and that they would get in the way, they need not have them. That is true local democracy. I hope that the Opposition will reflect on that and see the advantage of my proposal.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): It would be helpful to have an explanation of what my right hon. Friend has in mind concerning area committees. Does he agree that local councillors who seek to take advantage of the area committee idea would want to be in a position where they also controlled the finance for providing local services, as they do not have proper autonomy unless they also hold the purse strings? What are my right hon. Friend's proposals for financial arrangements?

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pushing me further on that point. We may be able to come up with arrangements in terms of block grant or block money voted by the local authorities concerned. I wish to return to that matter and I hope that the Committee will return to it. I hope that we shall return to it in the form of guidance and in developing more details of the system.

What is important for the statute is that it will provide a guarantee, if the scheme is approved by me, of the local decentralisation sought by local councillors. *[Interruption.]* I shall explain that in a little more detail for those hon. Members who seem unable to grasp the essential point.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way on this important point. If I heard him correctly, he proposes to come up with something in Committee. If the decentralisation proposal is of such fundamental importance that it will deal with the particular problem of Powys and recognise the case of Montgomery for unitary authority status, he should have given more thought to it. He should be in a better position to put explicit proposals to the House this evening, rather than hoping that, in Committee, he or the Committee will come up with something.

Mr. Redwood: I shall go on to explain the positive proposals incorporated in the Bill.

There is then the separate issue of what local schemes councillors might like to design in order to seek my approval to them. They should include some discussion of how the money will be handled. I firmly recommend that we do not go all the way, as some hon. Members might like, and give separate tax-raising powers to area committees. That is not part of the proposal.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): The Secretary of State has not responded to the acute question put by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) concerning the connection between responsibilities in practice and finance in practice, which is the essence of democracy. It simply is not good enough, after Green Papers, White Papers, consultation, sessions in the Welsh Grand Committee, consideration with his civil servants and contacts with local authorities, to say on Second Reading that he might be willing to allow certain things to occur and we must see what he can come up with in Committee. We are discussing the Second Reading of a Bill to which he is committed. We are discussing not an intimate detail or a tiny matter of consideration at the margins of public importance but a matter that is central to the operation of local government in Wales, as the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor pointed out. The Secretary of State must give a much more convincing answer to the questions raised by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor and my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) than he has given so far.

Mr. Redwood: The right hon. Gentleman would be right if we needed some legislative provision to cover that point, but we do not. We need legislative provision to

[Mr. Redwood]

cover the constitutional issue of the area committees' power vis a vis the principal council. I recommend firmly to the House that they should not be given separate tax-raising powers.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Redwood: May I explain this point first and come back to the hon. Gentleman if he is still not satisfied?

The proposals for decentralisation schemes have been criticised both for not giving councillors enough power and for trying to recreate a two-tier system of government by the back door. Opposition Members cannot sensibly argue both those propositions at the same time. There is a third possibility: that the Government have struck the right balance. There will be savings in cost because there will not be two groups of councillors and two corporate structures and overheads to maintain. There will be strong local interest in being represented by local committees. Councillors could meet for that purpose in the principal town of the area and could have staff working in the same place.

Authorities do not need my approval to establish a decentralisation scheme. There would be nothing to prevent the new authorities from establishing, as now, a wide range of decentralisation measures, including an area committee system using existing powers. I see no need, in Wales, to impose a duty on all the new authorities to submit general schemes to me indicating how they propose to apply those existing powers.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Redwood: I should like to finish this important point. I shall then give way, if I have not dealt with the hon. Gentleman's problem.

The Bill offers members of local authorities representing particular areas—such as Montgomeryshire—a guarantee that a decentralised system of administration will be adopted and maintained.

The Secretary of State's involvement in the process is required to provide that guarantee. The Bill does not require me to have a detailed or continuing role. It is for the authorities concerned to submit a scheme to me for approval. In that way, the schemes that emerge should be tailored to the particular local circumstances. The schemes should, of course, have something to say about how the money is to be granted, in what blocks it can be granted and how it can be protected under the Bill.

Once a scheme has been established and the guarantee given, the Secretary of State's involvement would cease. In keeping with the thinking that runs throughout the Bill, to which I am strongly committed, any decision to amend the scheme or to abolish it altogether would be for local determination—not for mine—in this case requiring the agreement of not only the principal council but also the area committee. Does the hon. Gentleman still have a problem?

Mr. Rogers: I still have a problem: it is the Secretary of State. Quite frankly, he has been duplicitous on a number of occasions. I have asked to see the Secretary of State and I have put forward arguments about the reorganisation in regard to the Rhondda. I have also seen the Under-Secretary of State.

The Bill went through the House of Lords; there were never any proposals along those lines except that we have to have authorities of a certain size to do the job. We are not carping particularly about Merthyr or Blaenau Gwent, but if the Secretary of State says that two areas—one with a population of 73,000 and one even smaller—are able to be unitary authorities, how is it that three authorities—Taff-Ely with a population of more than 90,000, Rhondda with more than 80,000 and Cynon Valley—are now not worthy of unitary status?

The Secretary of State has certainly misled me all the way and on every representation we have made to him. He has seen me on a number of occasions, he said that he would take our representations on board and then, at the end of the day, between the Lords and here, he has now turned on his head. Quite frankly, it is a disgusting thing that he has done.

Mr. Redwood: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will reflect and will withdraw those remarks. I have never promised an independent Rhondda authority. The representations I received were particularly strong in wishing to have the important name of Rhondda reflected in the local authority. I met that in the change of name I recommended to the House which has been approved in the other place. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will remember that I listened carefully to what he said. I reached the judgment I am putting to the House today which reflects the facts on the ground in the different circumstances of different councils in Wales.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): May I move my right hon. Friend to another point? The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is concerned about the fact that the Bill places no statutory duty on local authorities to have a social services committee. Can he give me some reassurance about how social services will be structured in Wales after the changes have taken place and let me know whether the same child protection arrangements will be in place for each local authority?

Mr. Redwood: The Bill does not change the statutory responsibilities of local government; they will transfer to the new unitary authorities. Social services will be one of the most crucial areas for which they are responsible, but in accordance with the settlement in the Bill, we are leaving the maximum amount of freedom to those unitary authorities to decide how to organise their political and administrative arrangements. I reassure my hon. Friend that the real concerns that he has in mind will, I am sure, be properly taken care of by responsible local government in Wales. The statutory requirements will remain in place to ensure that they stay up to the mark in delivering these important services.

I disagree with those who say that we need larger councils to deliver effective services. There were several debates in another place on trading standards. I believe that trading standards services, such as environmental health, can be organised by councils smaller than the current counties. Powys, one of the smaller new unitary authorities in population terms, is already a county authority responsible for trading standards and provides that service without problems. If councils believe that they can provide a better service by subcontracting to a neighbouring or larger authority, or alternatively by sharing their service with their neighbours, powers are available. I have

confidence that local government will be able to sort out its own arrangements for those important services and will want to do a good job for their local communities.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Is the Secretary of State satisfied that voluntary arrangements between the new unitary authorities will tackle planning issues, knowing what a mess the voluntary arrangements for waste disposal turned out to be? If strategic plans will remain in position, do not the Welsh people deserve to have at least the same treatment as Scotland?

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office will retain its interest in planning matters and has a responsibility for the general planning strategy and guidance affecting the whole of Wales. Many of the big investment decisions will be made by the House and financed out of central taxation, which will have a considerable influence on the development of Wales.

One of the most important strategic planning statements that I have made since taking up office was the statement on road priorities, which will in turn have a considerable impact on development patterns. The hon. Gentleman can rest assured that, at strategic level, the House and the Welsh Office will have strong responsibilities. I have every confidence that 22 local authorities—not many more, as 22 is the maximum that we could allow—will be able to plan for their local areas within that general strategic guidance and advice from the Welsh Office.

Mr. Ainger: The Secretary of State mentioned roads as an important strategic issue. Will he give an assurance during the debate that, on the problems that will undoubtedly be faced by the new unitary authority in Pembrokeshire for the funding of the Cleddau bridge—both the outstanding debt burden that exists and the strengthening that will have to take place to comply with European Union legislation from 1 January 1999, which, with the outstanding debt, could total more than £30 million—he will investigate the possibility of tabling an amendment to the new legislation so that grant aid can be given to the new Pembrokeshire unitary authority to offset that massive burden, which will undoubtedly strangle any unitary authority at birth?

Mr. Redwood: I do not agree with the apocalyptic vision of the hon. Gentleman, but the spending requirements and needs of each area are, and will be, taken into account when we come to settle both capital programmes and revenue support grant. I am sure that nearer the time the hon. Gentleman will remind me of the need to take that into account. I cannot hold out the assurance that he would really like—that I would transfer the whole thing to my Department's responsibility. That would not be the right course. But that local authority needs to have a reasonable settlement and to bear in mind its obligations.

It may be helpful if I repeat the undertaking given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Redwood: May I make this point, as I have been trying to make it for some time? I will come back to the hon. Gentleman.

In response to cross-party concerns expressed about the future of existing archive collections, an amendment will be tabled in Committee providing for the new authorities to consult me and my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor before arrangements are made for the archive service. That is a concession to the cross-party team in the other place. I assume that it is also satisfactory from the point of view of hon. Members who might serve on the Committee.

Mr. Ray Powell: I am still rather confused about the financial structure that the Secretary of State has outlined. Some of my hon. Friends have already suggested that he should be more explicit, and I think that Welsh local authorities would like more information than he has offered. I know that the right hon. Gentleman was a great supporter of the poll tax; perhaps he will suggest a similar scheme in Committee. We do not know what is in his mind at this stage. It is essential for him to be more explicit about the financial structure before we go into the Lobbies to vote for or against the proposals.

Mr. Redwood: I have been extremely explicit, as have the Government as a whole. It fell to me to help to see the council tax through, but we have nothing further to add on that side of the local government ledger. The new tax was enough for me; I wish to live on with it, rather than with some replacement.

As for the other side of the accounts—the question of grant and revenue funding for the services for which the area committees will be responsible—I have been crystal clear in explaining that that is a matter for the local authorities to recommend under the decentralisation scheme. The Bill must give a guarantee that the approved scheme will work, and cannot be reversed by the principal councils; it is now up to local government to decide how far it wishes to go within the law of the land and the general rules in regard to those decentralisation arrangements.

It is not for me to be over-prescriptive in the world in which I wish to create a world in which local authorities take more responsibility. I thought that Opposition Members were trying to encourage that, but now, at every turn, they are trying to make me answer all the questions rather than just those that should properly be answered by the holder of my office.

In another place, concern was expressed that local authorities would be unable to make representations to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary about the membership and structure of combined fire authorities, and any new amalgamation schemes for police authorities. The Government are considering the matter. We believe that one way forward could be to impose a duty on the Home Secretary to give notice of any new proposals to the existing fire and police authorities, as well as to the relevant shadow unitary authorities. The giving of notice would carry with it a duty on my right hon. and learned Friend to consider representations. I am sure that the Committee will return to that issue.

To allow for an orderly handover, the existing counties and districts will be under a duty to come together in transition committees—one for each of the new authority areas. The committees will need to identify the property, assets and staff that should transfer, and the existing service delivery arrangements. Clauses 29 to 31 provide a package of reserve powers enabling me to intervene if there is any risk of a breakdown in service delivery. I have already stated my clear preference for local arrangements.

[Mr. Redwood]

I see the reserve powers as very much a last resort, for use in the transitional period only. If hon. Members wish to modify them, I shall be happy to consider their requests.

Part V of the Bill provides for the establishment of the residuary body for Wales and the Staff Commission for Wales. It sets up mechanisms for transferring staff to the new authorities, and for the payment of compensation in appropriate circumstances. The residuary body's prime function would be advise me on the transfer of assets, and to manage and dispose of redundant assets. The body could also end up in temporary ownership of an asset if two or more authorities disputed its future. That would allow time to sort out the matter.

The residuary body is not a means for the Secretary of State to deprive Welsh councils of various assets that are unaffected by the reorganisation. Transfers would be made under the order-making power in clause 53. Clause 53 could not be used, for example, to transfer the St. David's shopping centre in Cardiff to the residuary body; such a transfer would not fall within the purposes of the Act, nor would it be a consequence of its provisions.

Assets that might be transferred to the residuary body are those such as administrative buildings which are, or are likely to become, redundant because of the organisation. I propose to use a mixture of asset proceeds and credit approvals to fund any new administrative buildings that might be required by the reorganisation. The precise arrangements in each case will need to be judged on their merits nearer the time.

As far as possible, I want to achieve two objectives in the transfer of staff. First, staff in district and county councils should be treated equally; secondly, the large majority of staff should pass to a new employer with a minimum of disruption.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I should like to pursue with the right hon. Gentleman a very important matter that has been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) from a sedentary position. There has been huge county council investment in Cardiff Wales airport. Will responsibility for the airport stay within local government after reorganisation?

Mr. Redwood: Recently I had a useful meeting with representatives of interests at the airport. We discussed the future investment and shareholding. There may be moves afoot to secure a local answer. I should like to see one that is good news for the future of the airport and that brings in the right kind of investment and management partnership. I should like to see how far we can get in discussion following our useful first meeting. I am not making any distinct proposals for the airport under this provision.

The Government's present proposal, which has been set out fully in another place, is that the vast majority of staff should be transferred by statutory transfer order. Other staff would be able to compete for jobs with the new authorities or receive a severance package. Some commentators have pressed the Government to transfer all staff to the new councils. That is an option which the Government are considering and which the Standing Committee will undoubtedly wish to debate further.

Whichever option is finally adopted, I do not expect the reorganisation to lead to a dramatic cut in the number of local authority staff in Wales. Inevitably there will be reductions in some areas as a result of the removal of the duplication that exists in the present two-tier system. As I mentioned earlier, I anticipate that all teachers, care workers and other local service operators are likely to transfer. My present estimate is that at least 95 per cent. of all staff will transfer. I hope that most people in local government will find these comments reassuring, which is what they are intended to be.

In the light of the debates in another place on staffing, the Government will be looking again at the drafting of clause 44. We wish to reassure staff that they will have their full rights under employment protection legislation —including consultation with staff and trade unions about prospective redundancies and notice of redundancy. Any amendments that are necessary to achieve this will be brought forward in Committee.

My right hon. Friends and I are still considering carefully the compensation arrangements that should apply to the reorganisations in Wales, Scotland and England. We shall consult on our proposals when they are finalised.

Finally, I plan to set up the Staff Commission for Wales in shadow form immediately after Easter. That is in accordance with the undertaking given in the White Paper. I hope that the House will agree that it is important for the commission to begin its work as soon as possible, building on the valuable work already done by the advisory committee on staffing matters. I shall make an announcement about appointments to the staff commission in due course.

The Bill will create strong new local authorities—local authorities based on communities, able to represent them well and serve them better. The Bill will strengthen local government. It should lead to better local government. It will lead to a renaissance of local government in Wales. I commend it to the House.

4.27 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

"this House, while recognising a broad measure of support for the principle of unitary authorities in Wales, declines to give a Second Reading to the Local Government (Wales) Bill [*Lords*] since it fails to establish a directly elected all Wales tier of government, concentrates further power over local government in the hands of the Secretary of State for Wales, abolishes a democratic tier of local government in favour of joint boards and other joint arrangements, threatens to undermine the viability of local services, provides opportunities for further privatisation and the possible creation of even more Welsh quangos, does nothing to improve the system of Welsh local government finance, ignores important traditional and historic Welsh local government boundaries and will cost the Welsh people at least £100 million which could be better used in improving basic local government services."

I should like to draw attention to the fact that, as was pointed out by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), this is the first occasion on which such an amendment has united all Opposition Members representing Welsh constituencies against the Second Reading of a Bill that relates exclusively to Wales.

Following the Secretary of State's uncertain and hesitant introduction, I am not convinced that the right hon. Gentleman has major areas of discretion that he wishes to see clarified in Committee if the Bill is given a Second Reading. I believe that, rather, he is full of confusion, reflecting the fact that he has not thought the proposals through as carefully as he ought to have done.

Before moving to the detail of the Bill, I want to reflect on three matters. The first is the strength of feeling in Wales against these proposals. Of the 38 Welsh Members of Parliament, 32 have signalled their opposition. The three major political parties are united in opposition. I exclude the Conservative party, of course, as, given the level of its electoral support and its current showing in the opinion polls, it can hardly be described as a major political party —least of all in Wales.

It is worth noting that the reason for reorganisation of Welsh local government being carried through by the Secretary of State, without the benefit of a commission as is the case in England, was made clear in the original consultation paper of June 1991. The then Secretary of State, in paragraph 1.5 of the paper, trusted

"that, in light of responses to the ideas set out in this consultation paper, it will prove possible to reach a broadly based agreement on the way forward in Wales."

As we all acknowledge and as the Secretary of State mentioned in his speech, there has been extensive debate in Wales, especially in local government, on the most appropriate course for reform. The proposals before us have managed to unite all parts of Welsh local government, but to unite it in opposition to the Bill. The county councils that have the relevant responsibility believe that too many councils have been proposed and that the smaller unitary authorities will not be sufficiently viable to undertake the necessary planning and co-ordination of services for which they will become responsible, notably strategic planning, education and social services. The districts contend that there are too few councils and that the historic boundaries of areas such as Radnorshire and Meirionnydd, in rural Wales, and Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent, in the valleys —which were in the right hon. Gentleman's initial proposals—are not reflected in these proposals.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: During his address the hon. Gentleman has told us of the views of the county councils in Wales. Looking at the hon. Members on the Opposition Benches behind him who have made contributions so far, it seems to me that every single one was asking the Secretary of State to go still further in setting up even more unitary authorities. In those circumstances, will the hon. Gentleman clarify for the benefit of hon. Members and of Wales where he stands on the proposals of the county councils in Wales?

Mr. Davies: I will certainly give the hon. Gentleman the satisfaction of clarification on one important matter. As I understand it, he is concerned about the future of the unitary authority of Powys. I shall give the hon. Gentleman the opportunity in Committee to vote on whether Powys should continue as a unitary authority.

I am sure that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) will see to it that an amendment is tabled allowing the Committee to vote for the creation of unitary authorities for Montgomery and for Brecon and Radnor. I assure the hon. and learned Gentleman that it is my firm intention to support him.

If the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) wishes to table an amendment to create a unitary authority for Brecon and Radnor, I give him the firm assurance that I am prepared to support it. If, on the other hand, he wishes to submit an amendment to create a unitary authority for Radnorshire alone, I shall give the matter careful consideration and I should be delighted to receive any representations that he cares to make.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I note the hon. Gentleman's response in relation to mid-Wales. Perhaps he will now answer the question that I put to him: what is the position that he takes on the representations made by the county councils in Wales?

Mr. Davies: Given the confusion that exists in Powys, I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would want to resolve that problem rather than involve himself in debates elsewhere. However, I can give him an assurance that in the latter part of my speech I intend to refer to the proposals that the Secretary of State announced today with reference to Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr, and I will certainly give him a clear indication as to the map of local government in Wales that would be preferable.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Answer the question.

Mr. Davies: I have given the hon. Gentleman a clear answer to his question—*[Interruption.]*—even if he does not like it. I have twice given way. I am amazed that, every time we have a debate on Welsh affairs, the conduct of Conservative Members seems to sink to the level of the gutter. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor has intervened twice and I have given way to him twice. He has asked questions and I have responded to them. If he wishes to pursue that issue, he will doubtless attempt to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. If he wishes to pursue it in Committee, I shall be happy to do so, too, but I should now like to make progress.

I have said that the county councils believe that too many councils have been proposed and that the smaller unitary authorities will not be viable. Of course, the districts take a counter-view; incidentally, that is despite the 1991 consultation paper which boldly declared guiding reform as one of its five fundamental principles. Paragraph 1.6 of that paper stated:

"local authority boundaries should as far as possible, reflect and strengthen existing community loyalties."

Setting aside the vexed question of boundaries, on which the counties and districts understandably have different perspectives, both tiers are united in opposing the reforms precisely because they reflect a deliberate attack on the ability of local government to plan and deliver local services. How can anyone welcome the proposals, especially those in clause 25 that will weaken direct democratic control in favour of centralised Welsh Office control, in light of the inefficiency, waste, corruption and incompetence that characterise the Welsh Office and its attendant quangos?

Democratic local government clearly has a direct interest, but its objections to the proposals are echoed by, among others, the Confederation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress in Wales, the Churches, the training and enterprise councils and a swathe of community opinion. According to the latest opinion poll undertaken for BBC Wales, 47 per cent. of the Welsh public were against these proposals and only 20 per cent. were in favour. Paragraph 1.6 contains a fundamental principle:

"local authorities should be democratically accountable to their electorates".

What clearer expression could there be of public opinion —of the democratic wish of the electorate—than all those varied views?

Only one local authority out of 45 has declared support for the proposals—Conservative-controlled Monmouth. As we know, its agenda is to protect its own party political

[Mr. Davies]

interests. The last elections in Wales were held in May last year. Of the 502 county councillors elected, 31 were Conservative. As I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) will point out, last week Labour had a resounding victory in the Bassaleg ward of Gwent county council, for the first time taking a Conservative-held county council seat. The 31 Conservative county councillors are represented by the independent group on the Assembly of Welsh Counties. In representing their views, the Assembly of Welsh Counties has made it clear that the leaders of Conservative opinion —Conservative local government in Wales—are vigorous in their condemnation of the proposals.

The second matter on which I wish to reflect is how the Government have managed to squander the genuine consensus in Wales in favour of reform. As our amendment makes clear, there is a broad measure of support in Wales for the principle of unitary authorities. Indeed, unlike the Secretary of State, most of us who stood as candidates and were elected for Wales in the last general election had such a manifesto commitment. Those of us who represent Wales understand that a sensible reform of local government could allow more unitary authorities, recognising the important traditional and historic boundaries to which our amendment refers.

We also recognise that any sensible reform of government in Wales has to include reform of all tiers of government. As well as democratising the existing devolved tier of government in the Welsh Office, a Welsh assembly or parliament would provide precisely the right mechanism for the strategic planning and co-ordination of the services that are delivered by the unitary authorities but that would require such an overview.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West) *rose—*

Mr. Davies: You were present, Madam Deputy Speaker, at the previous debate on Welsh affairs and you had to draw the hon. Gentleman's attention three times to the codes of courtesy and good conduct that we apply in the House. He took it on himself to launch a sustained, vicious and unsubstantiated attack on people outside the House of Commons who were not in a position to defend themselves. Until he understands that there are codes of good conduct and courtesy with which we should all comply, I have no intention whatever of giving way to him in the debate.

There is now an overwhelming view in Wales and a genuine consensus that to have an assembly and unitary authorities is the appropriate way to proceed. Certainly, it is the considered and joint view of the Assembly of Welsh Counties, the Council of Welsh Districts and 70 per cent. of the Welsh electorate who voted for those policies at the general election and the overwhelming majority view of those of us who represent Wales in the House of Commons. It is a pity that those who now run Wales—Conservative Members—are so lacking in confidence, so hidebound by their own centralising tendencies and so determined to cling to power for their own party's sake that they cannot bring themselves to acknowledge our majority view. I have never been one to regard the House of Lords as some beacon of democracy, but overwhelming support was forthcoming there for an all-Wales tier of government, even from the likes of Lord Hailsham in Committee, and it certainly managed to demonstrate how the Government are so out of date and reactionary.

By their failure to come to terms with the issue, the Government are proceeding with legislation that, inevitably, will be unsatisfactory. It will create a pattern of local government that will be inherently unstable and history will judge the Bill as the starting point for a fundamental and radical reform of Welsh government.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): May I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that, far from proposing to enhance democracy in Wales, which is what a directly elected assembly would do, the Government are undermining democracy, taking away democratic powers and placing them under the control of centralised authorities, especially in education? Do the Secretary of State and the hon. Gentleman recognise the great anxiety in Wales, especially about education, because of the reduction in democratic accountability and the effect of the opting-out process on the delivery of services to schools? Confusion will be created by having, in effect, two education systems—two school systems with two systems of funding—and that will have a terrible effect on services.

Mr. Davies: I know that the hon. Gentleman made that compelling case in the Committee on the Education Bill. It is a point that I intend to address shortly.

The explanation for the stubbornness and the state of affairs lies in the real motivation for the reforms. They are designed not to improve Welsh local government but to take forward the political agenda of the Conservative party. The proposals represent a massive assault on the independence of local government and provide a far greater concentration of powers in the Welsh Office.

Mr. Redwood *rose—*

Mr. Davies: I shall give way, but allow me to complete the point. Democratic local government in Wales is overwhelmingly anti-Tory, with the Labour party the dominant force. The Welsh Office is currently, albeit temporarily, on a short lease under Conservative control, hence the need for a concentration of power in Tory hands in the Welsh Office—powers that will, no doubt, in the normal course of events, be exercised by quangos that will be staffed by Tory candidates who either have been defeated or are about to be defeated at the polls by the electorate.

Mr. Redwood: Given the way in which I have described the Bill as extending the choice, powers and responsibilities of local government, which is what the Bill says, will the hon. Gentleman point to anything in the Bill that will centralise or take powers away from local government in the way he described? That simply is not on the face of the Bill. It is a charter for stronger, better local government, not for less local government.

Mr. Davies: The problem is that the right hon. Gentleman's rhetoric is far removed from reality. I have marked out parts II and III of the Bill. Every clause in part III refers to powers being given to the Secretary of State. In part II, clauses 19, 20, 23, 24 and 25 all refer to additional powers being given to the Secretary of State. In addition, there are the reserve powers of the Secretary of State and the special powers relating to the education

function, to which the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) referred. Such references are abundant in the Bill and I have suggested to the Secretary of State where he can find them in his legislation.

The Bill represents an assault on democratic local government. For example, the number of councillors will be dramatically reduced from 1,976 to about 1,250. For the first time in our history, the numbers of democratically elected local councillors will be exceeded by the 1,400 quango members—not elected but selected covertly by the Secretary of State.

The ability of the new authorities to undertake cross-border trading arrangements will be severely curtailed. Of course, that has nothing to do with the development of viable local authorities or good practice; it has everything to do with the ideological view of the Conservative party. It is a view to be imposed by central control because it would never be adopted by democratic local control.

Above all, the Bill provides an opportunity—obviously too good to miss—to gerrymander the boundaries of the parliamentary constituencies in Wales. If the Bill is given a Second Reading tonight, under the terms of the Boundary Commissions Act 1992, the Boundary Commission will have to take into account those new boundaries and, in effect, redraw the electoral map of Wales on which the next general election will be fought. Part III of schedule I provides an interesting insight into the Government's or, should I say, the Conservative party's intentions. Of the eight "preserved" counties, Dyfed, Gwynedd and West Glamorgan have unchanged boundaries. The other five have small, but significant, shifts of population. Those changes and those changes alone will have an impact on parliamentary constituency boundaries and, in each case, the direct or indirect consequence will be to the detriment of the Labour party's interests at the next general election.

In mid and south Wales there are only four Tory-held seats at the moment. Of course, after the next general election, the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) will doubtless join the former Member for Cardiff, Central, Mr. Ian Grist, in semi-retirement. I can assure—

Mr. Kinnock: We will not give him a job as chairman of a quango. It will be Jones the Dole after the election.

Mr. Davies: My right hon. Friend beat me to my punch line. I was about to assure the hon. Member for Cardiff, North that, in his retirement, he will not find that the next Labour Government offer him a post as chairman of a quango.

In the mid and south Wales seats of Monmouth, Brecon and Radnor, Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff, North, the interests of the sitting Tory Member are potentially advantaged by the changes. The clearest possible case is evidenced by the transfer of Wick, St. Bride's Major and Ewenny from Mid Glamorgan to South Glamorgan and, more accurately, from the political point of view, from the Bridgend constituency to that of Vale of Glamorgan. Despite overwhelming evidence that local opinion is opposed to those changes, those communities and their supposed Tory votes are used in the most corrupt of ways to attempt to shore up the 19-vote majority of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney). Any reputation that the Secretary of State has, either for intellectual honesty or for political probity, will be shredded if he fails to concede that those changes are indefensible.

Clauses 1 to 16 establish the new authorities. I am pleased to welcome the Secretary of State's announcement on Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil. My noble Friend Lord Prys-Davies presented a powerful case in the House of Lords. My hon. Friends the Members for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) and for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) have argued powerfully and consistently, publicly and privately, on behalf of their respective communities. I am grateful for the fact that the Secretary of State acknowledged that and saw fit to announce today that he would table amendments to create the unitary authorities of Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent.

The strength of my hon. Friends' case lay in the public support that they enjoyed. Having made that concession, the Secretary of State must understand that he will now receive further strong representations from authorities all over Wales. My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) was the first to his feet pressing the case for Rhondda. No doubt Taff-Ely will wish to make a similar representation, as will Cynon Valley, Neath, Port Talbot, Llanelli, Meirionnydd and Montgomery, which all feel a sense of injustice at the way in which they have been treated.

I assure the right hon. Gentleman that, now that he has acknowledged that his original proposals are capable of amendment, we shall want to examine the revised boundaries in great detail in Committee. I did not understand his response to one intervention during his speech, when he said that 22 was the maximum number of authorities that he could allow. Why 22? There is no particular reason for that number. Indeed, when the consultative paper was produced in 1991, the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor suggested that 24 was an option. If 24 was an option then, why does the Secretary of State now assert without evidence or argument that 22 is the absolute maximum?

Mr. Redwood: I explained that a balance had to be struck between the strength of feeling about community identity and the size and scale of local authorities for delivering services. The Labour party is split on the issue, because it argues that it wants both bigger authorities, for the delivery of certain services, and more smaller authorities, for community identity. I have struck a balance in the way that I described, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Davies: The Secretary of State has not answered my question. The Labour party's position is clear. We want a Welsh assembly and more unitary authorities. We have argued that clear position, and it commands overwhelming majority support in Wales. The problem lies with the Secretary of State and his party. They cannot accept the fact that that is the consensus in Wales.

The Secretary of State is creating problems for himself. He cannot concede the larger number of unitary authorities, and he will not concede the county case for a smaller number of larger authorities. In the absence of a consensus he is merely splitting the difference, and has arrived at an arbitrary figure of 22, which he cannot and will not justify. He must understand that that is in direct contradiction to the position adopted by his predecessor. The right hon. Gentleman is frowning. If a total of 24 local

[Mr. Davies]

authorities was an option in 1991, when the consultation paper came out, why can he now not move from 22? Why is 24 not an option?

Mr. Redwood: I have answered that question.

Mr. Davies: All that the Secretary of State did was to ask me a question. He refused to respond to mine.

Mr. Roger Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I understand the sense of gallantry that makes the hon. Gentleman want to come to the Secretary of State's rescue.

Mr. Roger Evans *rose—*

Mr. Kinnock: Here comes the dock brief.

Mr. Davies: I must reassure my right hon. Friend that on this occasion the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) is probably not being paid.

The Secretary of State must understand that real and strong arguments have been advanced in respect of small communities in south Wales. My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda put a compelling case for the Rhondda. He knows the difficulties in the mid-valleys area of Mid Glamorgan and the concern in towns such as Neath, Port Talbot and Llanelli and in the rural parts of Wales, such as Meirionnydd and Montgomery. If, having made the concession on Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil, which I unreservedly welcome, the Secretary of State were prepared to make another concession and allow 24 authorities—I do not suggest that that would be adequate—and if he undertook now to allow the Committee to reflect natural justice, I am sure that he would find it possible to achieve greater agreement on the proposals.

Mr. Roger Evans: The hon. Gentleman told us that his party's policy was to have a Welsh assembly plus a larger number of unitary authorities. Does that mean that Labour policy for Gwent, for example, is that there should be a number of unitary authorities, such as Newport, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent?

Mr. Davies: I am not sure what point the hon. Gentleman is trying to make. If we had a Welsh assembly and a pattern of between 25 and 30 unitary authorities, we would wish to discuss the details with the local authorities involved. We should really be debating the proposals before us, Madam Deputy Speaker, rather than the Labour party's proposals, but I am happy to answer the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Richards: Has the hon. Gentleman read the amendment?

Mr. Davies: Conservative Members are anxious to intervene from sedentary positions. Certainly, I have read the amendment; I wrote it, and I am fully aware of its contents.

The hon. Member for Monmouth must understand that, in any pattern of local government for Wales that included between 25 and 30 unitary authorities, there would clearly be unitary authorities in places such as Newport, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent. I have already said at least twice that I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement today that there will be a unitary authority for Blaenau Gwent. I assure the hon. Member for Monmouth that, if we had a unitary authority for his part of the world to replace Monmouth district council, it would be called Monmouth, not Monmouthshire.

Mr. Roger Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman ensure that he has put his party's policy absolutely clearly? Is it Labour policy, on the premise of a Welsh assembly, to abolish Gwent county council?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Davies: Our policy has been absolutely clear at every stage. I have had discussions with the leaders of Gwent county council. Councillor Graham Powell is a model of moderation, and my colleagues and I have had many warm fraternal discussions with him and with his good friend Harry Jones, the leader of Newport council. On several memorable occasions, we have even met in the same room.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is complete unanimity in Wales. All the Labour leaders of local authorities in Wales—that means all the Labour-held county councils and district councils—have put their names, as has every Labour Member of Parliament, to the document that we issued in February last year, which made clear our proposals for the reform of government in Wales, based on a directly elected assembly and a pattern of between 25 and 30 unitary authorities. Naturally, the existing pattern of district and county councils would then be abolished.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: With the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman, I must say that, with the exception of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), I am happy to take interventions from any hon. Member who I believe has a proper interest in the matter under discussion. I know that the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) had a former—*[Interruption.]* There is no need for Conservative Members to chatter at me. I well know who he is, and of his former role in the Association of District Councils. I am concerned with democratic government in Wales, and I am happy to discuss that with anyone who receives a mandate from Wales, who stands for election in Wales or who creates policies that are chosen by the people of Wales. I am sorry, but I do not recognise the hon. Member for Bromsgrove in that context.

I shall now proceed with the rest of my speech.

Mr. Richards: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it is order for a Member of the House to select from whom he will take interventions on the basis of geography and race?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. It is the absolute right of any hon. Member to give way or not to give way. What his reasons may be is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Davies: When I select my targets for political debate, I select targets who can reply.

The central flaw in the Bill is clearly demonstrated in part I. The Secretary of State wants to create unitary authorities, yet if they are large enough to be viable they will be too large to reflect identifiable local communities and historic boundaries. For reasons of dogma and party

political interest, the right hon. Gentleman cannot accept the solution that is not only logical but commands overwhelming popular support—more unitary authorities with our all-Wales tier of government.

The Secretary of State's response has been to introduce two elements to the Bill, both of which fundamentally weaken it by undermining the principle of unitary authorities. The first is the concept of decentralisation, which was mooted last summer in an attempt to reconcile conflicting interests in Powys and is enshrined in clauses 27 and 28. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) was quick to point out the flaws in the Secretary of State's argument. I was singularly unimpressed by the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion that the Committee would have to come up with suggestions on how the proposal could be financed.

If the proposal for decentralisation works, it will undermine the Powys unitary authority. If it does not work, it will fail to meet aspirations for local self-determination, especially those expressed by Montgomery district council. My right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) christened that the "Powys pudding". The chairman of Montgomery district council, David Jones, wrote to me this week to say that the "Redwood recipe" for the "Powys pudding" was fatally flawed. Indeed, that was the almost universal view in the House of Lords and on all sides in local government in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he thinks that the recipe is so unattractive that no one will wish to mix the ingredients up and eat it? I suspect that there would be deep resentment in Wales if the enabling power were stripped out, because many local communities would welcome it. Does he agree?

Mr. Davies: I agree that the provision is included in the Bill to meet an inherent defect, which is especially relevant to a county such as Powys. If the right hon. Gentleman had made the concession demanded by the people of Powys and parliamentarians who represent Wales, there would have been no need for the compromise arrangement.

The second element relates to joint boards and joint working arrangements. A properly constructed system of unitary authorities should have no need of those arrangements, which will be an insecure base for the planning and delivery of services in the medium to long term. The compromise in the arrangements will be prone to lowest common denominator services and will lack the consistency and clarity of decision making that a single authority can provide. Even worse, as the number of joint arrangements increases—as it inevitably will if smaller local authorities wish to provide services—the system will come to resemble a two-tier structure, except that there will be the disadvantage that the upper tier will be neither directly elected nor directly accountable.

One way to obviate some of those difficulties would be to allow greater cross-border trading, especially in professional services and sectors of specialist expertise. If the Bill proceeds, clause 25, which gives great power to the Secretary of State, will need close scrutiny. The fear shared by all who care for local government is that the Bill may become a charter for privatisation because of that provision.

In any event, the Bill's assault on the principle of social services committees, the prior removal of mandatory education committees—to which the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North referred—and the renewal of compulsory competitive tendering after reorganisation are a further step towards the destruction of publicly delivered services in Wales.

In part II, in addition to clause 25, clauses 19, 20, 23 and 24 confer on the Secretary of State powers over local government. Clauses 27 to 33 in part III confer more such powers on him. Given the demonstrable incompetence and undemocratic nature of the Welsh Office, that centralisation of power is reason enough to oppose the Bill.

Little attention has been given to the interests of the 140,000 local government employees, many of whom face worry, insecurity and possible redundancy. Many have given a lifetime of dedicated public service. I hope that the employment of all those people will be protected by transfer to the new authorities. I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement that he will allow flexibility and consider the options in Committee. I am also grateful that he has announced a compensation scheme in clause 44.

I welcome the establishment of the staff commission. Should the Bill proceed, I trust that the Secretary of State will do all that he can to ease the worry of staff during the transitional period.

The Bill heralds turbulent years for local government. The reorganisation that it proposes will be costly and controversial. Much of Wales will be badly served by it. It contains proposals that are badly thought out, undemocratic and deeply flawed. Many Conservative Members, including Ministers, have made clear their intention to oppose the introduction of similar measures for their county councils in England. It is a sad reflection on our democracy that they are asked to vote tonight to enforce on Wales a system that they would reject for Somerset, Hertfordshire or wherever. If the Bill succeeds on that basis, it can proceed only in a Committee packed with compliant Back Benchers without an interest or a mandate in Welsh affairs. If it passes into law, my hon. Friends and I will not regard it as the end of the process; rather, it will be the start of the process of the reform of Welsh government. That reform will become more radical, more democratic and more relevant to the needs of Wales when the Government are thrown out at the next general election.

5.5 pm

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): I have two interests to declare. The first is pecuniary—I am a consultant with solicitors Dyson Bell Martin, whose clients include local authorities in Wales. The second—an interest in legislation of this type—goes back many years. Ten years or more ago, in my capacity as the leader and subsequently chairman of the Association of District Councils, I held discussions with leaders of Welsh district councils about abolishing the county councils in Wales. They were keen advocates of the introduction of smaller unitary local authorities. Their trust has been let down by the Labour party, which wants to torpedo the legislation that those leaders have been seeking for more than 10 years. Their interests are not being represented by the Labour party.

The Bill represents an opportunity for local government to be a significant force in Wales. It gives a chance for communities to be more closely identified with local government and for councils to be more imaginative and innovative in their approach to community problems. Such

[Mr. Roy Thomason]

an approach has been denied to district councils in the past because so many functions have been undertaken by larger county councils.

The Bill represents the chance for a better future for local government in Wales and it should not be cast aside in the dismissive manner proposed by Labour Members.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving his vision of successful, small unitary authorities. Does he agree that, 10 years ago, when he had those discussions, he envisaged unitary authorities similar to the ancient county of Montgomeryshire? Will he give an assurance that if he is a member of the Committee he will vote for a unitary authority in Montgomery?

Mr. Thomason: The size of local government units is critical. I think that the Rowntree Foundation has argued that it is viable to have units of 25,000 people—[HON. MEMBERS: "25,000?"] It is argued that units of that size are viable. The local government reforms were introduced in the first place in 1974 to create authorities with proper career structures for officers and with a proper committee structure to deal with important policy issues. Therefore, there is a fine balance to be arrived at between a minimum size for local authorities on the one hand and a proper career and committee structure on the other. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) contended that area offices were not an appropriate way to deal with social services functions. I think that that was the hon. Gentleman's argument. Of course, there is a difference between an area office that is carrying out an administrative role and a fully accountable unit of local government.

I have great sympathy with the arguments advanced by authorities such as Montgomeryshire and Brecon and Radnor. However tempted one may be by the proposals in the Bill that allow for a decentralisation mechanism to be introduced, which may address those subjects, one must balance the need for creating a properly resourced local authority unit reflecting the needs of a community.

In some instances the community issue will be so strong that it may be appropriate for a smaller authority to be introduced. However, there may be other occasions—the vast majority of local government units will fall into that category—where the size requires something a little larger. With Montgomeryshire and Brecon and Radnor there is the delicate balancing exercise to be made of whether it might be appropriate for them to be individual units.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. He gives us the great advantage of his expertise on such matters. Does he agree that a strong natural community with ancient roots and 57,000 people is a viable basis for a unitary authority? Can he answer yes or no?

Mr. Thomason: I consider that it is a viable basis, provided that the community interest is as strong as the hon. and learned Gentleman is inferring. I believe that it is possible to have a unit of that size. However, there is a downside to the argument, and that is that the quality of the staff and their career prospects, and the committee structure for the elected members which may be introduced, may not be as strong as would be the case in a Powys authority with decentralisation. As I have already made clear, the argument is a fine one. I have much sympathy with the hon. and learned Gentleman's argument that there is a case for Montgomeryshire being an authority on its own, as for Brecon and Radnor.

Mr. Kinnock: I have great respect for the hon. Gentleman's experience in local government. However, I must say that, in speaking in support of the Local Government (Wales) Bill, he is fulfilling the function of someone who kicks the ball high into the back of the crowd and, without having time added on for injury, wastes a considerable portion of the game. I suppose that by speaking in support of the measure he is talking his way on to the Committee that will deal with the Bill. What strong and repeated representations has he made to the Government in support of a proposition that the Government should impose on England exactly the same sort of measure as is being imposed on Wales?

Mr. Thomason: I have encouraged the Government to proceed with local government reorganisation in England. I wish that we were debating a smaller measure for England today. I make no apology for saying that. My position is absolutely clear: I want a reorganisation of local government in England based on smaller unitary authorities introduced as quickly as possible because it will serve both the national interests and the interests of local government that much better. I assure the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) that I am making no bid to serve on the Committee that will deal with the Bill. However, I am happy to support the Bill because of the important steps that it makes.

I return to what I was saying a few moments ago. The great mistake of the local government reorganisation in 1974 was to abolish many proud county boroughs such as Cardiff—places that had a long tradition, and an understanding of where their people stood and what their problems were—and to impose a county council covering a wider and more remote area. Those reforms were wrong.

Mr. Win Griffiths: It was a Tory Government.

Mr. Thomason: The reforms were wrong, whoever introduced them. Attempts by Labour Members to sabotage the Bill today is not a constructive way forward. I understand that some of them have difficulty understanding such matters.

The history of local government is one of continuity, to which this Bill will add. When the 1974 reforms were introduced, the philosophy of the day was that size mattered—the big unit offered opportunities for savings and the organisation, above all, should be self-sufficient: for example, it could have its own in-house violin or oboe teacher; it could provide all the services within its own boundaries; and it could service a mainframe computer and all the staff who went with it. However, those days have changed.

There is no need now to talk of self-sufficiency within local government. There is no need to argue the case that big is beautiful because a smaller unit, by contracting out its services and sharing its facilities with other local authorities, is well able to provide the full range of local government services, often more efficiently and effectively than those provided by the previous in-house services.

Mr. Rogers: Like the hon. Gentleman, I have had considerable experience of local government. Throughout the years that I served on district and county councils, I

tried to discover what would be an ideal size. The hon. Gentleman is constructing an argument on what is a reasonable size and saying that small is beautiful. Can he put a figure on that for an urban area? I know that the Secretary of State does not want him to do so because of the peculiar way in which the Secretary of State's mind works. Can the hon. Gentleman put a figure on that? He has much more experience than the Secretary of State.

Mr. Thomason: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's blandishments. Earlier, I made the point that the minimum size depends in the end on the strength of the community.

Although it is clear that an authority with more than 150,000 inhabitants, say, can provide a worthwhile structure, it could be argued—I believe that it is right so to argue—that much smaller authorities are appropriate, depending on the strength of community which attaches to them. One must balance those two aspects. It is a perfectly legitimate and proper process to do that. There may be a strong case for the establishment of an authority such as Montgomeryshire, with 57,000 people, because it has a long tradition.

Equally, one can think of other examples of authorities of about 100,000 people where the strength of identity and traditions may not be sufficient to warrant its independent existence. Those matters must be looked at case by case. It depends on the individual authority—its community identity and traditions. One should avoid making wide generalisations in the way that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) is seeking to do. He is trying to impose a blueprint, a formula, across the whole of Wales. That will not work. He should know and appreciate that Wales has a much richer pattern than that.

Mr. Rogers: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. If he is saying that in the parameters or guidelines that the Secretary of State should adopt—I wish the Secretary of State would listen to some sound advice from his more knowledgeable Back Benchers—there should be a marriage between the size of the authority and its traditions and background, what advice would he give to the Secretary of State with regard to the Rhondda Valley? That council is the only one that has maintained its boundaries. It is probably the most famous community in Wales, yet the Secretary of State refuses to accept that it could be a unitary authority. It has never been anything other than the Rhondda Valley. Could the hon. Gentleman tell the Secretary of State how, in order to follow his argument, he could gauge the feelings of the people in the community?

Mr. Thomason: I have already made clear the balancing act that must be undertaken between the considerations of efficiency and size and there is no need for me to repeat the arguments. If the hon. Member for Rhondda could not understand them, I am sure that he will read *Hansard* and they may be clear to him tomorrow.

I was talking a moment ago about the ability to move away from the requirement of self-sufficiency in local government. Smaller councils have the opportunity of contracting out services which allows them to use the services of a large operator. The operator may be able to provide extensive services in a regional sense, yet the services might be specifically honed, in a contractual arrangement, with that local authority to meet its specific requirements. It follows that size is no longer anywhere near as important, although it has some importance. Equally, there are many examples across England and Wales of local authorities which are working together. We need to foster partnership between local authorities, just as there has been a fostering of the partnership between local authorities and the private sector. The Bill creates opportunities for that to be undertaken.

Local government must be close and responsive to its communities in a way that a smaller authority can be—that was the point I was making a few moments ago. An authority that is the right size to allow it to be representative of a community will be more effective. I say that because I believe that the councillors representing that unit will have a much closer relationship with the area.

I give the example of a typical county council. The councillors and officers of the county council cannot have an intimate knowledge of an area which may be 30, 40, 50 or 100 miles away from where they live and work. At that distance, they cannot have the sense of individual community issues and the objectives of that community. It is only by being in close proximity to the local area that they can gauge the temperature of the people of that area and properly reflect their aspirations.

There is a unity of objective to be sought in the local government reorganisation which is proposed today which the Bill gives an opportunity to progress. Some hon. Members suggest that reorganisation will be an expensive exercise. There are different factions which fight over these points and counties and districts have advanced their own figures. One must make a careful judgment as to which is to be considered the more appropriate. However, it is quite clear that local government reorganisation of the type proposed in the Bill can lead to a revenue saving year on year.

There are possibilities, in streamlining the authorities' organisations, to produce a saving over a period of a few years. It has been suggested by the Association of District Councils in Wales that the cost of reorganisation could be recouped within two or three years, but it may be longer. However, an overall saving can be made on the costs of reorganisation. It need not be the call on the public purse to the extent that many have suggested will be the case. The House has heard through parliamentary answers that the cost of the abolition of the metropolitan counties in England produced a revenue saving overall and there is no reason why that cannot be replicated in Wales.

The objective of local government reorganisation should be to invigorate local government. I pay tribute to the councillors and officers in local government in Wales for the work that they do at county and district level. Too few hon. Members speak of that, and it is right that it should be acknowledged. However, they can operate only within the structure that the House has created for them. It is not possible within the present structure for county councillors and officers to represent and seek the sort of partnership with the communities to which I have referred. There are opportunities in the Bill to create a local government that can be much more responsive.

One looks to the district councils in England and Wales for some of the leading innovations of local government in the past 15 to 20 years. The district level of local government led the way in economic development opportunities. The counties have done a great deal of work in that field, but the districts led the way and ultimately created a function for local government based upon their

[Mr. Thomason]

work. That was something which they saw as necessary because of their close proximity to the communities that they represented.

Mr. Win Griffiths: In the context of Wales, what the hon. Gentleman is saying is a travesty of the truth. The counties, as well as the districts, in Wales have been particularly active in the area to which he refers and there has been a partnership. Let us not talk about one tier providing pioneering work and the other doing nothing. Both tiers have been doing it in Wales and the counties have been very effective.

Mr. Thomason: The hon. Gentleman did not hear me say that the counties have done work in economic development. My contention was that district councils led the way in creating economic development opportunities. They created the opportunity and the counties have come along as well and work has been done by county and district councils. If we look back to the first economic development initiatives in the 1970s, we see that the work was undertaken by the smaller units of local government. That was because they were close to individual towns and groups of villages and could understand the employment prospects. They could seek to generate the jobs that could be directed at specific problems.

Finally, I turn to the question of accountability. The present arrangements of two-tier local government create confused accountability: first, a financial one because the council tax bill arrives in two stages; and, secondly, a democratic one because people do not know whether to turn to town or to county hall for their services.

The introduction of the proposals in the Bill will lead to a single point of contact and a single authority providing the whole range of local government services. The Bill will provide for a single authority which is raising a single council tax. It follows that people will be able to see clearly what their local authority is doing, what it is costing and to whom they should complain if they feel that the services are not being delivered in the correct way.

That will make local government not only responsive, but more aware of its need to react to the people whom it represents. I believe that the blurring of accountability since 1974, and before, has been a great failing in local government which will be strengthened substantially by the proposals. The Bill will introduce into local government an opportunity for invigoration, better accountability, improved partnership, greater value for money and enhanced services. It should be supported.

Mr. Ray Powell: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know that this is a United Kingdom Parliament and that all hon. Members in the Chamber can catch your eye. However, I would ask you to use your discretion when Labour or Conservative Members who have been elected to Welsh parliamentary seats wish to catch your eye. Might not they have preference over hon. Members from areas outside Wales on the crucial issue of local government reform? The issue affects all hon. Members, particularly those from the Labour party, and they would all like to participate in the debate.

The hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) has taken 21 minutes out of a very short debate and some of us will be excluded from participating because of the time factor. I ask you to use your discretion to ensure that all Welsh hon. Members are afforded the opportunity to participate in the debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Both Madam Speaker and I have already exercised that discretion and I hope that that will be the end of the matter.

5.29 pm

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Given the competition to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, the House will be delighted if I promise to make a short speech as an elected Member for a part of Wales. The House listened with a great deal of attention to the Secretary of State's final piece of rhetoric. He expected the Bill to provide a renaissance in local government in Wales. That was putting it a bit high. Moving the chess pieces across the boundaries board will not provide the renaissance. Giving the cash to local government to provide local services will achieve the renaissance.

There is a great deal of unanimity in Wales about the concept of unitary authorities. It is certainly the policy of my party. The argument is about the size and powers of unitary local government. I shall return to that point in a moment. That unanimity in Wales, as my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) emphasised, hinges on the concept of a Welsh assembly. In England the term "regional authority" is used. I despair when that term is misused in Wales. One thing that we are not is a region. We are a nation. If we were not, the Secretary of State would not have his seat in the Cabinet.

We have debated a Welsh assembly on previous occasions and we shall return to it in the future. I shall not discuss it this evening. As the years have gone by, I have become more and more confident that what I believed in 1974 and earlier was right then and is even more right now. I raise the matter because the concept of unitary local government as we understand it in Wales hinges on its being accompanied by a democratically elected body covering a substantial area—in this case, the whole of Wales. That is the fatal flaw in the Government's proposals. Why? Many functions could not be performed by small units of local government. The units could not discharge their functions effectively without an assembly. That is the fatal flaw.

I am particularly anxious about the problem that will face us in Wales in recruiting more than 20—now 22—directors of education with the necessary qualifications and the right experience and in paying them properly. Of course, if the Government have their way and every school opts out, there will be less of a problem for local government. But the problem will remain in the case of joint provisioning, about which we heard a little from my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly.

I am equally worried about how we will find people of the right calibre to head social services departments. Of course, if everything that moves is privatised, the local problem will be very much reduced. But what will happen to the remainder of the services that are not privatised? Society will have to carry the burden one way or the other of meeting those needs. Of course, for those who are Thatcherites—they are an endangered species—there is no such thing as society. Yet the problem will remain. I am deeply worried about finding people of the right calibre, given the need for so many of them to cover the essential functions in Wales.

Apart from being fundamentally flawed on the grounds of not including a national dimension—

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morris: No, I am trying to be brief. I mean no disrespect to the hon. Gentleman, but I want to keep my remarks brief so that other hon. Members can speak.

I am deeply worried about whether the numbers envisaged by the Secretary of State are right. The Secretary of State is not lacking in confidence. No one would belittle him for that. However, his high office was thrust upon him. It never crossed his mind in his wildest ambition that he would be called to grace it. Worse than that, I am confident that until he went to the Welsh Office, the problems of local government in Wales had never crossed his mind.

Lord Walker tried his hand in the 1970s. The pattern that he imposed will not be allowed to celebrate even its 25-year anniversary—its silver jubilee. It will not have lasted. It will have been cut down. No one in the House would say that he lacked confidence—certainly not Lord Walker. The present Secretary of State, with his limited experience, puts forward a prospectus with some confidence and tells the House that it will provide the renaissance for Wales. I fear that he will live to regret that particular piece of rhetoric.

I believe that the proposed units—this is not an inconsistent observation—are too large to reflect adequately the need to preserve local loyalty and a speedy response to people's needs. Yet they are too small effectively to carry out the functions proposed for them. In any event, as for all local government reorganisation, I am confident that the costs, and certainly the transitional costs, will prove much more expensive than envisaged in any of the examples given by the Secretary of State.

I ask the Secretary of State, through the Minister on the Front Bench, to write into the Bill an amendment to ensure that two or three years after the new units of local government come into force and after the first elections, an independent body, for example, the Audit Commission or some other body of that calibre, will examine, assess and publicise the costs of local government reform. That will be a test of the cost estimates given by the Secretary of State.

I shall now deal with the problems of my areas. I have had the privilege to represent the borough of Port Talbot for more than 34 years. I have the privilege of being a freeman of the borough. I represent, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), part of the borough of Neath and I have done so for the past 11 years. We in Port Talbot and Neath want to know—if my hon. Friend the Member for Neath catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sure that he will ask the same question—how we differ from Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent, about which the Secretary of State made an announcement today.

One reason that the Secretary of State gave for his change of heart was the particular unpopularity of putting those boroughs together. I assure the Minister that the unpopularity that was expressed when the first proposals were published remains both in Neath and in Port Talbot. It is stronger now than it was at the beginning. How do we differ in terms of the service that is delivered, our traditions, our civic pride and loyalty and the factor which the Secretary of State added, the unpopularity of the proposals? I expect an answer from the Secretary of State tonight.

What are the local views? We do not have a commission for local government in Wales because the men in Cathays Park think that they know better. I note with approval the words of Mr. John Banham, the chairman of the English commission. He said:

> "The Commission is in a sense the catalyst, seeking to identify a realistic choice, consistent with our guidance that we put before local people. The local people are the jury."

What does the jury say in Neath and Port Talbot? A ballot was held in Neath. The form of the ballot can easily be criticised, but the result was a pretty strong indication. Of the 6,000 ballot papers returned, only 135 voted for the Secretary of State's solution of joining Neath and Port Talbot together in what was regarded and is still regarded locally as a shotgun marriage. An opinion poll in Port Talbot found that 95 per cent. of people did not want to merge with Neath, and there were 10,000 letters of support from residents and organisations in the borough. I suspect that, in relation to the third leg of the proposal, people in Lliw do not feel especially warm towards the concept of being swamped by either Neath or Port Talbot.

Will the Secretary of State answer a question? Who, in either of those two boroughs or in Lliw, who knows the citizens, their problems and their history, wants the proposal suggested by the Secretary of State? If he can name an individual or an organisation, let us have their names, which I am sure can be counted on the fingers of one hand, so that we can examine their experience and on what basis they support the Government. I know not of one, and I am confident that my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) has the same experience. I know not of one who wants the shotgun marriage proposed by the Secretary of State. If I can be told differently by the Minister tonight, I will be grateful. I am glad that he is listening and I am sure that he will send out his minions to provide an answer for me by the end of the evening. I look forward to that with great enthusiasm.

The Secretary of State was foolish enough, in the Welsh Grand Committee, to regard the map of Wales as being important. He never understood that the map of Kent, where he was born, is totally different in its geographical components to a land made up of hills and valleys, as is Wales. The bright idea that came from the Welsh Office of looking at a map and finding Neath next door to Port Talbot and using that as an argument for putting them together is sheer idiocy. The Welsh Office fails to understand the nature of our valley communities, and that a common interest does not run across mountains and valleys but runs down valleys. That is why the antipathy was so strong, and is equally strong now.

The Secretary of State and the Government have failed to understand the importance of local loyalties, proud civic traditions and the knowledge and understanding in the locality that the existing machinery—"warts and all"—provides a responsive and sound service. People know where to go.

It is proposed to combine two main communities between which there is deep-seated rivalry. Let me give the House an illustration. The original proposal for the name of the new borough was West Glamorgan—a misnomer. When the subject was discussed in Neath, it was suggested that it should be Nedd-Neath. If that was an exercise in trying to win friends when there was Port Talbot and Lliw,

[Mr. Morris]

I hope that it does not augur for the future. I was glad that that proposal was not pursued, but it is indicative of something and perhaps I need not pursue it further. I make the argument, for what it is worth. Despite the subservience of the Secretary of State to the map, community affinity runs downhill, not across mountains.

I thank the Secretary of State for the one good thing that he has done—as I raised in the Welsh Grand Committee—which is to increase the number of councillors. I regard that as very important. We are losing a tier of local government and simultaneously reducing to 1,250 the number of councillors in the new authorities. Councillors and their leadership provide an avenue for the community to explore problems. They are the great safety valve. They are very important in the communities. To reduce the numbers is to cause a great loss. That is what is happening and therefore I thank the Secretary of State for his revised provision to increase the numbers. It is important and will be valued.

I could have spoken at much greater length, but I do not propose to do so. Some of the arguments have been ventilated in the other place and I am grateful to noble Lords on the Front Bench and the Back Benches for the way in which they have reported on what they understand to be the lack of affinity between the two boroughs. My hon. Friend the Member for Neath and I were elected by those two boroughs and I think that we represent as well as anyone can the deep-seated feelings there.

The Secretary of State seemed to be vague and uncertain of himself when he discussed the problems and the provisioning of area committees. I ask him the following questions. First, what type of provision would he expect as regards financial provisioning in a scheme put to him? What does he expect to come forth in the schemes that he has to consider? Secondly, bearing in mind the numbers of people referred to in the schedule who can request such a committee, will he be sure to resist any amendment to tilt the balance against those people who request such a committee in a new unit, in favour of the central new unit itself? If there is to be any purpose—it may be attractive in some parts of Wales—it is important to preserve the interests of the locality that requires it.

I say to the Secretary of State, in accordance with the words of Lord Ferrers, who replied to the debate on Second Reading in another place, I would hope that the door is not shut. The figure has increased from 21 to 22. When the Secretary of State said today that his proposal was

"22—I do not think there could be many more".

I regard that as not closing the door and I hope that he will reconsider.

5.46 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) made two points that will be remembered in my constituency and in Gwent generally. Neither of those two points was perhaps quite so clear before he spoke as afterwards. First, we were interested to learn that the policy of the Labour party, in the premise of a Welsh assembly, is to have unitary authorities and more of them.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly referred to the fraternal discussions between the socialist leader of Gwent county council and the socialist leader of Newport borough council. It is clear, for the first time, we are told, that Mr. Graham Powell, the leader of Gwent county council, has lost that internal Labour party discussion, and that it is the Labour party's policy to abolish Gwent county council. That will be welcomed in most quarters, but it will be a matter of some surprise, I suspect, to some supporters of the Labour party in Gwent.

The second point that the hon. Member for Caerphilly made—it is a matter that my constituents especially will wish to note—was the suggestion that if he had his way—

Mr. Ron Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Evans: Of course.

Mr. Davies: I should like to clarify one point in case the hon. Gentleman is under a misapprehension. The policy that I outlined to him in our earlier discussion has been the policy of the Labour party in Wales for well over 12 months. It emerged as a result of a detailed consultation exercise. It was made public as early as February last year and the leaders of all the Labour-controlled county councils in Wales have been signatories to that policy statement, so there is nothing new.

Mr. Evans: I hear the hon. Member's protestations. That is not what many of his supporters in Gwent have been saying, whatever the position might happen to be, as a matter of technical constitutional right, in the Labour party's policy-making process. We now know the position and we are grateful to know it.

I go on to the second point that the hon. Gentleman's speech revealed, which will be treated in my constituency as a typical example of the rather curmudgeonly approach of the Labour party: if it had its way, our new authority would be known as Monmouth, not Monmouthshire. "Monmouthshire" is what resonates with my constituents. They do not want the simple title "Monmouth".

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): As someone who was born in Monmouthshire, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies)—

Mr. Kinnock: And me.

Mr. Murphy: And my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). We would find it deeply offensive not to be called "men of Monmouthshire", even though we do not live in the district of Monmouth. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that his own Monmouth borough council does not want to change the name to Monmouthshire?

Mr. Evans: When history is torn up, as the noble Lord Walker's proposals tore it up in 1972-74, and when new creations that are not consistent with history are proposed, conflicts of feeling arise. I respect that and understand the point made by the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy). However an area is renamed, one cannot change the name that it had when one was born or first educated there. We must consider modern reality, which is that a division exists between the urban and rural areas in our part of the world. Local people want to call the area Monmouthshire.

On clause 2, if a council is called a shire, it would be duplex and bad English to call the local council the shire county council. In the case of Monmouthshire, it would be much simpler to call the new council Monmouthshire

council. That answers the point made by the hon. Member for Torfaen, as it avoids confusion with the pre-1972-74 position.

Clause 14 introduces for the first time a proposal to require consultation with community councils, which receive little attention in the Bill. I do not like the term "community council". Why cannot they be called parish councils? They may not technically be parishes in the old sense, but it is a much better word. The community councils want the right to be consulted and the Bill recognises that important right.

The worry at unitary authority level is about how the proposed mechanism will work in practice. Unitary authorities must sometimes make speedy decisions and a requirement to consult in all cases may be inconvenient and unnecessary. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would clarify that point.

On nomenclature, clause 16 uses another unhappy combination of terms from the 1970s—a "town council" and a "town mayor". In my area, there has been an unfortunate confusion between the community council of Monmouth town, which was an ancient borough until the noble Lord Walker's proposals came into effect, and the mayor of Monmouth borough. To use the present terminology in all cases would be unfortunate and unfair. As Monmouth used to be an ancient borough, I do not understand why the mayor cannot be known as the borough mayor. I am happy to say that, with the creation of a Monmouthshire council, that conflict has been resolved for the unitary authority.

I was surprised to hear what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said about clause 27. I had assumed that the decentralisation provisions were intended and designed for the problem of Powys. I had not realised that they were intended to be adopted elsewhere in Wales. The clause stipulates that 10 councillors must be connected with an area before it can be decentralised, which means that those provisions will come into operation only in councils of a certain size. I should be grateful for clarification on that.

In pouring scorn on part III of the Bill, the hon. Member for Caerphilly did not do justice to clause 32, which is potentially one of the most useful, helpful and practical provisions in the Bill. Local authorities' present rules on who can delegate decisions to whom and in what circumstances are arcane, legalistic and unhelpful. Clause 32 addresses that difficulty for the first time. I should be grateful for clarification on how it is envisaged that that will be done.

Clause 50 deals with Welsh church funds. I note the proposal simply to apportion the funds among the new unitary authorities. Given the time that has elapsed since the Welsh Church Act 1914 came into force, has not the time come to review the purposes for which those trust funds are held and their whole position? In the 1990s, there is a powerful argument for those funds to be applied for conservation purposes on a non-denominational basis, rather than for a diffuse mixture of community purposes.

Clause 51 introduces a power to control disposals by councils that are to be abolished from an operative date. When do the Government envisage that operative date? It would be a much happier matter if it could be the same date on which the Bill is enacted, rather than some uncertain future date. The purpose of clause 51 would be frustrated by a delayed date—if the clause is necessary at all. Clearly, my right hon. Friend considered that it was necessary to include it. If it is to be in the Bill, it must be effective and it should be effective from an early date.

Finally, may I raise the ghost of Gwent? Paragraph 1 of schedule 2 contains a peculiar drafting device to preserve counties of Wales in certain cases and not others for the purposes of the Lord Lieutenancy and the High Shrievalty —*[Interruption.]* I notice the ribaldry with which certain Opposition Members greet that comment. It is up to them if they want to humiliate Newport, for example, and say that it should not enjoy the privileges of Bristol. Let them say that to their electors. I should have thought that, in 1994, Cardiff has a strong argument for being a city and a county, as Newport and Monmouthshire have the right to be shire counties in the proper sense.

Under clause 58(2) and clause 59(2), arrangements for the reordering of Lord Lieutenancies and High Shrievalties enable the boundaries of a preserved county to be adjusted, but do not seem to provide for the creation of a new Lord Lieutenancy and High Shrievalty solely for Monmouthshire. If I am wrong about that, I should welcome a correction.

Despite the criticisms that have been made of the Bill, it is popular in my part of the world. I leave other hon. Members to argue their own circumstances. The wording of the amendment is minimally negative. It recognises "a broad measure of support for the principle of unitary authorities in Wales".
To judge by the temper of the debate, that measure of support has been less broad than the wording of the amendment. The Bill is welcomed and my constituents, in particular, will be grateful to my right hon. Friend.

5.59 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Let me start by welcoming the opportunity to debate Welsh local government and to reform Welsh local government. The time has long been due for the existing Welsh local authority structure to be changed.

I have a clear vision of a new local government framework which would be much more democratic and accountable and which, above all, would improve the delivery to the public of the range of services that are the proper responsibility of local councils. Unfortunately, however, the Bill does not provide the framework for changes that would be beneficial to Wales and could be made to last.

A new framework of local government for Wales should include unitary authorities, and, to an extent, the proposed one does. It should also include an important and new elected tier of government at an all-Wales level.

The concept of a Welsh senedd or parliament has become something of a bogey to the Government, although, in my view, it is only a matter of time before we are driven to accept a form of government similar to that which has served so well in modern Germany. I see that structure not as giving rise to separatism or home rule, but as being entirely compatible with a strong United Kingdom. Indeed, I see it as strengthening the wider national interest by confirming the importance of Wales under the Crown and as part of the developing regional structure of the European Union.

In the Bill, no Welsh parliament is on offer. That makes it doubly important that we should ensure that the unitary authorities which are created reflect the best possible solution for local government.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The hon. and learned Gentleman is expounding a view that he has held for some time and which he certainly held in the 1970s. He well knows that when we held a referendum at that time, there was a substantial vote against. In those circumstances, why should he deprive the people of Wales of the opportunity of a referendum on his proposal on a second occasion?

Mr. Carlile: I do not believe that I have ever said that I was opposed to giving the people of Wales that opportunity. I am confident that much has changed since 1979 and the result would be different.

To return to this Bill, in which a Welsh parliament is not on offer, it seems to me that two principles must be fulfilled if we are to achieve a worthwhile unitary system.

First, the new system must command sufficient support and consensus to be permanent. To reorganise Welsh local government every 20 years or so is disruptive to too many people and services. It is also very expensive, as the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) was just saying.

It is not fair to people involved in local government, whether as councillors or as servants of local authorities, that they should face a reorganisation every 20 years. It is plain that the proposed reorganisation does not command the type of consensus that would give it 50 or maybe 100 years, as happened with the reorganisation of local government in Wales in the late 1880s. We should be aiming at a new disposition which will not be the subject of acrimonious debate when the Government next changes, particularly as, given only a little more flexibility, considerable consensus could be found through the machinery of the Bill.

Secondly, the new system must prove to be better than the present one in terms of service delivery if it is not to be regarded as change merely for the sake of change.

It is stated at the beginning of chapter 2 of the Government's White Paper:

"Local government is government for local people by local people."

Amen to that; of course it is a principle which I accept.

My constituency, the county constituency of Montgomery, has been a unit of government since 1542. Twenty years after the creation of the new county of Powys in 1974, Montgomeryshire still resists giving up its social cohesion. Whether we talk of the young farmers' club, the women's institute, the cricket team, or many other institutions, we talk naturally of Montgomeryshire, not Powys. Despite the passage of those 20 years, there is no Powys society of exiles in London, yet there is a strong Montgomeryshire society founded upon that strong and historic local tie. The Secretary of State should recognise that 20 years of opportunity have failed to make Powys a community.

In another place, the Lord Advocate said in introducing the Bill that few would deny that the changes of the 1970s cost Wales some of its cultural cohesion. He was right. He claimed that Pembrokeshire, Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire still retained distinct identities. He was right. He said that local people identify not with the new county imposed in 1974, but with the historic shires. He was right.

No distinction, however, can be drawn intellectually, emotionally or on any grounds between Mongomeryshire and those counties of Pembrokeshire, Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire except that Montgomeryshire is a little smaller in population. As the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason), who spoke with great experience of local government, pointed out, if natural ties are strong enough, 57,000 people are more than enough to make a valid and valuable unitary authority, particularly with the opportunities that are now available to purchase services outside the county.

If the Government value the sense of belonging and cultural cohesion which is Montgomeryshire, they have only to take the simple step of accepting the same approach for Montgomeryshire as for the other counties that I have mentioned.

Those who have served in and worked for Powys have done so honourably and with determination, and generally without political rancour, yet all their efforts, honestly made, have failed signally to build in the public mind an identity for Powys which touches hearts and minds as well as pockets. Montgomeryshire is a natural point of contact for both hearts and minds.

What particularly puzzles us in Montgomeryshire is that the Government recognised and accepted that fact as long as three years ago. In their consultation paper in 1991, the Government rightly recognised the importance of a structure of local government founded on natural communities. Montgomeryshire was held as a example of that in the then Secretary of State's preferred solution. He spoke of it in the House.

I hope that we shall be told by the Minister who replies to the debate the answer to this question: why have the Government changed their mind about Montgomeryshire since then?

The preference for Montgomeryshire as a unitary authority was not just a passing fancy of a transient Secretary of State. In March 1992, just weeks before the last general election and therefore when he well knew the weight that would be attached to his words, the right hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), now the Secretary of State for Employment, announced:

"in the rural areas I want to see local government based on the traditional counties".—[*Official Report*, 3 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 171.]

Montgomeryshire was expressly cited with Pembrokeshire at the head of the list of examples. Please will the Minister answer this question, too: why, if the Government had changed their mind, did they not say so then? Perish the thought that it had anything to do with an impending general election.

The intention to provide unitary status was reaffirmed yet again by the then Secretary of State in dramatic circumstances. During the 1992 general election, he paid a visit to Montgomeryshire. He addressed a meeting in the pretty village of Llanfechain. Ministerial visits there are as rare as memories of what Ministers say are long. He made as explicit an electoral promise as anyone could imagine —that there would be a unitary authority for Montgomeryshire.

Perhaps the Minister will answer these questions. What does he think now of his right hon. Friend's remarks on that occasion? Was the right hon. Member for Wirral, West —as one would expect of him—being truthful, or was he reckless or negligent? His statement in Llanfechain was important. It almost certainly confirmed the loyalty of a significant number of usually Conservative voters for whom it was a key issue in their voting intentions. The then Secretary of State knew that. That is why he did not equivocate.

What has happened since then to persuade the Government that a new unitary authority, perhaps with fewer councillors than the existing Montgomeryshire district council—the Secretary of State knows that I do not quarrel with that proposition—is no longer the natural solution for the historic community that I represent? Why is history to be treated under one heading for Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent and an entirely different heading for Montgomeryshire? The suspicion exists strongly in my constituency that Montgomeryshire is being sacrificed to a mistake—the Secretary of State's mistaken belief that what he is currently proposing will serve the interests of his political party—rather than to any valid consideration of the merits.

The people of Montgomeryshire, a mere 16 per cent. of whom expressed a preference for a unitary Powys according to an NOP poll taken last summer, want to know why their opinions have been rejected in the face of the clearest possible governmental and electoral commitments. That is not just my view; it crosses political party lines. Indeed, I pay especial respect to the support that the Campaign for Montgomeryshire has received from the Montgomeryshire Conservative association, the leading members of whom are entirely opposed to the current proposals.

Chief among those Tory opponents is the former chairman of the Development Board for Rural Wales, Mr. Leslie Morgan, CBE. Mr. Morgan, former Tory candidate for Montgomeryshire and president of the local association, is no namby-pamby sentimentalist. He is a hard-headed local business man, head of a now fourth-generation business straddling the English and Welsh heartlands of the county, with a wide grasp of the social and economic structure and needs of the area. He is not only convinced of the merits of the case for a unitary Montgomeryshire, but has also told the Secretary of State, in my presence, and in the clearest possible terms, of the damage that he believes that the current proposals will do to the Conservative party locally.

Nor can that be claimed as the view of only the older members of our community. Recently, I was given the opportunity to make a short film on the issue for BBC Wales. As part of it, I interviewed a young woman called Gillian Plume. She is Welsh speaking and comes from Bont Dolgadfan, near Llanbrynmair. She is articulate, intelligent and successful, working in a responsible position for a significant inward investor in Newtown. Hers is a representative view to be given credence. When I asked her for that view, she revealed that, to her generation, Llandrindod Wells, the county town of Powys, seems remote and irrelevant. When we pondered in detail how often she had been there, it became apparent that her only visits were several years ago for a schoolgirl hockey match. That is but a single illustration—one of many—of how Powys has failed to become a natural part of community life, even for young people.

In his speech in the House on 3 March 1994, the Secretary of State spoke of his plans for Welsh roads. His strategy can be summarised tidily as taking as its emphasis an east-west-east axis. He was right in relation to Montgomeryshire. The natural swing of communications is not between the north of Montgomeryshire and the south of Breconshire, but between ourselves and Shropshire to the east and Aberystwyth to the west, and, to an extent, north-eastwards towards Wrexham and Chester. Little trade or travel has Powys as its natural sway.

Of course, the provision of the functions of local government must be sound and efficient in any changed system. There is plenty of evidence that Montgomeryshire could provide good and efficient service. The existing district council has discharged its functions without the need to impose high levels of tax on residents. Naturally, the question has arisen whether it would be able to discharge the heavy burden of administering education—so long as the Government leaves education in the hands of local authorities. All I ask the Secretary of State to do is look at the record of one of the best education authorities that Wales, indeed, I say confidently, the United Kingdom, has ever had—the old Montgomeryshire county council. It provided an estate of schools of which we are still proud. It had at times the highest academic achievements of any education authority. The morale of teachers and the quality of the directors was second to none.

I turn now briefly to the organisation proposed in the Bill for what is currently, and unfortunately in my view, perpetuated under the name of Powys in the amended text. The proposed arrangements for a partly devolved system, in which an attempt is made to perpetuate vestiges of the old county, are simply unsatisfactory. Whether one calls these arrangements "Powys pudding" or a muddle in the middle, one has a clear picture of the view held of them in mid Wales. Even partial devolution would not be guaranteed under the Bill, but would remain at the discretion of the Secretary of State. As the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) pointed out, there would be no real financial independence. It would be less efficient, less accountable, less acceptable than the current two-tier system.

If the Secretary of State insists on having a two-tier system and remains convinced that he cannot trust the people of Montgomeryshire to run their affairs, I suggest that he excludes Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire and Breconshire from this reorganisation altogether and avoids the upheaval, uncertainty and expense that is being caused.

One of the finest sights in Montgomeryshire is a great avenue of redwood trees. They were planted late in the last century, shortly before the reorganisation that created in its statutory form the efficient Montgomeryshire county council of which I spoke a little earlier. They were planted for a great Montgomeryshire man who became one of the county's Members of Parliament. They stand for the stability, solidity, honesty and determination of our community. It would be an irony if those trees were now to stand as a reminder of the destruction of our community's local government tie by their namesake, especially as they dominate the ground of my noble and learned Friend Lord Hooson, who represented the county for 17 years from 1962 with such distinction.

I ask the Secretary of State to read with great care the speeches of my noble and learned Friend in the debates on the Bill in another place. I tell the Secretary of State sincerely that my noble and learned Friend and I will be the first to praise him if he feels able to respond to our advice. We give it in the authentic voice of our county.

6.19 pm

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): I am pleased to follow the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile)—*[Interruption.]*—because I want to make some comments that relate very much to his speech.

[Mr. Alan Duncan]

I am sorry to hear sedentary murmurs from the Opposition Benches, perhaps suggesting that it is inappropriate for an hon. Member representing an English constituency to speak in the debate. Hon. Members who have attended debates on the subject will have observed that I have been present for all of them, since the moment when the Bill was first mentioned in the House. It is regrettable that the hon. Members for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) do not welcome the fact that people from outside Wales show an interest in the legislation. In doing so, they risk unduly fragmenting the House into regional areas. That does no good to the House, and I argue that, ultimately, it does nc good to Wales.

As I have said, I have attended all the debates on this subject. When the Secretary of State's predecessor first mentioned the Bill, I asked him a few questions about the status of smaller counties such as Montgomeryshire, Breconshire and Radnorshire. Clearly, there is a coincidence of interests between people in those counties —which will be affected by the Welsh local government reorganisation—and myself, representing the ancient county of Rutland. On the basis of that coincidence—but concentrating, of course, on Wales—I wish to make some observations, which I hope my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider.

When we were in government in the early 1970s, we made a big mistake in setting local government reform as we did. There was a drive for managerial efficiency; in redrawing the map, supposedly to serve the interests of that efficiency, we trampled over historic boundaries, creating artificial counties that have been unpopular from the day of their introduction. Now, after 20 years of complaints and unsatisfactory arrangements, we are having to "unbundle" those rather silly artificial creations.

This debate deals mainly with the question of size. What is a suitable size for the system of local government administration, enabling it both to pay attention to community identity and to deliver services efficiently? I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) will not object too strongly if I take him to task for having advanced the least persuasive argument. He said that we must pay attention to the career structure provided for officers in local government administration; I do not see why the career structure for local government officials should be the strongest argument on which to determine the size of any local authority. If that argument reached my hon. Friend from any other source, I detect an ill-considered influence.

My hon. Friend said that a population of 25,000 might be all right, but then argued that, for career-structure reasons, it would not be. Local government administration is there for local people: it is there primarily for those who elect local government members. We must consider what is a sensible number to represent the interests of the electors.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Duncan: Of course I will.

Mr. Flynn *rose—*

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have just returned to the Chamber; I apologise for having left it. I now find that yet another English Member is speaking. I know the problems involved, Madam Deputy Speaker, but—like other Front Benchers —I registered my wish to speak in a debate that affects our constituencies, and, like them, have not been allowed to do so. I understood that Parliament was a body in which we could speak on behalf of our constituents. I know that the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) is an expert on council houses, but I cannot see that he has any locus in this debate. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a matter for the Chair to determine. The best way to ensure that all who wish to speak will be called is for the earlier speakers to speak briefly.

Mr. Duncan: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a matter of regret to me that an attempt to contribute to the debate—and, indeed, to express opinions that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) might find that he shared, if he only had the courtesy to listen—has been treated in such a facile way.

As I was saying, we should consider the size of local government administration. It should work for those who elect the councillors and wish the councils to deliver services. We may have risked being unduly carried away in our wish to make some local authorities too large, and failed to appreciate that small units of local government administration can deliver services in an efficient way that has not been recognised in the past by those who have shaped Welsh local government administration, and who are now embarking on the same process in England.

If we returned to what I understand to be truly Conservative principles of local government reform, we would want diversity rather than uniformity. We wish to preserve historic identity. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery said that his county was created in 1542. If I may say so, he is rather nouveau: Rutland can beat that by the best part of 450 years.

Mr. Flynn: Is the hon. Gentleman going to inform us of the benefits to be obtained from profiteering in council houses, from the benefit of his personal experience?

Mr. Duncan: I think that the best service I can do the House is to ignore comments of that kind.

Mr. Alex Carlile: May I say that I welcome the constructive contribution that the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) has made to the debate? Hon. Members representing small counties would very much like to hear that contribution. I ask others to listen to the hon. Gentleman with patience; I know that, on this matter at least, he has a valuable contribution to make.

Mr. Duncan: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman, if only for his slightly qualified endorsement of what I have been saying.

Let me make a simple point, to which I know my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will listen carefully. I raised it at the outset, when his predecessor introduced the legislation. I asked him a specific question about Powys, which results from an amalgamation of smaller counties creating a larger county. That question was this: did he not appreciate that smaller counties—smaller units of government—could, if they wished, combine with their neighbours when they saw fit to do so, for the purpose of delivering a service? By the same token, a larger unit of

government containing parts with a strong sense of community identity cannot declare unilateral independence for the purposes of local government administration.

When it comes to constructing a sensible arrangement for local government, it makes sense to preserve smaller units, leaving them a measure of flexibility to combine with their neighbours when they see fit in order to make the delivery of services as efficient as possible. I urge the Secretary of State to present us with the arguments that he considers strong—that he thinks will really work—for the supposed economies of scale that attach to the larger units of government proposed in the Bill, which I fear will be proposed for England later. I hope that he will see fit to value the ability of smaller units, with a strong historical identity, a community interest and an understanding of the services needed within their small communities, to deliver those services efficiently—while being able to combine with their neighbours to meet any necessary economies of scale and serve the best interests of those who elected them.

6.29 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I have particular expertise in this subject as one of the few Opposition Members—indeed, one of the few Members of the House—who took part in the Committee stage of the Local Government Act 1972. I remember well the two Ministers who were in charge. Lord Walker has been mentioned. The person who was then his Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment is now a president—President of the Board of Trade. Indeed, I know a good deal about Conservative principles of local government, about which the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) waxed so lyrical.

The 1972 reorganisation was not worth the candle, and I suspect that this one is worth not very much more. Having participated in debates on this subject for more than 20 years, I tend to think that local government reorganisation is very often a matter for the professionals, who enjoy discussing and debating size and so on. But the public are pretty fed up with these reorganisations, which—certainly in the case of Conservative changes—end up in far greater expenditure, more concentration of power and very little increase in the accountability of those who provide the services.

It has been rumoured that the current Secretary of State would have been quite pleased to withdraw the Bill. I do not know whether he ever made such a promise to the Cabinet or to a Cabinet Committee, but I suspect that his heart is not fully in the legislation. After all, he had to take it over from his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), who had a very obsessive attitude towards unitary authorities. What deep psychological reason there might have been, I do not know. I cannot divine whether it was the right hon. Gentleman's Liverpool youth or the fact that he was in charge of the poll tax. Ministers who are fellows of All Souls do not have a very high reputation. Certainly this Bill does not have the mark of what I consider to be a fellow of All Souls.

The legislation is not worth the candle. It will result in much higher expenditure, and it will not create the kind of democratic accountability that we want. If the Secretary of State wants to do something for democracy in Wales, he could start by making more democratic not just the quangos in general but, for example, the hospital trusts. Why does not he announce that, to begin with, 50 per cent. of the members of hospital trusts are to be elected? Let us have an election—and I say so to members of my own party too.

Let us have a ballot paper such as is used in the United States of America. Let us have an arrangement that will enable local people to be really involved. That would be an advance for democracy. This legislation does very little except shuffle matters around.

As usual, the Tory party is completely out of touch with popular feeling in Wales, especially in respect of a Welsh assembly or parliament. My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) made very clearly the point that if the Bill contained a proposal for a Welsh parliament or assembly we could support it. My hon. Friend argued that such an arrangement would make it possible to have more unitary authorities. We could have a Llanelli unitary authority, and we could have similar arrangements for Port Talbot and Neath. Now, indeed, we do have Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent as separate authorities. Like other hon. Members, I ask the Secretary of State what is the difference, in terms of the Bill, between Llanelli and Port Talbot, between Llanelli and Neath, between Llanelli and Merthyr Tydfil and between Llanelli and Blaenau Gwent.

The Secretary of State has conceded that all logic, the entire intellectual basis for the legislation—if it has an intellectual basis—has gone. All of us shall now quite properly press the case for our own areas, as there is no longer any logic or any understanding as to correct size or the reasons for the figure of 22.

I return to the question of a Welsh assembly. Whenever the matter is raised, Tory Members, as happened yesterday, talk about a high-taxing, high-spending body. I am sorry to tell those people that they are completely out of touch with the mood in Wales. I do not fear another referendum. I have little doubt that, if one were held, there would be an overwhelming majority in favour of a Welsh parliament or assembly. As we are debating local government in Wales, I do not want to dwell on the question of an assembly, although the amendment refers to the matter. However, I want to make the point that there are many reasons for the shift in opinion that has taken place.

Perhaps the Secretary of State will be very interested in one of the reasons—the ever closer union in the European Community. That is one of the reasons for the ever greater consciousness of identity in Wales. People are beginning to ask why on earth we should look towards London when power is passing more and more to an ever closer union of European states. We have not yet reached that point, but this is one of the reasons that we may very well see gradually a demand not only for a Welsh parliament or assembly but for representation in the Council of Ministers for such a body or for the Welsh nation. I do not know whether that will happen, but I suspect that if the London Government, of whichever party, are bent on moving towards a single currency and a central bank and on transferring economic power to Brussels, people in Wales, as they are doing now, will ask what is the point of talking to the Secretary of State for Wales or to other Ministers in London when the thing to do is to talk to the people in Brussels. That is just one reason for the change in the mood in Wales about an assembly. The Tory party is making a very big mistake if it thinks that matters have stood still since the referendum of 1979.

Mr. Richards: I have been listening very carefully to the hon. Gentleman. It is always worth hearing what he has to say. Does he think that if a Welsh parliament were established, a Welsh currency would be a good thing for the Welsh economy?

Mr. Davies: I can see that the hon. Gentleman is a bit concerned about my remarks. He obviously remembers the debates on the Maastricht treaty. As I do not want to return to those matters, I shall not pursue the point that he has raised. Indeed, there will not be an English currency if we have ever closer union. The Minister of State likes to talk about the ecu, although I do not think that he, any more than any of the rest of us, has ever seen one.

I should like to turn to the question of what this Bill will do for my constituency—indeed, for west Wales. In many ways, Llanelli's natural area is west Wales. Everybody knows that Llanelli is the cultural and industrial capital of the region. It is the sporting capital of west Wales and may be the sporting capital of Wales as a whole after 4.30 pm on Saturday of the coming week. Dyfed, although it is an artificial creation, has been able to provide certain strategic planning services for the area of west Wales stretching from Llanelli all the way down to Pembrokeshire. If the Bill becomes law, Dyfed will go. Who will then provide the strategic planning for that area? Pembrokeshire, Cardiganshire or Carmarthenshire? Or can we hope that it will be a Llanelli unitary authority? It will not be possible to provide the sort of strategic planning that Dyfed has tried to provide.

At Question Time yesterday I referred to the problem of transport and communications from west Wales to continental Europe. The Minister of State dismissed my point. He was not very concerned. He said that responsibility for roads and railways lies with his Department. There is very little co-ordination, and the situation will worsen if Dyfed as a strategic area is abolished.

When I became the Member of Parliament for Llanelli in 1970, there was a Llanelli borough council—the old borough council—and a Llanelli rural council, which took into account the fact that the villages in my area are different from Merthyr Tydfil and some of the other valley communities. The rural council took in all the old anthracite mining villages. Those bodies were amalgamated. We had one council, but at least we shared power with Dyfed. Previously, we had shared power with the Carmarthenshire county council. Now we are to lose it all. We shall not have the old Llanelli borough council or the new Llanelli borough council, and we shall not have a Llanelli rural council. In the whole of my constituency there will be no local government with real power or power sharing. Everything will be transferred to the new Carmarthenshire county council. My constituents find this quite extraordinary—a point that will be pressed in Committee.

The Lord Advocate in the other place and the Secretary of State here have mentioned the decentralisation initiative. Some people have called it the "Powys pudding". It is the Tower Hamlets neighbourhood council idea. It is no good the Secretary of State shaking his head. I say it neither in praise nor in condemnation but merely from my observation. It is the Tower Hamlets neighbourhood council idea.

Mr. Alex Carlile: They have found out the hard way.

Mr. Davies: I do not know about that. It may suit London areas such as Bow and Poplar and Stepney, but the whole concept of a local area committee is quite alien to the traditions of local government in the part of Wales that I represent. How are these area committees, if they were to come about, to dovetail, if at all, with community councils? In my area the community council is very important. The hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) said that he did not understand why they were not called parish councils. I will not go into it; I will merely tell him to read the speech by Lord Tonypandy, who led for the Opposition in that famous 1972 local government debate. He will find out why they were not called parish councils. The reasons are obvious to those who know Welsh history.

Leaving that aside, however, how are these area committees supposed to dovetail in? If the Secretary of State is going down that road, I would prefer the emphasis to be placed on the community council; the town council. The town council can perform the function of the neighbourhood council or of the area committee, and it is there; it exists; it is elected. How on earth this hotch-potch will work out in practice, I do not know.

One of the disappointments of the Bill is that, although they have done a little, the Government have not tried to strengthen the basis of the community council which in Wales is extremely important, certainly in the part of Wales that I represent.

This is a hotch-potch of a Bill. It will do no good. It deprives my constituency of democratically accountable local government. It takes it and puts it somewhere else. We shall come back to this argument in Committee. All I can say now is that the sooner the Bill is thrown out, the better.

6.41 pm

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): When I read the Labour amendment, I was surprised because, although it started well by recognising, rightly, that there was a broad measure of support for the principle of unitary authorities, it went on to criticise every conceivable aspect of unitary authorities. My surprise diminished when I heard from the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) that he was the draftsman. What does not dim my surprise is the fact that all Opposition Members from Wales have signed the amendment, the various aspects of which I would like to deal with one by one.

First, the Opposition claim that the Bill fails to establish a directly elected, all-Wales tier of government. That is pretty clear. What it does not say is what it would cost were any such tier of government to be provided. That is rather strange because the last point in the Opposition's long list of criticisms is that the reorganisation of local government in Wales will cost the Welsh people at least £100 million. If the Opposition are so worried about expenditure on reorganising local authorities, how is it that they can face with equanimity the costs of setting up and running a directly elected, all-Wales tier of government?

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): The hon. Gentleman intimates that he is worried about cost. Opposition Members make the point that the cost of the quango system currently in operation exists day in, day out and that the cost of a Welsh assembly would be no more, and probably less, than the cost of quangos. The difference, however, is

that the services would come under some form of democratic accountability. The hon. Gentleman fails to grasp that point.

Mr. Sweeney: The hon. Gentleman has missed the point that I was making, which is that setting up and running a directly elected, all-Wales tier of government would cost money, whereas the cost of reorganising local government is a one-off cost that will ultimately lead to savings.

The second point on which the Opposition belabour the Government is that the Bill concentrates power in the hands of the Secretary of State for Wales. My first response to that is that the reforms will increase the accountability of local councillors. Presumably that is why the Opposition began by welcoming the principle of unitary authorities, because they realised that benefits will accrue from having a single tier of local government and that it will enhance rather than diminish the power of locally elected representatives.

Perhaps the real reason why they are concerned about the possibility of power residing in the hands of the Secretary of State is that, after 15 years in opposition, they have come to the reluctant conclusion that they will never be in the position of fielding a Secretary of State for Wales and therefore they resent any power that the office-holder may have.

Mr. Redwood: I wonder whether my hon. Friend noticed that, when I challenged Labour Members to say where the Bill was going to centralise, they chose to give as an example clauses whereby I would be strengthening local power at the request of the local authority and its elected members—the complete opposite of centralising power.

Mr. Sweeney: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for making the point.

The third criticism in the amendment is that the Government will abolish a democratic tier of local government in favour of joint boards and other joint arrangements. If the Opposition accept the principle of setting up a unitary authority, how on earth can they criticise us for wanting to abolish a democratic tier? One cannot achieve single-tier local government without abolishing a democratic tier. It follows that if there are more unitary authorities than there have been county councils hitherto, it makes sense to set up some sort of joint arrangements, crossing the boundaries of the new unitary authorities, for certain purposes where it seems appropriate.

The fourth criticism is that the Bill undermines the viability of local services. That is a bit rich, coming from an Opposition who have today called for more unitary authorities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has referred to 22 unitary authorities. The hon. Member for Caerphilly asked why there should not be 24. Why not 26 or 28, if that is the sort of reasoning that Opposition Members apply? Other things being equal, the smaller the local authorities are, the less viable local services will be. The proposals in the Bill serve to ensure the viability of local services by achieving a sensible compromise between size of authority and genuine accountability to the public.

Mr. Ainger: The hon. Gentleman has not mentioned in his list of criteria a community of interest. Both the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) have mentioned it. Does he not accept that as an important point as well as the scale or the size of the operation?

Mr. Sweeney: I recognise the importance of a community of interest; it is a considerable factor. It is also why I have urged the Government to create a unitary authority based on Vale of Glamorgan.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman and I were at a meeting on Friday night which was attended by about 200 people, only one of whom wanted to belong to Vale of Glamorgan. Does he recognise the fact that the community of interest in Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick is to be with the Bridgend unitary authority, not with the Vale of Glamorgan unitary authority?

Mr. Sweeney: I was certainly pleased to visit the hon. Gentleman's constituency last Friday at the invitation of the people of Ewenny, Wick and St. Bride's Major. It is fair to say that almost all the people in the hall—about 175 from those communities—were opposed to joining Vale of Glamorgan. I shall deal with that issue later, but I feel that their interests will be best served by joining Vale of Glamorgan because they will benefit from lower local government costs and will, in all probability, receive a better service.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sweeney: I shall not give way as I must make progress.

The fifth criticism in the Opposition's amendment is that they fear that

"further privatisation and . . . even more Welsh quangos"

will result from the Bill. I expect that knee-jerk reaction to the possibility of further privatisation, and I shall be interested to hear about the Opposition's new-found interest in keeping down the number of civil servants and bureaucrats. I hope that in future the Conservatives will have more support from the Opposition when we try to reduce, rather than increase, the amount of red tape.

The sixth criticism in the amendment is that the Bill will do nothing

"to improve the system of Welsh local government finance".

I strongly repudiate that notion. One of the main purposes of the Bill is to ensure more democratic accountability. People will no longer be confused about whether to go to councillor Bloggs or councillor Snooks to deal with a housing or education problem. If it is a matter for local government, they will know who their councillor is and who is responsible.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Some will go to their Member of Parliament.

Mr. Sweeney: Indeed, some will still go to see their Member of Parliament, as I discover every Saturday morning at my two surgeries.

The Opposition's seventh criticism is that the Bill

"ignores important traditional and historic Welsh local government boundaries".

Members may have something to say about their boundaries, but I am delighted that that of Vale of Glamorgan is to continue to exist. There is a great deal of local pride in the area and I am sure that it will be strengthened by the addition of the three communities that have already been mentioned.

[Mr. Sweeney]

The Opposition's final criticism of the Bill relates to costs. The amendment states that the Bill

"will cost the Welsh people at least £100 million which could be better used in improving . . . services."

Labour Members have missed the point. The Bill will improve public services not only in two years' time but for every year thereafter, which is why I support it. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already explained how the initial investment will be financed, and it will be money extremely well spent.

I told the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) that I would speak of the boundary between his constituency and mine. What particularly prompts me to do so were the remarks made by the hon. Member for Caerphilly, who is not in his seat at the moment but who suggested that a number of boundaries were being determined in the political interests of the Conservative party. He singled out my constituency for special mention.

I should like to set the record straight by pointing out that my constituency already has 67,000 electors. In other words, it has about 8,000 electors too many for the typical Welsh seat. In its provisional recommendation based on the existing local government boundaries, the Boundary Commission said that my seat—or Vale of Glamorgan seat—was on the large side and that it was a matter of concern but that it was inclined to leave matters as they were, for the time being at any rate.

It is certainly not a foregone conclusion that the Bill would be of any benefit to me. Indeed, one possibility is that the Cardiff boundaries might be altered and the existing Vale of Glamorgan seat could disappear. I do not know what final recommendation the commission will make, but it is important to set the record straight and stress that the reason for the inclusion of Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick is in order to benefit the people of Vale of Glamorgan, including those who live in the three communities. [Hon. Members: "None of them believes that".] It is interesting that Labour Members interrupt from a sedentary position to say that local people will not believe it. The fact is that—

Mr. Ray Powell *rose—*

Mr. Sweeney: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

I outlined the arguments to a public meeting at which about 175 constituents of the hon. Member for Bridgend were present. None of them refuted what I had said. With a population of about 120,000 after reorganisation—

Mr. Powell *rose—*

Mr. Sweeney: I am sorry; I did say that I would give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Powell: I represented Bridgend from 1979 to 1983 when Ewenny, Wick and that part of the vale were part of the Ogmore constituency. I was secretary and agent to Walter Padley, my predecessor, who served the Ogmore constituency for 28 years during which time the area now in dispute was included in it and for 10 years before that. The area has a history of belonging to the Ogmore constituency and there is no doubt that it should now join Bridgend. All the people whom I represented there and whom I still know have said to me, not once but many times, that they should not become part of a different constituency when they have always been oriented towards the market town of Bridgend where they do their shopping. They can also walk from Ewenny to the town of Bridgend and it would be a disgrace if the area were included in Vale of Glamorgan.

Mr. Sweeney: Constituency boundaries are wholly irrelevant in this context. Changes to constituency boundaries are a matter for the Boundary Commission, not for the House.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The hon. Gentleman mentioned them.

Mr. Sweeney: I mentioned them because an accusation was made against me earlier in the Chamber and I was anxious to refute it.

With a population of about 120,000 once the reorganisation proposals are in place, the vale will be big enough to achieve economies of scale and to manage major services effectively while remaining small enough to maintain its existing character, foster pride in the community and delivering high quality services at a competitive cost.

The people of Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick will benefit financially from joining the vale. In 11 of the past 12 years, people living in the vale have had lower council tax, community charge and rate bills than in Ogwr. The strong likelihood is that, just as the total council tax bill now imposed by South Glamorgan county council and the Vale of Glamorgan borough council is substantially lower than the total bill imposed by Mid Glamorgan county council and Ogwr borough council, everyone living in the new vale unitary authority will pay less than those living in Ogwr.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that, when he was making that point at the public meeting on Friday, people shouted that they might have to pay a bit more, but that the convenience of being in the Bridgend unitary authority would far overcome any slight reduction in cost from being in the Vale of Glamorgan? They laughed at that point, and when the vote was taken at the end of the meeting, only one person was persuaded to follow the hon. Gentleman's line.

Mr. Sweeney: The hon. Member is quite right to say that I was interrupted at that stage of my speech before I had a chance to develop the other aspects of my argument.

Mr. Griffiths: What about the vote at the end?

Mr. Sweeney: The vote at the end reflected the fact that some 175 people turned up at a meeting and clearly almost all those individuals had made up their minds beforehand. [*Laughter.*] The meeting was distorted by a 20-minute speech by the chairman, who introduced the debate in such a way that, in effect, doubled the time spent on the platform by speakers who opposed the communities coming into the vale.

With regard to the services, I believe that the people living in Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick will receive a better quality of service in the vale. There has been a lot of misinformation flying about. For example, some people in Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick believe that after they join the vale they will have to go to hospital in Cardiff if they are ill, instead of going to Bridgend. That is nonsense.

Mr. Griffiths: They do not believe that.

Mr. Sweeney: The hon. Member interrupts from a sedentary position to say that they do not believe that. I have had letters from people claiming that, I have heard people saying it, and that is why I am dealing with it. People living in places such as Cowbridge, Colwinston and Treoes in my constituency already go to hospital in Bridgend and it will be no different for the people who join the Vale of Glamorgan unitary authority. Under the recent reforms of the national health service, the money follows the patient. That will not be changed by local government reorganisation.

There are excellent schools on both sides of the present western boundary of the vale. I freely acknowledge that Bryn Teg, the comprehensive school which children from the three communities currently attend, is excellent. Cowbridge school, which has the fourth best academic record in Wales, is heavily oversubscribed; and Llantwit Major school, which is in the process of being rebuilt to a very high standard, is also expected to be full in the near future. The sensible course is therefore for the new vale unitary authority to purchase places at Bryn Teg to avoid disrupting the education of children from the three communities.

I acknowledge that there may well be some difficulties for people who live close to Bridgend in travelling to Barry, but the need to do so has been grossly exaggerated. People who live in the three communities will doubtless continue to shop, for example, in Bridgend. If the people who live in Llantwit Major and Cowbridge, who all live in the existing Vale of Glamorgan, find that they cannot get what they want in the local shops, they often shop in Bridgend. The new local authority boundary will not affect that.

The increase in population in the western vale will tend to improve access to services. The new council is more likely to delegate certain administrative functions to the western vale if the population balance shifts westwards. For example, it is already possible to pay council tax and council house rent in Cowbridge and Llantwit Major. The new unitary authority will make its own decisions, but, when planning the local services, it is bound to take into account the wishes and needs of the population that it will serve.

The population of the three communities have a lot more in common with Treoes, Llangan and Colwinston in my constituency than they do with Bridgend. There is no natural boundary between the vale and the three communities. Part of Ewenny is physically separated from the vale and joined to Bridgend. That problem can be overcome by the local government Boundary Commission, which will have power to recommend detailed amendments, as it has already successfully done for the eastern vale boundary. The addition of the new communities to the Vale of Glamorgan will provide an extra rural councillor and give more clout to rural points of view.

In essence, the proposals are in the interests of the whole of the Vale of Glamorgan. They are certainly in the interests of my constituents, whose interests I must represent today, in that the Vale of Glamorgan unitary authority will be significantly larger than the existing vale borough council area. The new authority will be in a position to deliver a high level of services at a lower cost than is being experienced at present by people living in Ogwr.

7.6 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The Opposition realise that the Secretary of State is in a predicament because he has effectively inherited a rather unfortunate Bill. I am sure that Opposition Members would be more than willing to discuss and to rework the Bill with him. The Secretary of State is laughing. I had always thought that the whole point of the Bill was to bring some consensus in the matter. If there is to be consensus—he may not understand this—there has to be discussion. That is why the Secretary of State is typical of the Government. He does not listen and he will not listen. I should be obliged if he would listen during the few minutes in which I shall speak.

Mr. Redwood: I was smiling because, as I explained to the House, that is exactly what I have been doing for months since taking the job. I entirely agree with the need to discuss, think it through and see whether we can reach agreement. That is what I have been doing.

Mr. Llwyd: May I take that as an indication that discussion on the Bill has not yet ended and that there will be some give and take in Committee on various important amendments that may seem necessary?

Mr. Redwood *indicated assent.*

Mr. Llwyd: I am obliged to the Secretary of State for that indication. None the less, I appeal to him to recognise that there are aspects of the Bill which worry many Members on both sides of the House. No doubt the Secretary of State will have seen the recent amendment and will have noticed that every Opposition Member has put his or her name to it.

I believe, as others have said, that the fatal flaw in the Bill is the absence of an all-Wales tier of government. Members of my party make no secret of the wish to see a full tax-raising and legislative Welsh parliament. Colleagues in other parties have a Welsh assembly firmly set in their manifestos, and I need not remind the Secretary of State that no fewer than 72 per cent. of the Welsh electorate voted at the last general election for parties to include various forms of devolution in their manifestos. So important was that issue that every party had a most definite view on it.

The vote on the amendment moved by Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos in another place sent a true and honest signal to the Government of the need for an all-Wales tier. The amendment was lost by eight votes only and the fact that the other place came that near to such a substantial constitutional change tells its own story.

Mr. Morgan: A moral victory.

Mr. Llwyd: The hon. Member chips in with the right phrase. I would have used it, but he used it first.

No lasting and meaningful review of government in Wales can take place without dealing with the all-important need for an elected all-Wales tier of government. The so-called democratic deficit in Wales is huge, and even as I speak it is dividing the people of Wales from this place. A Welsh parliament is absolutely necessary, and in addressing the need for a Welsh assembly pro tem, I say that it is not only desirable but vital that such a body be set up. It, and it alone, could exercise truly democratic control over the executive functions of the Secretary of State for Wales.

[Mr. Llwyd]

The case for an assembly is now overwhelming, if only because of the recent revelations about the Welsh Development Agency and other non-departmental public bodies in Wales. Such organisations must be made thoroughly accountable to a fully democratically elected all-Wales body. The non-departmental public bodies have a huge budget—£1.8 billion per annum—and a staff of 50,000. They are peopled by about 1,400 members, the overwhelming majority of whom are Tory placemen and placewomen. Under the proposals in the Bill there will be about 200 fewer councillors than quango members in Wales. Democratic accountability is lacking, and I am afraid that the system is in disrepute.

The answer is clear. In a recent public opinion poll 45 per cent. of respondents favoured a Welsh assembly, and only 22 per cent. were against; the "don't know" element was 33 per cent. If we eliminate the "don't knows", 67 per cent. of the people tested were in favour and only 33 per cent. against. The same poll revealed that there is no support in Wales for the current proposals for reorganising local government. Only 20 per cent. of the people of Wales support them. No reorganisation of local government should be implemented until the new structure has been considered and approved by a democratically elected Welsh assembly or parliament.

Any reasonable or acceptable form of local government should act as a counterweight to the centralist direction and tendencies of central Government. For that to work, local government must be returned to the people. Professor Ivor Jennings, in his excellent book "Principles of Local Government Law", puts it thus:

"Local government may have a wide variety of meanings. Since it is 'government', the system of local government which a country adopts must be part of its governmental or constitutional structure. Since it is 'local', it relates to specific portions of the country defined by locality. The institutions of local government are, thus governmental organs, having jurisdiction not over the whole of a country but over specific portions of it".

The words "defined by locality" need further emphasis, and I shall talk briefly about them later.

As I have said, local government's role is as a counterweight to the state. It is vital that it should so act, because so long as the Government retain their financial stranglehold through charge capping and the like, councils are dangerously near to becoming mere agents or rubber stamps for Westminster rule. For good or bad, the system that we have relies on a healthy balance between local and central Government. That balance is now heavily weighted towards central Government, and that all-important balance in our democracy is under serious threat.

As though to further that damaging process, the Bill adds considerably to the Secretary of State's powers over local government. It is a centralising measure, transferring powers from democratically elected councils to the Welsh Office. It weakens democracy yet further, and does not address the serious problem of accountability in Wales. The draconian and far-reaching powers to be conferred on the Secretary of State must be brought under full democratic control.

The European aspect is interesting. The concept of subsidiarity means in essence that decisions best reached at a local level should be made at a local level. That applies not only to the relationship between the European mainland and Westminster, but to the relationship between Westminster and Wales. The need for that link is obvious, as is the need for a proper division of decision taking to be enshrined in any measure that purports to review local government law in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that I have explained that I want many choices, responsibilities and decisions to be dealt with locally? It is Opposition Members who say that I must specify in each case what the answer should be. The argument on local accountability is the other way round from what the hon. Gentleman has described.

Mr. Llwyd: With the greatest respect, I must point out that the right hon. Gentleman's attention has already been drawn to various parts of the Bill, such as clauses 29 to 33. We know of the many reserve powers throughout the Bill. I admit that the right hon. Gentleman said that those powers were a last resort, and that he would not wish to use them—but I am sure that he would not wish to use his power of rate capping either. None the less, those powers are there, and they were nearly used recently against a borough council in north Wales.

When one dissects the Bill carefully, one finds numerous areas in which the Secretary of State and the Welsh Office have a firm grip on everything that goes on. The powers might not be used—but they are there, and I call attention to them.

Mr. Redwood: The powers are either transitional or enabling. They do not take functions and duties from local government.

Mr. Llwyd: But with various bits of work being farmed out—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members are having a laugh about this argument, but I do not believe that it is all that funny. Inevitably, various directly provided local government services will now go out to tender. We know that that will happen; compulsory competitive tendering may have been postponed, but it is coming in the next few months, as sure as eggs are eggs. I therefore question the Secretary of State's assertion.

I was talking about the relationship between Westminster and Wales, and I still say that the Bill will deliver the reverse of subsidiarity. It flies in the face of mainstream political and constitutional thinking in mainland Europe.

While we are on that subject, let us remember another fact. Only 15 per cent. of local government funding will come from council tax; 85 per cent. will come from central Government. That will perpetuate the financial stranglehold. The Audit Commission, referring to the European dimension, recently said that the absence of forums in which local authorities can meet to represent the interests of a broader region was beginning to disadvantage the United Kingdom local government system in its representations to the European Commission.

We know about that in Wales, because we have often failed to obtain structural funds for various areas of our country. We cannot allow our local authorities to operate under such a disadvantage. A democratic assembly for Wales is essential to safeguard and promote the interests of Welsh local authorities in Europe. Aberconwy, in my constituency, lost out and was denied assistance under the assisted area schemes because the local authority did not have a suitable voice in Europe.

One of the justifications for the Bill is the Government's belief that the public are confused about the role of county, district and borough councils. If there was such obvious confusion, why has it taken 20 years for the Government to notice it? The alleged duplication is also a bad point.

What of the alternative structures now being produced to clear up the confusion? The Bill purports to replace the existing structure of two tiers—besides the community councils, that is—with a single tier of unitary authorities. However, in Committee in another place, Lord Elis-Thomas said:

"Let us not mislead ourselves. We are not talking about a simple scheme to create unitary local government; we are talking about a very complex multi-tiered structure".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 17 January 1994; Vol. 551, c. 360.]

Although local government functions will initially be vested in the new principal authorities, there will be substantial delegation to area committees, especially in rural areas such as Powys, Caernarfonshire and Meirionnydd. Other functions will be discharged jointly, either voluntarily or by joint authorities or statutory joint bodies. Moreover, police, fire and other services will be arranged on a combined authority basis. The new structure will be more confusing to the citizen than the present one. The reference to area committees shows that the Bill is bad.

If one of my constituents wishes to set up a business in the region, perhaps after being made redundant as a result of the decommissioning of Trawsfynydd nuclear power station, he or she will need planning permission for the business premises. Which authority will that person approach? Will it be the area committee or the new principal authority? It will probably be neither. He will have to seek planning permission from the new national park authority, with its headquarters in Penrhyndeudraeth. He will need building regulation consent, which may be available from the area committee's office in Dolgellau. As a prudent business person, he will seek advice from the local authority's economic development department. He might require technical advice from the professional officers of the trading standards service.

Will those functions be discharged by the local area committee, the new principal authority or through joint arrangements? Which authority should he approach? Where will he receive his advice? He may need advice on fire precautions for the new premises. For that, he will have to approach the new combined fire authority, with its headquarters at heaven knows where. Will the new system cause less confusion or make life simpler? I doubt whether it will be the latter.

There is also great concern about staffing. I welcome the Secretary of State's assurance that the likely loss of staff will amount to only 5 per cent.

Mr. Redwood: I said not that there would be a 5 per cent. loss of staff, but that 95 per cent. of staff were almost certain to be transferred over. I wanted to reassure all those people, but that does not mean that the other 5 per cent. will lose their jobs.

Mr. Llwyd: I make no issue about that matter. I apologise for misreading the position.

Mr. Ainger: But there is no guarantee.

Mr. Llwyd: No. I shall come to that.

There is considerable concern in my region about the potential loss of well-paid jobs in Dolgellau, which will deprive the economy of the spending power of many people and families and will weaken the social fabric in Meirionnydd. That is a major concern in my constituency, which has already suffered heavy blows in recent months, especially as a result of the decommissioning of Trawsfynydd nuclear power station.

There is also deep concern among members of staff, many of whom will be unable to transfer to Caernarfon even if jobs are offered there, for family and other reasons. They must at least be entitled to generous compensation. When will the Secretary of State make an announcement on that issue?

There is also great concern about the Government's view that those employees whose contracts of employment end on 31 March 1996 will not be made redundant but will have their contracts terminated by frustration of contract. That view is unacceptable. Employees who end up without a job must be entitled to all the protection afforded by the relevant employment legislation. Those matters must be considered in great detail in Committee.

The Secretary of State will recall addressing a meeting of the Wales Trades Union Congress in January at which he said that there was need for a substantial contribution on the issue of staffing during the Second Reading debate. With great respect, I have not heard him say much about that matter today. I invite him to develop his theme since he advanced it in January.

It would be worthwhile to mention what the Staff Commission for England recently said on the subject, and I invite the Secretary of State to comment on it. It advised the Department of Environment that the reorganisation compensation scheme should be mandatory, include age and length of service banding, and have a lump sum upper limit of 82 weeks for the under-50s and a 30-week maximum for the over-50s. It said that it should also give maximum added pension years for the over-50s, come into force with the reorganisation order and last for a year after the reorganisation day.

Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that he will accept those points as minimum criteria and that the matter will be considered in great depth during the passage of the Bill? Such matters are more vital in Wales. A recent survey by Manpower Watch shows that a disproportionate number of employees in Wales are over 50 years of age compared with their counterparts in England. It is even more important for Wales that we are able to reach an early conclusion on the matter, and that it is satisfactory and fair to staff. The subject has naturally caused great worry throughout local government in Wales.

I am sure that the Government are aware of the recent study that was carried out by a team of top local government finance officers. It showed that the transitional costs of creating 21 unitary authorities would amount to £202.3 million at 1995-96 prices over a 15-year period. It also found that running the new authorities will cost another £6.2 million per annum more than at present. Does the Secretary of State agree with those figures? If not, what are his estimates of the transitional and annual running costs of the new authorities compared with those of the existing structures? Will the Secretary of State guarantee that all such additional costs are financed by the Treasury and will not result in any further squeezing of local government services or other Government-financed activity in Wales?

The debates in the other place began to expose the cracks in the Bill. For instance, great concern has been expressed about the restrictions that the Secretary of State

[Mr. Llwyd]

intends to impose in clause 25, which allows authorities to provide services for each other. The Secretary of State has made it clear, however, that he will take away the powers conferred by clause 25 in respect of all services that are subject to compulsory competitive tendering. Those will soon include not only basic services, such as school meals and roads maintenance, but white-collar services, such as information technology, construction-related services and legal work. Does not the Secretary of State's intention to impose those restrictions militate against the lead authority's provisions and the joint working arrangements that he has advocated so strongly? What is the relationship between clause 25 and the working arrangements in clauses 29 to 31? Those provisions must be examined carefully and in great detail in Committee.

The Bill is being rushed through and implemented without sufficient consideration. Also, the timetable does not add up. The election of members to the new councils will take place in April 1995. The chief executives will be appointed in June or July and the other chief officers will probably not be in post until September or October 1995. Service delivery plans, however, are to be prepared in draft form by 1 November 1995 and finalised by 1 February 1996.

The Secretary of State can issue a direction to a local authority to prepare a decentralisation scheme as late as 1 July 1996. Once the scheme is submitted, therefore, he has up to 12 months in which to approve it. A decentralisation scheme might, therefore, not be approved until late 1997.

Mr. Ron Davies: They will all be gone by then.

Mr. Llwyd: That may be the case. If the scheme is not approved until late 1997, that will be about 18 months after the new authorities have come into operation. Whether or not a decentralisation scheme is implemented is crucial to the arrangements for service delivery and for local government democratic control. The Secretary of State must allow more time for those matters to be considered properly by the new authorities and brought into effect in a rational and orderly fashion.

Hitherto I have talked about the generality of the Bill. I shall identify some further areas which will undoubtedly concern me in Committee. I heard the powerful speech of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on behalf of Montgomery. Of course, I add my voice to what he said, as I have done consistently. I hope that he will succeed in his difficult and arduous task of reinstating that honourable county status.

I ask the Secretary of State to think again about the excellent case for unitary status put forward by Meirionnydd. Meirionnydd has been a unit of local government since 1284, and was an excellent county council until 1974. Lately, the district council has been an excellent deliverer of local services. No fewer than 12,500 people signed a petition presented to Parliament last July calling for a unitary authority for Meirionnydd. Not one of the detailed reports prepared by Meirionnydd district council and the Meirionnydd campaign received a reasoned response. That is not acceptable. It is not acceptable for the Under-Secretary merely to say, as he did yesterday at Welsh questions, that matters relating to the Bill are for Parliament to decide. We know what that means.

I ask the Secretary of State again to give further consideration to the Meirionnydd case. Some weeks ago, during a meeting I had with the Under-Secretary, he admitted that only two campaigns had been mounted in Wales for unitary status of the nature of those run by Meirionnydd and Montgomery, so the argument that floodgates would be opened because some concessions had been given today does not add up. I am pleased for the hon. Members for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith). However, merely not to respond in any detailed way to the arguments put forward by my authority and, indeed, the Montgomery authority, and to disallow them out of hand, would be wrong, undemocratic and totally unacceptable to the people in those areas.

Does the Secretary of State further accept that communities such as Bro Garmon, Bro Machno, Dolgarrog, Llanrwst, Maenan and Llanddoget, Trefriw, Ysbyty Ifan and Eglwysbach have all indicated a preference for joining—that list will ensure that the *Hansard* reporters send me a note. If they send me the book down, I shall take the time to write it all out. I apologise —I should have taken it a bit slower; it comes as second nature to a Welsh speaker. Indeed, those communities are listed in the *Official Report* of the House of Lords as a result of an amendment moved by a noble Lord in Committee.

Those communities have indicated that they want to join with Caernarfon, as indeed have Penmaenmawr and Llanfairfechan. They want to move in with the Caernarfon set-up. We are talking about a large number of people and a large number of councils. I ask the Secretary of State to consider the matter because it is important across all shades of political opinion. Later, I intend to table an amendment to that effect, but I shall be grateful if the Government will consider the matter in the meantime.

As the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) said earlier, the borough of Taff-Ely is an excellent deliverer of services—it may be because it is run by Plaid Cymru. In any event, that authority has made a very strong case for unitary status. I ask the Government to re-examine that particular aspect. I join the hon. Member for Pontypridd in his arguments on behalf of that authority.,

We are dealing with the every-day lives of our citizens. Their aspirations must be taken into account because the Bill will mean nothing unless it carries with it the consensus of Welsh opinion. I welcome the concession on archive services and their provision. I ask whether there will be a similar approach to trading standards departments. Earlier, the Secretary of State said that that service could also be provided by smaller authorities. Therefore, I ask him to develop that aspect further, if not in this debate then obviously in Committee.

I also ask the Secretary of State, who has just left his seat, whether he can give an assurance that council employees will not be ineligible to stand for office. Undoubtedly, amendments will be tabled in Committee, but an indication at this stage would assist. Failure to allow employees to stand for office would, of course, deprive thousands of citizens of their basic democratic rights.

I shall refer briefly to the question of a Welsh assembly. I remind hon. Members that a vote was taken on the amendment tabled by Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos. Although the House of Lords is not noted for radical decision

making, the amendment failed unfortunately by only eight votes. Surely that must be a telling point that the Government will have to bear in mind.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way because I appreciate that he is reaching the end of his speech. Surely he is not telling the House that the form of assembly which was proposed in another place is a form of assembly that would satisfy the hon. Gentleman or any of his parliamentary colleagues.

Mr. Llwyd: It is an indication of principle. Earlier, I said that I did not want a Welsh assembly; I want a Welsh parliament. In the meantime, and on a pro tem basis, I shall fight hard for a Welsh assembly, which has been requested by other Opposition Members.

I reiterate that Opposition Members sympathise with the Secretary of State. He has been saddled with his predecessor's proposals, for which he has no enthusiasm. Moreover, as a former local government Minister in the Department of the Environment, he knows that the proposals in the Bill will not lead to effective and efficient local government in Wales. He should have the honesty and integrity to express his true feelings about the Bill and consign the proposals to the wastepaper basket, where they belong. He should consult widely in Wales across the political spectrum and bring forward new proposals for the government of Wales which will be acceptable to our people; otherwise the Bill will only give rise only to resentment and dismay. Surely that must be avoided if the process is not to be utterly discredited.

7.36 pm

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): I contratulate the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on his achievement in getting such a large number of signatures for the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. In view of the confusion and divisions that pervade the Opposition Benches, it was no mean achievement to gain all those signatures. However, having read the Order Paper, I note that the names are arranged in alphabetical order and therefore I have no doubt that all the names owe more credit to the skills of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) than those of the hon. Member for Caerphilly.

Like a music hall conjurer, as it were, the amendment is a conjuring trick by the hon. Gentleman, which Tory Members can see through. The perception that the hon. Gentleman wishes us to gain from the Order Paper is that there is some unanimity that binds Opposition Members. However, we know about the manifest divisions in the hon. Gentleman's and between his party and the nationalist and Liberal parties in Wales. Those divisions exist with regard to the assembly itself.

Mr. Ron Davies: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) does my bidding on such matters, I can assure him that he grossly misreads the relationships within the parliamentary Labour party.

Mr. Alex Carlile: You do his bidding.

Mr. Davies: I certainly do not. I hope that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) is not impugning the integrity of the hon. Members who signed the amendment. It is a fact that all 32 Opposition Members agree that the Government's proposals are fundamentally flawed and that the system of unitary authorities is not acceptable without a Welsh assembly. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that that is an accurate reflection of the views of the 32 hon. Members who signed the amendment.

Mr. Evans: It is common knowledge that there are some among the hon. Gentleman's parliamentary party in Wales who are far less enthusiastic about the idea of a Welsh parliament than he would have us believe. More importantly, the amendment condemns the Government proposal because it

"abolishes a democratic tier of local Government".

The democratic tier to which the amendment refers presumably is the county councils. Yet Opposition Members—including the hon. Members for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), for Blaneau Gwent (Mr. Smith) and for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells)—have demanded that further action be taken to place local government unitary powers in the hands of those at the district level, and that the new unitary authorities should be based on the districts rather than on the counties. The amendment derides and attacks the Government because they are moving away from county councils.

Dr. Howells: My difficulty in the matter is in trying to understand why, when there are local authorities and district councils that are exactly the same size, which have the same population and offer the same services—which are twins, in many ways—one becomes a unitary authority and the other is linked with neighbouring authorities. I am looking for the logic in it. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can give me a better idea of where it derives from than the Secretary of State did.

Mr. Evans: If the hon. Gentleman remains for all of my speech, he will find that I shall ask certain questions along those lines in relation to my area. I have not noticed the hon. Gentleman saying that we need to retain the two-tier system, or that we need a unitary authority based upon Mid Glamorgan county council. I have not heard those claims from Opposition Members, but I have heard claims that we need more unitary authorities, rather than fewer.

Mr. Rogers: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman understandably shows a complete lack of knowledge of local government. He ought to realise that services are provided at different levels. It is a matter not of drawing boundaries on a map, but of delivering services. The Opposition are anxious to ensure that there is an optimum size for the delivery of the best services. Our argument is that an authority of 240,000 is too big to deliver many of the personal services. On the other hand, such an authority may in some senses be too small to provide all of the support facilities for the delivery of education and social services.

What is dumbfounding for Opposition Members is the fact that the Secretary of State can propose that an authority bounded by the same mountains and adjacent to our local authority can be big enough when it has a population of 70,000, and yet other authorities which are bigger again are not big enough. Where is the logic in the argument?

Mr. Evans: I am perfectly happy to debate the issues. In relation to the hon. Member's opening statement, I always find that arguments are not advanced by abuse.

The hon. Gentleman seems to be proposing that, in certain circumstances, the retention of a two-tier system would be desirable.

Mr. Rogers *rose—*

Mr. Evans: May I just put a point to the hon. Member which I think is of fundamental importance? We must look at the basis from which the Bill springs. It springs from a consultation exercise undertaken by the Secretary of State's predecessor in which he asked authorities within Wales at both county and district level whether there was a case to justify retaining a two-tier structure, or whether we should move to unitary authorities. I know about that because I was involved in the debate with each of the local authorities in my area.

Mr. Rogers: I did not mean to be abusive to the hon. Gentleman in a personal sense. I was commenting simply on the problems of deciding on the correct size for local government. Some of my hon. Friends do not agree with me, and it is not my party's policy, but I believe in two-tier local government. Frankly, the Secretary of State's proposals will create two-tier local government, because unitary authorities will have to combine to provide bigger services. In effect, there will then be two-tier local government. Why on earth must the county councils be abolished to start with?

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman will find as my speech develops that there is much which, perhaps surprisingly, unites us in the matter.

I feel strongly that we should not base local government on some desired percentage, or a gross number which is the desirable figure upon which every local authority should be based. The basis of my argument is that there are different circumstances in different parts of Wales. The proposals in the Bill that govern the situation within Powys create the retention of a form of two-tier structure.

I shall return to the thrust of my speech, rather than just responding to interventions from the Opposition. It is important that the debate should be seen to be about the initial step taken by the Secretary of State in asking whether there should be unitary authorities or the retention of the two-tier structure. The response from virtually throughout Wales was in favour of unitary authorities, and there can be no ducking that.

The response from the counties was that we must have unitary authorities, but they must be based on the counties. The response from the districts was that we must have unitary authorities, but they must be based on the districts. The problem identified by the Secretary of State, and which we have heard about during the debate, is that there has been confusion in the roles of the authorities.

There has been confusion in terms of the delivery of services. The counties and districts have agreed on that; otherwise, they would not have proposed creating unitary authorities in the first place. Sadly, I do not think that the authorities have looked in as much detail as they might at some of the difficulties that might arise if we went for one desirable size for a local authority area. For instance, I understand that the desirable population for a local authority within Wales must be 70, 000. However, I know that the English local government commission has argued that 150,000 is the desirable population. Why should the appropriate population be twice as big in England as it is in Wales?

Within Wales, a number of authorities proposed in the Bill have a population significantly lower than 70,000. In the Government's proposal for Scotland there are two authorities that are smaller than Radnorshire. Those authorities are proposed in the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, which is being debated in Committee, and the Government recognise that a proper level of local government service can be delivered by an authority based on a population as small as in those areas.

I am sure that that is anathema to some of those who advise the Secretary of State, and to the Assembly of Welsh Counties. They see things very much in the context of the remarks of the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason), who said that one important consideration has to be the career structure of those who work in local government. I am not unsympathetic to the concerns of those who work in local government, and we should provide proper terms and conditions for them. However, our fundamental and primary role must be to ensure that we create a structure of local government that is right for local council tax payers and the local population.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with me that smaller district councils have been able to attract a high quality of officer? Some have been brilliant young officers who have moved on, and some have been slightly older officers who were looking to work in a rural authority.

Mr. Evans: I agree entirely, and the hon. and learned Gentleman will know that, in my constituency, Radnorshire district council has a chief executive, Mr. Geoff Read, who is widely respected. He has also created a structure within the district council in which it is not the perception that whoever fills a council role must only perform that job and no other. The hon. and learned Gentleman will know that in career structures it is desirable to bring in people who train in one environment and move on to other local authorities.

To say that we must all conform to one template for the structure of local government and the desired size of population, with the lines then being drawn over Wales accordingly, runs entirely contrary to local sensitivities and does not produce the best form of local government reorganisation.

Another caveat in respect of the Local Government Commission has been referred to in the debate. Proposals are being made for the retention of a two-tier structure in certain parts of England. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) suggested such an arrangement as a backstop position for Montgomeryshire. People in Montgomeryshire may have said to him that they want their own unitary authority, but certainly do not want to lose control over local services. We should ponder hard before we create a structure in a year or so of unitary and two-tier authorities over England, but only unitary authorities across Wales, created in the face of local opposition. That would not be in anyone's interests.

At the time of the debate about whether it was helpful to move towards unitary authorities, I discussed with the authorities in my area whether they believed that Powys uniquely had reasons for retaining a two-tier structure. The hon. Member for Rhondda spent a good deal of time interrupting me and I gave way to him. I see that he did not choose to remain for the rest of my speech. It is rather a shame. I accept entirely the point that he made in this regard. Some services need to be delivered to a much larger population; other services need to be delivered much closer to the people. How are we to deal with that key problem?

I see no reason why we should not have a structure of unitary authorities based on small populations. I am sure that the authorities in the constituency of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery and those in my area would work together constructively to deliver strategic services over a wider area. Furthermore, that might even involve some councillors from the area of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd). I know that his authority has discussed the matter within the mid-Wales context with other authorities. That is a constructive debate.

However, I was a little disappointed by the remarks of the hon. Member for Caerphilly. He said that he was committed to voting in Committee for Montgomeryshire or a Brecon and Radnor authority, but had not yet decided whether he was prepared to support a Radnorshire authority in its own right. One aspect of the debate in another place that particularly disappointed me was that it was proposed that Brecon and Radnor should be merged, against the wishes of the people of Radnorshire and in the teeth of the opposition of those people. Such proposals are not helpful in developing the best form of local relations.

The authorities in my constituency are fundamentally independent. Most of the councils are under independent control. Yet we have Labour representation in Radnorshire. I know from speaking to the Radnorshire Labour councillors last week that they intend to urge the hon. Member for Caerphilly to change the position that he outlined tonight.

Mr. Ron Davies: I said that we had taken a view on Montgomeryshire. The spokesman for the Labour party in the House of Lords said that that was the policy which we would be prepared to support officially. The problem that we now face is that the hon. Gentleman is engaging in a tortured approach to his county of Powys. He obviously cannot make up his mind whether to argue the case for a unitary authority in Radnorshire and/or a unitary authority in Breconshire. As soon as he decides which side of the fence to come down on, we can consider whether to support his argument.

Mr. Evans: I am surprised to hear that remark from the hon. Gentleman. He clearly cannot have listened to any of my speeches in the House on the matter in the past two years. If he had, he would know my position.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Evans: If the hon. Gentleman will stop seeking to intervene and allow me to develop my argument, he will understand clearly. If he had listened on previous occasions, he would understand.

Mr. Griffiths: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's argument that Radnorshire should not be drawn into a combined Breconshire and Radnorshire unitary authority. He said that if they were combined, they would be dragged kicking and screaming into the new structure and he would not approve it. Is he prepared to support our amendment? The communities of Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick have shown that they do not want to be part of the Vale of Glamorgan, but want to stay with the Bridgend unitary authority.

Mr. Evans: I am prepared to listen to any arguments advanced by particular communities. The hon. Gentleman ought to know that I met representatives from Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr. The hon. Member for Caerphilly knows that I expressed some sympathy with the observations that they made. I was pleased to hear the announcement that by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made about those authorities. I am certainly prepared to listen to the arguments on those matters, although I cannot give a definitive response at this point.

I return to my theme. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made his proposals. The somewhat surprising proposal for a unitary authority based on Powys was not one which the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery expected or one which I expected. The consultation paper referred to the creation of either a Brecon and Radnor joint authority or separate authorities. We in mid-Wales well remember the dotted line between the two district areas. I pay credit to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and to his predecessor for what they have done since that time. It is churlish of some Opposition Members to suggest that there has been any lack of consultation with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I have been to see him on four or five occasions with representatives of the local councils to discuss the issues.

The Government clearly must recognise that the proposal for a unitary authority based on Powys in its own right is a major problem. That is why the area committees proposal is in the Bill. In fairness to the Government, that is a recognition of many of the points that we have made. However, there are dangers in the proposal for area committees. If the area committees are to have real autonomy, they must have financial control. That is a fundamental aspect which I have argued privately with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in meetings when representatives of the local councils have been present, and on other occasions. That is one of the reasons why I have raised the matter yet again in the House.

Again, in fairness to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, he went much further in his response today than he did on a previous occasion on the issue of financial autonomy. As yet, all we know is that my right hon. Friend recognises the problem and we must examine what he proposes as the solution. The problem is not limited to financial autonomy. One of the problems that have arisen from the way in which the debate has been conducted is some difficulty in the relationship between the councils in mid-Wales. That is unhelpful and those of us who have a parliamentary role in the area should do our best to resolve it.

I am greatly displeased by suggestions that I have heard that, if ultimately there should be a Powys authority, the stronger authorities to the north or to the south of Radnorshire may choose to operate Radnorshire on a north-south basis, with disastrous effects on Llandrindod Wells. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery said that some people in his constituency feel that Llandrindod Wells is remote from them. I recognise that they have that perception, but it is inevitable when one is dealing with a vast geographical area such as Powys.

Nevertheless, if we had a Powys authority, even with that financial devolution, it would create difficulties for Llandrindod Wells, which depends substantially on being the administrative centre of Powys, because there would be a perception of a north-south split in the county.

It was surprising that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy said that he was sorry that 85 per cent. of the funding for those new authorities is likely to come from

[Mr. Evans]

central Government, as at present. He suggested that that was too much; that we needed to change that balance. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would clarify those remarks.

Mr. Llwyd: I am invited to intervene. The simple point was that the longer and the firmer is the financial stranglehold on local government by this place, the less likely we are to have any democratic development in local government generally. The point is fairly obvious. I know that the hon. Gentleman wanted to make a point, but it really is a silly point.

Mr. Evans: The clear thrust of the hon. Gentleman's remarks is that, if 85 per cent. central Government funding to local authorities is too much, ultimately there will be a switch in the balance of resources so that more resources are raised locally. Presumably that is the hon. Gentleman's point.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones), although he has not spoken in the debate, was present at a Parliament for Wales meeting in my constituency recently. He made it absolutely clear at the meeting that, on instructions from the hon. Member for Caerphilly, he was arguing the case for keeping central funding from this place, that the block grants must still come from the House of Commons, and that we must not get into a debate about there being tax-raising powers for any assembly in Wales. That is yet another of the slight divisions between the position of the hon. Member for Caerphilly and the nationalists on that matter.

I ask my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to give me reassurance about two aspects of the detail of the Bill. Clause 24 deals with police authorities and gives certain powers to the Secretary of State to bring forward plans in relation to proposed amalgamations. That issue causes great worry in my constituency.

I was happy to hear today that within the Dyfed-Powys police force in my constituency there have been recorded reductions in crime rates of 48 per cent. in Brecon and 28 per cent. in Llandrindod Wells—and that from a police force which has the lowest crime rate and the highest clear-up rate in the country. It may be a small police force, but it is an efficient and well-run police force. We must oppose any forced merger with another police force authority such as South Wales, which is formulated on the basis of a much bigger population, but is being run into the ground through poor financial management. I therefore urge my hon. Friend to clarify what may be in the mind of the Government in relation to clause 24.

Clause 23 includes powers concerning the fire authorities. It is proposed, as the Under-Secretary of State knows, that there should be three fire authorities in Wales. I view that with substantial anxiety. People in my constituency will want reassurance about service delivery if there were to be such a reorganisation.

I echo the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) about the concerns of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children regarding children's services in Wales.

I conclude by referring to the fundamental part of the Opposition's reasoned amendment. In essence, it proposes that the Bill should not receive a Second Reading because it fails to establish a directly elected all-Wales tier of government. That is the fig-leaf covering the hon. Member for Caerphilly. The proposal that there must be a parliament for Wales draws the Opposition together.

Opposition Members say that 70 per cent. of people in Wales support the policy. That is manifest nonsense. In 1979, more than 80 per cent. of the people in Wales voted against a parliament for Wales; two months later, 67 per cent. of them voted for parties who were committed to it. Does that mean that in two months all the people in Wales changed their minds? No. It means that some of the people who support some of the Opposition parties vehemently oppose a parliament for Wales.

Several factors lead to people voting for some of the Opposition Members. I wish that we could persuade them to vote otherwise. Be that as it may, the creation of a separate Welsh parliament is not one of the fundamental things that cause people to vote for some of the Opposition parties, save only perhaps in the case of Plaid Cymru.

In those circumstances, it is manifest nonsense for Opposition Members to claim that vote as evidence for support for a separate parliament for Wales. They had 67 per cent. of the vote in 1979 and 70 per cent. of the vote at the most recent election—a 3 per cent. change in the vote in that period.

Further, recently a poll recorded that 45 per cent. of people in Wales are in favour of creating some type of assembly. What do those people want? What do they imagine the parliament leading to? It is my case that 82 per cent. of the people who propose the idea of a separate Welsh parliament regard it, as does the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, as a step on the road to an independent and separate Wales.

Mr. Llwyd *indicated assent.*

Mr. Evans: I am glad to see that the hon. Gentleman nods his support for that, because he spoke of the debate in another place, and said that, during that debate, the Welsh parliament idea had only just failed to get through, but it was not the type of parliament that he wanted. He wanted very much more control over a wide range of matters in Wales. So we are concerned with people who wish to be on the road to an independent, separatist Wales, and who view the establishment of a separate Welsh parliament as a step on that road.

Mr. Llwyd: I have no embarrassment about wanting a Welsh parliament—obviously not—and I wonder why the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) should suddenly be surprised when I nod my head. My argument was that a Welsh assembly is necessary now to sweep away the quango system, or at least to bring some scrutiny to bear on the quangos, because the system is in complete disrepute. We waste £1.8 billion per annum on running quangos in Wales without any proper scrutiny. A Welsh assembly could start by considering that.

Mr. Evans: Every public organisation that has been set up by the Secretary of State for Wales is answerable, through him, to Parliament. That is why we have questions on the Order Paper about them every day—most of them tabled by the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent.

I am very pleased to see the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) in his place. I was sorry that he, not discourteously, would not allow me to intervene earlier because he was keen to keep his remarks short. He said that his views about a Welsh assembly had

not really changed since the 1970s. As he said that, I remembered those famous remarks that he made in 1979: when an elephant is on your doorstep you know it for what it is. The right hon. and learned Gentleman was most eloquent on that occasion. He was saying, in essence, that, whatever his own views may have been, the people of Wales had a totally different view.

As regards the current situation and the bankruptcy of the approach of so many Opposition Members, we know that the Labour party is not prepared, as part of its policy for a separate Welsh parliament, to put it to a vote of the people of Wales. The assiduous response of the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), during the Parliament for Wales campaign meeting, was that he had the authority of the hon. Member for Caerphilly to say, "We will have a separate Welsh Parliament and we will bring that Parliament about within 12 months of an incoming Labour Government, but there will be no referendum on it." Those were the reported words of the hon. Member for Neath. I was with him when he said that and he did so with the authority of the hon. Member for Caerphilly.

Mr. Ron Davies: For the sake of clarity, will the hon. Gentleman tell us whether he is in favour of a referendum for an assembly or parliament for Wales?

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman pays too little attention to my remarks. I have consistently said that anybody who proposes a separate Welsh parliament should, in the context of the 1979 referendum, be prepared to put it to a vote by the people of Wales. Were the hon. Gentleman to do that, I should be delighted to take him on at the hustings, because I have no doubt that the outcome would be exactly the same as that of the previous referendum.

8.10 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Given that unitary authorities have such widespread support in principle across the country and the consensus that local government should be reorganised on the principle of unitary authorities, how has such a popular policy become so unpopular in Wales? The answers are self-evident.

First, the Conservatives are riding roughshod over the interests and democratic wishes of the Welsh people. That is the background against which they are introducing the Bill and why it is meeting such opposition and criticism. My constituents describe the Secretary of State by all sorts of names, some of which are too unparliamentary to repeat here. One of the nicer ones is Dr. Strangelove because of his approach to Welsh politics and the fact that his single greatest achievement has been to reduce Conservative support in Wales to its lowest level ever.

The second reason why the Bill is so heavily criticised and greeted with such suspicion is that the Government are defying the electorate. They are seeking to overturn the democratic results of general and local county council elections by instituting a new tier of quangos to replace elected representatives with a new elite. The "quangia" are exercising great powers but are not accountable.

The Bill runs alongside and encourages that development because it sets up new quangos that will be less democratically accountable than the local authorities that they replace. Despite the welcome increase in the number of councils, there will be fewer elected local councillors than members of the various quangos in Wales. That will encourage elitism and toadying, which is now such a feature of public life in Wales. Tory placepersons are put on quangos when they cannot get directly elected. It will also produce what my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) appropriately described as a loss of democratic legitimacy.

When elected councillors are taken out of their communities, a vacuum is left. The whole system of politics and democracy rests on legitimacy. Whatever their imperfections, local councillors are an important part of creating building blocks for that legitimacy, but they are being replaced by an unelected elite throughout the system of government in Wales.

Combined with the economic and social policies that the Government are pursuing to disastrous effect in Wales, there will be increasing problems of ungovernability, not just in Wales but throughout the United Kingdom. We shall certainly see that in communities such as those that I represent, with a strong democratic tradition and sense of community. If those features are destroyed, the traditional sense of legitimacy and respect that the communities in the valleys of south Wales have for the democratic process will also be destroyed. That is a serious consequence of the Government's open defiance of democratic wishes.

The third reason why the Bill is so unpopular is that it entrenches the fragmentation of government, the problem of quangos to which I have already referred, and the associated process of opting out which some local hospitals and schools are forced to adopt. The parallel developments of contracting out, market testing and privatisation also contribute to the fragmentation of government. The result is a system of politics in which voters no longer achieve their true role as citizens whose place in the democracy exists by virtue of exercising their democratic rights. They become mere customers of services that have been opted out, contracted out, quangoised, market tested or privatised.

That result is the destruction of local policies, and the Bill entrenches that process. Ultimately, local policies are the cement that binds local communities together. Unless people are involved in local policies, their respect for priorities cannot be attained. Moreover, the process by which cohesion can be sustained and priorities set within a community cannot be attained. The essence of politics is to set priorities, which will advantage some people and disadvantage others. One retains the respect of those who have been disadvantaged only if they feel that they have participated in the democratic process of arriving at those priorities.

However one looks at this remorseless, systematic fragmentation of politics, democracy and local government, it is a serious phenomenon that will be one of the Conservative regime's principal legacies when the Conservatives are finally driven from office. They intend to turn local authorities from democratic agencies, for which socialists have always argued, into mere administrative outposts of Whitehall. That is what the Bill is about. It seeks not to empower local citizens or local democracies but to reconstitute local authorities as administrative agencies for central Government, a process that is entrenched by the fact that some 90 per cent. of local authority finance is now provided centrally. Coupled with the capping of local authorities' scope to allow local autonomy and democracy to flower and reflect local wishes, that power is virtually extinguished. It is a

[Mr. Peter Hain]

top-down version of democracy—if we can still call it democracy. It is certainly a top-down version of government, as opposed to an empowering bottom-up one.

The other key consequence of the fragmentation and destruction of local government is that the strategy and mechanism for determining the strategic approaches to policy matters and for developing policies with strategic consequences no longer exist. A cluster of competing fragmented units are responsible for carrying out services or deciding on policies. The ability to determine an overall strategic approach to Wales' future is lost, which is why the biggest gap in this process of reform of government in Wales is the absence of an all-Welsh tier of government —a Welsh assembly or parliament, whatever it is called when it is brought in, as I believe that it will be in the end, despite Conservative resistance.

The biggest hole in this reform of local government is the ability to have an agency capable of taking a Wales-wide strategic approach to policy. The Secretary of State has all but recognised that by conceding the case for establishing an economic council. Why is such a council to be established? That is an interesting question for a Government who reject the idea of an all-Wales tier of government. At least in respect of economic policy, the Conservative Government recognise that there is a hole in their policy and that they need a Wales-wide approach. Therefore, instead of conceding the case for a Welsh assembly or a Welsh parliament, they are setting up a puppet quango in the proposed economic council. They have at least recognised the need for an overall strategy on economic policy development.

Another concession that is even less acceptable is the Secretary of State's proposed forum, which he is trying to cobble together without co-operation from the Labour party, at least in terms of the forum's composition. Why did he make that suggestion? Because he sees a gap in his approach to government. Associated with that policy is the encouragement and promotion of joint boards and consortia that do irreparable damage to the democratic process and the lines of local accountability.

What will a local citizen in Neath be voting for in education and social services or the fire service if those vital emergency and general services are run by joint boards or consortia? How will his or her vote determine the policies of those new quangos, consortia and boards? How can they be held accountable when they are fragmented and dispersed into parallel bodies working alongside elected local authorities? As a consequence, we have a real dog's breakfast of local government reform.

That is why, relatively late in the day, the Secretary of State has come upon the wheeze of decentralisation. It is not really decentralisation; if it were, as my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) has pointed out, the Government would need to devolve real power, not least over finance. That is not proposed. The consequence will not be real decentralisation, but the danger of reconstituting old districts in their parochial sense without being empowering agencies. That could lead to the paralysis of the new unitary authorities rather than to their being genuinely powerful and dynamic in implementing their policies and reflecting local wishes.

That brings me to the future of Neath. The borough of Neath has been in existence for some 900 years. The town dates back to Roman times. To defend the legitimacy of its existence is not simply to indulge in a local whim or some parochial self-interest; it is not the reaction of local politicians who want to cling to office.

Neath borough council employed independent consultants, Touche Ross, a company of which the Government normally take considerable notice—but in this case they have not. Touche Ross looked carefully and in detail into the case for Neath remaining on its own and took the view that it could meet all the criteria required for successfully functioning as a unitary authority.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hain: I am not taking any interventions from the hon. Gentleman, who is known in my constituency as Rod Gwenwn.

Neath borough council has put together detailed proposals for Neath to remain a unitary authority. The Minister might at least note that even local Conservatives have enthusiastically backed them. It is not simply the Labour party that has put the case for Neath; a broad section of the community, from the Churches to the trade unions, has endorsed virtually unanimously the case for Neath to remain on its own.

My right hon. and learned friend the Member for Aberavon pointed out that, in an independent ballot conducted for the local authority, only about 135 of the 6,000 or so votes cast were actually in favour of the Government's proposals.

The Touche Ross report pointed out that a Neath unitary authority would offer real benefits

"for social services, where the model of working together currently applied most successfully between housing and social services in Neath is capable of extension to include local health service professionals and will provide a sound basis for strategic planning".

It also pointed out:

"a Neath local education authority would be small enough for the chief education officer to have immediate personal contact with head teachers through the appraisal system".

It set out the benefits

"for highways and transportation, where the benefits of unitary status in Neath could offer better coordination between highways and planning departments without involving the difficulties of merging two district planning departments",

as is proposed for Neath and Port Talbot and half the planning authority for the upper Clwyd valley.

The report, which was delivered in May 1992, stated:

"a Neath authority would have a much clearer community focus than a combined Neath/Port Talbot authority could achieve."

It argued:

"The lack of community links between Neath and Port Talbot reflects the topography and shows through in patterns of shopping and personal mobility. Neath's vibrant pattern of sporting, leisure and cultural activities is largely independent from Port Talbot. There are significant differences in the transport focus and industrial character of the two boroughs".

It concluded:

"We believe that Neath is well placed to operate as a unitary authority in own right, meeting the criteria set out in the Welsh Office Consultation Paper of being able to deliver high quality services while meeting the financial objectives set out in Section 7 of the paper".

I need not rely simply on Labour advocates or independent consultants for that view; those opinions were voiced in another place recently. In the debate on the Local Government (Wales) Bill, Lord Howe of Aberavon said:

"We like people from Neath as long as they keep their distance and I hope they take the same view of we people from Aberavon, but that there could not be two more distinct communities. It

would be a mistake to merge them".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 10 February 1994; Vol. 551, c. 1740.]

Viscount Tonypandy, a former Speaker of the House, speaking of Neath and Port Talbot, said:

"I was going to say that they are like salt and sugar, but I do not wish to offend one side or the other. Those two have a fierce rivalry . . . I am afraid that the Government could not be making a bigger mistake."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 14 December 1993; Vol. 550, c. 1287.]

Those are the views of two eminent and experienced former Members of the House whose views should be taken into account by the Government but clearly are not.

The Secretary of State has conceded the case for Neath's existence as a separate unitary authority without implementing the necessary changes to the Bill but by conceding the case for Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent to go their own way. I do not quarrel with that; I congratulate those areas on their achievement and my hon. Friends on having secured it.

What criteria were used in the Secretary of State's decision that could not be applied to Neath or Port Talbot? It cannot be size, because Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent are of similar size. It cannot be geographical convenience, because the journey between Glyncorrwg in Aberavon and Cwmllynfell at the top of my constituency takes perhaps an hour and a half through tortuous, winding, traffic-ridden roads.

There is no common community interest between those villages and it is not a question of geographical convenience or civic pride; there is tremendous civic pride in Neath and Port Talbot which will be extinguished as a result of the reform. It is not a matter of history, as that is being ignored. It is not a question of community, because that is being defied. It is not a question of functions, because no logical explanation is given for Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent being single local authorities that could not be applied to Neath or Port Talbot.

It is not a question of service delivery. No criterion has been given for the optimum level at which different services are to be delivered in Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr, which have been given their own opportunity, that could not equally be applied to Neath and Port Talbot. It is not a question of finance either, because, as the Touche Ross report showed, the Neath-going-alone option would be cheaper.

None of those principal criteria is the reason chosen for the Bill's final form; it is a question of expediency, of what the Secretary of State feels that he has been able to get away with. The Bill will be bulldozed through with the votes of Conservative Members of Parliament sitting in English constituencies. I am delighted that the constituencies of my hon. Friends have achieved unitary status, but I believe that that decision has stripped the Secretary of State of all his defences.

There is no logic, conviction or honesty in the Bill. It does not have credibility. For those reasons, there will be widespread opposition to it throughout Wales, and certainly in my constituency. We will fight it every inch of the way in Committee, and will do so from a principled basis, opposing the Government's unprincipled expediency.

8.30 pm

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your eagle eye and for calling me.

As I listened to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), I was reminded of a recent opinion survey conducted by the Labour party in Ystradgynlais, when the boundary between his constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) was in dispute, or under discussion. The Labour party conducted a survey asking the good people there whether they wished to be included in the constituency of Neath or stay in the constituency of Brecon and Radnor. It showed that 97 per cent. of the people surveyed wished to stay with my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor rather than go to the hon. Member for Neath.

There is general agreement in the House that local government in Wales is in need of reform. The debate, however, is about how best to achieve that. The reasons for the divisions between Conservative Members and Labour Members are quite easy to understand. Conservative Members believe that the purpose of local government is to provide quality services at minimum cost to council taxpayers. One would have thought that that would be a common primary objective. Unfortunately, to the Labour party, local government is about creating employment first and delivering services second.

Since the Government announced their reform proposals, the two boroughs that cover my constituency have got on with the job of making reform work—would that that were true everywhere in Wales. Colwyn borough got together at an early stage with neighbouring Aberconwy, with which it will form a new unitary authority, and has co-operated well since. When I recently asked Colwyn borough how it was progressing, it expressed pleasure at the latest Welsh Office consultation paper under which it will have equality of numbers with Aberconwy in the new unitary authority and at the fact that the rural wards in Colwyn will be preserved.

What has not yet been announced, but which I am sure will be widely debated, is the name of the new authority. I do not intend to get involved in that debate. The other borough authority, Rhuddlan borough council, is reasonably content with my right hon. Friend's proposals but will make representations on a few matters. Given that boundaries are intended to reflect and strengthen existing community loyalties, Rhuddlan borough council argues that it is illogical to exclude certain communities from the new Denbighshire. In my constituency—the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) will have views on this—that would affect Kinmel bay and Towyn. The only other matter on which the authority feels strongly is its name; it would prefer the new authority to be called Vale of Clwyd, or Dyffryn Clwyd. If all the local authorities in Wales were as well organised and progressive as the two with which I have to deal, the debate would have been over in next to no time. That is all I want to say about the Government's proposals.

Members from each of the Opposition parties in Wales are signatories to the Labour party motion. I shall devote the bulk of my comments to the issue on which there is a clear and unmistakable distinction between Conservative Members and Opposition Members. Opposition Members want a Welsh assembly or parliament; Conservative Members want neither. The Labour party wants this so-called "devolution" because it now realises that it is the natural party of opposition in the United Kingdom. It knows that the only chance it has of power is by dividing up the United Kingdom in a way that, in my view, would surely lead to its break-up.

In a television debate with me this morning for "Westminster Live", the hon. Member for Rhondda

[Mr. Rod Richards]

(Mr. Rogers)—I notice that he is not in his place, although he was active earlier—said that he wanted to see an independent Wales. I took that to be the policy of the Labour party. It is significant that the hon. Gentleman is an Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs. The Labour party lives in fear of the nationalists. After years of the Labour party dominating local government in south Wales, the ordinary people who voted for socialist principles now realise that they were sold short by the Labour party. The Labour party knows that the electorate are gradually being won over by the compelling case for Conservatism. In the meantime, there is the real risk to the Labour party that those people will defect in droves to the nationalists.

Mr. Dafis: How many Conservative members are there on local authorities in the Rhondda area?

Mr. Richards: As the hon. Gentleman knows, there is a tradition in Wales that members stand as independents. Very often they are Conservatives, very often they are nationalists, very often they are Liberals, but in my experience, most of the independents whom I know—there are many in Wales—are Conservatives.

Labour Members who campaigned ardently against an assembly in 1979 now say cynically that they are in favour of devolution. They call it devolution—the setting up of unitary authorities with an elected body to oversee them. Surely such a body would have powers of its own, thereby weakening the powers of the unitary authorities. That is not devolution of power, but centralising of power in Cardiff.

Labour would do that, although the only real test of public opinion was a referendum in 1979, when the people of Wales voted against devolution by 4:1. I do not believe that the people would vote differently now. The truth is, neither does Labour—which is why it has ruled out a referendum on this issue. Even if the Labour party formed a Government, it would have to implement its current policy, because it has ruled out a referendum.

One of the reasons why the people of Wales would reject, in a referendum, the assembly proposed by Labour is that—as Labour has made clear—such an assembly would have tax-raising powers. "No representation without taxation": that is the slogan of the Welsh Labour party conference. Perhaps the party should stick to the word "parliament", as opposed to "assembly"—as, of course, some do. I understand that the hon. Member for Neath, who seems to have left the Chamber, is one such person.

Is it any wonder that Labour Members have rejected the idea of a referendum? Imagine the question on the ballot paper: "Do you want to pay more tax—yes or no?" I suspect that the answer would be a resounding no. The other question is, what would the good people of Wales receive in recompense for that additional tax burden? One thing is certain—they would get a parliament costing an additional £50 million a year. What else would they get? No-redundancy guarantees, which would smother the free flow of workers, protection for lame-duck industries, and probably the opportunity to fund a few of them. A minimum wage, perhaps—now, there is the ultimate guarantee of greater unemployment. Legislation to give trade unions more power—why not? Labour has done it before, and will do it again.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Very subtle.

Mr. Richards: Absolutely. The hon. and learned Gentleman is listening for a change—and, indeed, he is present.

The unions would be given more power, so the flood of inward investment would dry up in Wales and emerge elsewhere. There would be more unemployment.

It is already possible to paint a picture of Wales under such a Labour Government and with such a parliament. The people would migrate to neighbouring England to escape the tax burden and find jobs; there would be a migration of talent such as we have not seen since the 1930s. In those days, when young men and their families boarded the trains at Cardiff, Swansea or Carmarthen, the cry would go out as the train left the station, "Never forget your Welsh." Well, the next generation of migrants will be able to call back, "Never forget your Welsh tax."

As if what I have already said were not enough to make people reject the concept of a tax-levying Welsh parliament, my constituents have even more to fear. A parliament in Cardiff would care little or nothing for north Wales—just as Labour cares little or nothing for it now. Labour cares only for its stronghold in the valleys. Seldom, if ever, does it venture into the north.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Has the hon. Gentleman been to Bridgend?

Mr. Richards: Will Opposition Members be quiet for a moment?

When we debated Welsh affairs on 3 March, I challenged the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) to tell us who and what he had visited in north Wales in his capacity as an Opposition spokesman on Wales. I note that he is not present now; I am sure, however, that my comments will be relayed to him. What was his response to my challenge? He scuttled across the Floor to huddle with his hon. Friends at the Bar of the House, like a frightened lamb. They were all gathered there like sheep in a thunderstorm, lacking leadership and lacking direction—all because of the truth about Labour party lackeys. Since that day, the hon. Members who gathered at the Bar of the House have been known throughout Wales as "the Bar-Baas".

It must be said that the nationalists are more honest about their demand for a Welsh parliament. They have at least been consistent. For them, the Welsh parliament is a stepping stone towards an independent Welsh republic. I understand from Plaid Cymru literature that that republic's head of state—its president—will be invested, or inaugurated, by the arch-druid himself. I have no doubt that that ceremonial occasion will bring tears to the eyes.

What would such a republican utopia hold for the people of Wales? Even more of the same, I fear. Inward investors and key workers might be required to learn Welsh by statute; the housing market might collapse because of planning restrictions and residential qualifications. I note that the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) is present; perhaps he would like to comment. I envisage an economy yearning for the good things of the 21st century, but not allowed to engage in any activity more robust or imaginative than the production of love spoons and trinkets. Would the hon. Gentleman care to comment on that? I see an economy managed by people who believe in seeking out subsidy and support from others, now and for ever, without the vision to perceive the productive potential and talent that we have in Wales.

Fortunately for the people of Wales, the Government have woken them from Labour's pipe dreams. The Government will create a structure of local government that will promote local democracy, reduce costs and duplication and deliver cost-effective local services, while retaining Wales's voice at Westminster and the integrity of the United Kingdom.

8.47 pm

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): I believe that I am the only former councillor to have spoken so far. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) will speak later; he, too, used to be a councillor. I bring a certain amount of experience to the debate—experience that was clearly lacking in the speech of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards).

Although many people in Pembrokeshire will welcome the fact that unitary authorities are on the horizon, the Bill contains an enormous flaw, or gulf, in that it includes no proposals for either an assembly or a parliament in Wales. I am interested to observe that the Minister of State, Welsh Office is not present—the reason being, of course, that he is out meeting his opposite number in not the Spanish but the Catalonian government. That is a regional government, to which—along with Alpes-Rhone, Lombardy and Baden-Wurttemberg, the Minister of State referred on 25 February, in an interview with Vincent Kane on "Welsh Lobby".

Let me quote from that interview. I am not being selective; the Minister made it very clear that he thought the four "motor regions" in Europe were operating wonderfully. He said that we should try to create a skilled work force in Wales and learn and benefit from the experience of those regional governments. The right hon. Gentleman said:

"We should rub shoulders with our betters, and we might get somewhere."

In the opinion of the Minister of State, regional government in Europe is an obvious success. I was interested in the comment of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), who claimed that the quangos in Wales are accountable to the Welsh Office. The sad fact is that had it not been for my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), as well as the Audit Commission and the Public Accounts Committee—not the Welsh Office—all the sleaze and corruption that has gone on in the quangos of Wales would not have been discovered. What faith can we have in the present regime in the Welsh Office when it cannot account for £200 million of public money? The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor talks about how wonderful the Welsh Office is and about forcing quangos to be accountable, but we cannot accept what he says.

Recently we had the so-called St. David's day debate on St. Winwaloe's day, which is two days after St. David's day. A great deal of that debate—in particular, the speech of the Secretary of State—concerned roads in Wales. This House is not the proper forum for such a discussion. Regional functions, such as a transport system, should be the responsibility of a regional government. Conservative Members refer constantly to the 1979 referendum. They say that there has been no real change in the political feelings of the Welsh people on the question of a Welsh assembly or parliament. That is not my experience—certainly not of Pembrokeshire, which is not known for particularly radical views and was fundamentally opposed in 1979 to the idea of a Welsh assembly.

Recently the *Western Telegraph*, which is the largest-selling weekly paper in Wales, carried an editorial referring to the Interreg funding, on which Dyfed is currently losing out. It said:

"The parts of Europe which have benefited most from EEC funding are those that have a regional parliament to fight on their behalf. Without our own regional parliament, and with even the small Welsh presence now in Brussels under threat, Wales will become increasingly marginalised, receiving only token representation by the single-minded English lobby."

That is what is happening at the moment. The Minister of State is talking to his counterpart in Catalonia, rather than lobbying in Brussels on behalf of Dyfed.

The whole thrust of this proposed legislation causes great concern throughout Wales, particularly when one reads views such as those expressed in another local paper in Pembrokeshire under the heading "The Conservative Column". Referring to Labour's plans for Health 2000, whose intention is to democratise the health service—again the Conservative view of more democracy—this paper said:

"Labour wants to reintroduce politics into the NHS by having local councillors play a prominent part in the running of the health service. Many of these councils do enough damage already within their own town halls, and they must not be allowed to get their hands on our health service."

The Minister of State, looking slightly tanned, is now in his place. It is good to see him back. I am sure that he had a very enlightening discussion with the regional government in Catalonia.

The views put forward in the column to which I have just referred are Conservative Members' true views, which dare not be spoken openly, as those Members know very well that they will never have an opportunity to take control of local government in Wales and will certainly have no opportunity to take control of a Welsh assembly or parliament.

There are two problems, particularly in relation to this legislation, and other hon. Members have referred to them. I highlight clause 22, which refers to the creation of joint boards for fire brigades. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor mentioned this matter. In fact, he referred to the wrong clause—23 instead of 22—but perhaps *Hansard* will fix that for him. The present arrangement, under which there are eight fire brigades in Wales, is an excellent one. Dyfed's fire brigade has a worldwide reputation following some of the fires that it fought in the refineries of Milford Haven. The proposal is that the Secretary of State, and not local representatives, may bring forward an order. If that is done before 1 April 1996 there will be no public inquiry.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Clause 23, which I quoted, refers to combination schemes involving fire services. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will withdraw his remark.

Mr. Ainger: Clause 23 refers to the police—*[Interruption.]* Not in my copy.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor spoke for 34 minutes, but did not give us his view of the plans for Brecon and Radnor. It is unacceptable that he should now interrupt a person who is speaking as quickly as possible so that other hon. Members may participate in the debate.

Were the Government truly concerned about democracy and local accountability, they would create a fire brigade with an area stretching from Swansea to the north of

[Mr. Ainger]

Powys, and from Aberystwyth right across to the English border, but only if the local people believed that that was the best policy for delivery of the service. There is no question but that local representatives totally oppose such a proposal. Not only that, but I am certain that it would be linked with the creation of only three police authorities in Wales. Hon. Members on both sides have mentioned the excellent performance of Dyfed-Powys police and of the Gwent police force, proving that small is efficient as well as beautiful.

It concerned me when Lord Hooson proposed an amendment in the other place that would give the Secretary of State power to introduce decentralisation proposals. At present in Tower Hamlets, if things go from bad to worse and two more fascist, British National party councillors are elected in the Isle of Dogs, £23 million of public money per annum will be under the control of three fascist councillors. I am not suggesting that fascists would ever be elected in Wales—I am certain that they would not—but trying to solve a problem in Powys by coming up with this concept of decentralisation may open up a can of worms that we may live to regret. It gives a great deal of power to a small number of people. They are not properly accountable and the system is not democratic. I urge the Secretary of State to reconsider that matter very seriously.

8.59 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): I begin by mourning the passing of county councils. We have not heard a great deal about that tonight, but county councils have done a superb job in many respects, and they have had some great officers serving in them. This is especially true of Mid Glamorgan where the officers have had to operate in extremely difficult economic circumstances, with a gross domestic product per capita of 64 in a British index of 100. It would have been an enormous task in any circumstances. Given also that they have had to operate under a flawed model for the past 20 years of overlapping responsibilities, of vague demarcation lines and so on, they have done sterling work, as have the rest of the county authorities in Wales.

The councils have carried out, in many respects, the strategic planning functions; functions which presumably will now be assumed by the so-called joint arrangements. As far as I can see, these are vague and nebulous bodies and have about as much credibility at the moment as the three-ring circus that met in Brussels last week—the Committee of the Regions. My constituents will ask who is to take the responsibility for strategic decision-making formerly taken by the county councils. They will ask a number of questions about this vagueness. They will want to know on what basis the Secretary of State for Wales decided that it was quite proper for Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent to become unitary authorities and did not allow Cynon valley, Rhondda and Taff-Ely the same right when they have bigger populations.

Even before today's announcement, there was mystification at the proposition that two authorities which were twins in so many ways, Torfaen and Taff-Ely, should have such different fates. I hate to say, and generosity of spirit prevents me from doing so seriously, that the Secretary of State is keeping Torfaen a separate entity from Monmouth or Monmouthshire because he wants to retain some chance of the Conservatives hanging on to that seat or of winning it in the future, whereas he seems to be consigning Taff-Ely, Rhondda valley and Cynon valley to a ghetto where people do not vote Tory anyway and are unlikely to do so in the future. These questions must be asked seriously.

Let me assume that the Secretary of State believes that Taff-Ely has as much right to remain a unitary authority as any of the others to which he has given independence today. I assume that he understands the logic of that. There can be no reason for it or, if there is, I have no idea what it is. I want to hear what he is going to come up with. I hope that he does not assume that by bolting on a relatively rich authority, Taff-Ely, to two authorities that face great economic and social problems, Rhondda and Cynon Valley, he will somehow ratchet up the GDP of those two local authorities so that their problems do not look as severe as they are at present. Does he think that if he links them with Taff-Ely, with the new industry along the M4 corridor, with the terrific, new, high-tech industries that are coming into Nantgarw and Llantrisant—only this week we learnt of 600 new jobs that may be coming in the Gooding/Grundig electronics venture—this will somehow solve the problems of Cynon valley and Rhondda valley?

That will not solve the problems any more than it will solve the problems faced at the northern end of Taff-Ely. They are severe structural problems which are being dealt with by district authorities which have a tradition of taking on such tasks and combining with private enterprise, the Welsh Development Agency and the Welsh Office to transform the local economies. In many ways, they have done a wonderful job and they do not need the kind of artificial arrangement being proposed.

For the Secretary of State's proposals to gain credibility and acceptance in Wales, people have to believe in the motives behind them. People who, like me, live in a borough such as Taff-Ely will have listened to what has been said today and said that what is good enough for Merthyr, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen is good enough for Taff-Ely.

Mr. Rogers: I do not entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is important for Cynon valley and the Rhondda to have access to areas which, as he said, are likely to offer development opportunities. He talks about bolting on the Rhondda valley and the Cynon valley to Taff-Ely, but I remind him that it was only about 20 years ago that a number of district councils were bolted together to make Taff-Ely. If it has worked for Taff-Ely, there is the possibility that the new authority will work. At any rate, that is what the Secretary of State is gambling on, although I disagree with that gamble.

Dr. Howells: I am sure that my hon. Friend makes a good point although I am not sure exactly what it is. I know that he believes that Rhondda wants unitary status as much as Taff-Ely, but what he said is true. Twenty years ago Taff-Ely was artificially created. It was the creation of a very rich authority—Llantrisant rural district council—and a traditional valley authority—Pontypridd urban district council. There is no question but that it took a long time for the two authorities to be brought together but they have pulled together very well. All of the indices show that we are making a success of it. I should hate that success to be stymied by a decision that will have long-term effects.

Taff-Ely is lucky in many ways: we have beautiful countryside and ready access to the M4 and we are on the A470. I am sorry that the Secretary of State is going to give the Pentyrch wards to Cardiff because, in order to attract more industry, we need executive housing and areas into which executives want to move. It is very important that our districts retain such assets but it appears that they are to be filched for whatever reason and given to Cardiff, North, Greater Cardiff or whatever one wants to call it. Incidentally, the House should remember that Labour has just won those wards, so one should not assume that it will be a soft touch for anyone else to win, especially not the present hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), the Under-Secretary of State.

In the past 20 years, the borough has forged itself into an entity that deserves respect—

Mr. Morgan: Pontypridd rugby team.

Dr. Howells: Indeed, Pontypridd is the best rugby team in Wales—

Mr. Morgan: Does my hon. Friend mean that they are forging tickets as well?

Dr. Howells: If my hon. Friend will wrap up for five minutes, I shall be able to continue.

Many mistakes were made in 1974 when the present model of local government was created. One of its strengths was the ability of local councils to provide a degree of strategic planning and service. Presumably, we are now creating a new structure that is supposed to last for at least 20 years, although I should think that the Secretary of State hopes that it will last even longer.

We cannot afford to make those kinds of mistakes again. They will be very expensive mistakes. I am sure that we shall lose the services of a great many professionals and executives and people who have served the county very well. Let us ensure that, when we create the unitary authorities, they are the right size, they have the right identity and they see themselves as viable entities for creating a new future for Wales.

9.9 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I shall underline and support the sentiments of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) about the work of county councils in Wales and especially that of Mid Glamorgan county council, which has done a sterling job under the most difficult of circumstances.

May I appeal again to the Secretary of State to consider his White Paper—it was not his to start with, but he has taken it over—in the context of the changes proposed for the boundary between Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan. Paragraph 1.4 of the White Paper "Local Government and Local People" said:

"The Government is committed to the creation of good Local Government which is close to the communities it serves. Its aims are to establish Authorities which, so far as possible, are based on that strong sense of community identity that is such an important feature of Welsh life; which are clearly accountable to local people; . . . The proposal set out in this White Paper will achieve those aims; they will establish new and innovative local Authorities, firmly-rooted in their communities and enjoying strong local support."

In paragraph 2.1, the Secretary of State said:

"Local Government is government for local people by local people. One of the objectives of re-organisation is to establish Authorities which, so far as possible, are based on a strong sense of community, evident in Welsh life."

In paragraph 3.1, which the Secretary of State repeated in a written answer to my question on 29 April 1993, the White Paper said:

"Local Authority boundaries should, as far as possible, reflect and strengthen existing community loyalties; and
local public services should be of high quality, and delivered efficiently, economically and effectively."

In that context, I want to remind the Secretary of State that there have been several tests of opinion in those three communities. First, there was a postal ballot, organised by Ogwr borough council. The result showed that 80 per cent. of people were in favour of staying with the Bridgend authority, from a turnout of almost 60 per cent.

There was also a business referendum for which half of the businesses returned their papers and showed that 84.5 per cent. wanted to stay with Bridgend. There were public meetings in each community, where 93.3 per cent. wanted to stay with Bridgend and only 2.5 per cent. expressed the vale as a preference.

A ballot was also organised by the Electoral Reform Society, in which almost 80 per cent. of Ewenny residents voted and 89.7 per cent. of them wanted to stay in Bridgend. Almost 75 per cent. of the residents of St. Bride's Major voted and 87.8 per cent. wanted to stay with Bridgend. In Wick, 74.6 per cent. of residents voted and 81.2 per cent. wanted to stay with Bridgend. That is a clear picture of the loyalties of those three communities.

On top of that, the Vale of Glamorgan borough council, in its own representations to the Secretary of State, said:

"The council would only support the inclusion of those additional communities if the proposal was supported by the majority of the people concerned."

They clearly do not support the proposal.

In letters to constituents and in letters to me, the Secretary of State's civil servants have said that the reason for the change is that the Vale of Glamorgan authority is more used to dealing with small, rural communities.

When I tabled a question asking the Secretary of State for Wales about the size of the communities in the Vale of Glamorgan, in Ogwr and in other parts of Wales, I was told that the information was not held centrally. So I could not understand how the Government had come to know that there were more small communities in the Vale of Glamorgan than in Ogwr.

I asked both borough councils to send me the information about their communities, and I found that in the Vale of Glamorgan there were seven communities of fewer than 4,000 people, but that in Ogwr there were 10. There were six small communities of a similar size to St. Bride's Major in Ogwr, but only one in the Vale of Glamorgan. So Ogwr borough council is more used to dealing with small communities than is the Vale of Glamorgan council.

Next I concentrated on the rural or agrarian nature of each borough. I contacted the planning departments of both the borough councils, and was told that 15.4 per cent. of the borough of Ogwr is designated for planning purposes as "built up", whereas 20 per cent. of the borough of the Vale of Glamorgan is so designated, so there is a greater percentage of rural areas in Ogwr than in the Vale of Glamorgan.

I accept that there can be different ways of defining rural as opposed to urban communities, but between 20 and 28 per cent. of councillors on the Vale of Glamorgan council and between 20 and 24 per cent. of those on the Ogwr council represent communities which are defined as rural, so there is virtually no difference between the two.

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

Employment in farming could also be a measure, and that is just under 1 per cent. in Ogwr and just over 1 per cent. in the Vale of Glamorgan. On all those criteria, there is little to choose between Ogwr and the Vale of Glamorgan. If anything, on the basis of the number of small communities, Ogwr has the stronger case.

I cannot understand why on earth the Secretary of State is not prepared to listen to what the local people say. I hope that even at this late stage he will be prepared to accept that the overwhelming majority of people in the three communities concerned, including their two borough councillors—both Conservative party members—are totally committed to keeping those communities in Ogwr.

In my remaining two minutes I shall deal with some of the general issues and the type of service that the Secretary of State's plans will provide. Some have been mentioned already, so I need not say much about them. First, it is clear that joint arrangements will lead to a second tier of local government that will be neither as clear nor as accountable as the present two-tier system. On that ground alone the proposals should be rejected.

As for the delivery of services, there are serious doubts everywhere about smaller authorities' ability to provide a comprehensive range of services such as special education services, and trading standards services. The trading standards people have asked for statutory provision to be made for combinations of authorities to deliver services. Organisations such as Children in Wales are concerned about issues in the interface between social services and health, such as reporting schemes for child abuse.

The reserve powers that the Bill will provide for the Secretary of State for Wales are enormous. That will mean centralisation into the Welsh Office. For all those reasons, it is clear that the Bill should be rejected, so I hope that our amendment will be accepted.

9.18 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The review of local government in Wales has been a shoddy and undemocratic process which reflects little credit on either the Secretary of State for Wales or his predecessor. It has left many communities perplexed and disillusioned. For a reorganisation to be successful, it must be based on sound principles of good and lasting government, on a cross-party consensus and on community support, not on plucking numbers out of the air, which is clearly what the Secretary of State has done. The Bill fulfils none of those criteria.

It is perhaps a sign of a dying and obsolete Government that they should choose to exercise their powers in a frantically dogmatic fashion and introduce legislation that puts decisions in the hands not of local people, democratically elected, but of a single Minister, whose governorship of Wales is neither respected nor wanted. The Secretary of State today mentioned the archives. I hope that he will be relegated to the archives of Wales as soon as is humanly possible.

Since the publication of the Bill, we have seen the Government's true agenda for local authorities in Wales. Far from creating progressive unitary authorities with powers to act, the Government are attempting to belittle the last vestige of democratic government in Wales. Ministers should take note that, despite all the odds, local authorities provide value-for-money services in Wales. We need no instructions from those responsible for the waste and inefficiency of unaccountable quangos, and from a Welsh Office that could lose £300 million. The "Charter for the Future", as the Secretary of State's predecessor ineptly called it, is a charter for the private sector and nothing more.

That a Conservative Secretary of State should seek to limit the powers and tie the hands of local government is no surprise or mystery. Last July, I criticised the lack of an independent commission to determine the issue. Such an organisation might have listened to evidence, undertaken extensive and proper research on opinions, and reached sound and lasting conclusions. Instead, we are faced with a map of Wales which provides neither community identity nor effective units of local government.

Faced with a lack of any independent organisation, councillors in Cynon Valley commissioned a poll which showed that 66 per cent. of people questioned supported the retention of an authority that was based on current borders. Virtually no one wished there to be an amalgamation with the Rhondda and Taff-Ely authorities —and I mean no disrespect to my hon. Friends.

In addition to that poll, hundreds of people attended public meetings in Cynon Valley and supported the council's bid to become a unitary authority. I draw the Secretary of State's attention once again to a map produced by his predecessor entitled "Local Government—the way ahead." If he looks at it, he will note that Cynon Valley is clearly marked as a single unitary authority. Only 12 months later, a White Paper proposed the unlikely amalgamation to which I referred. What rationale was employed in making the radical change from a self-contained community of 60,000 people to an authority of 240,000 people?

Independent academic research by the Centre for Advanced Urban Studies in Bristol emphasised the futility of arranged marriages between distinct valley communities. It stated:

> "Unitary options based on the amalgamation of two or three Valley authorities fail, on the grounds that they lack local responsiveness and do not generate any scale or specialisation advantages in service planning and provision. Such authorities would be characterised by divided, rather than locally united, civic leadership".

In addition to the evidence of unanimous public meetings and opinion research, a 10,000-signature petition was raised and presented at the Welsh Office by a large delegation from Cynon Valley.

The Secretary of State is offering us the potential for a confusing two-tier set up and for Welsh Office manipulation and priority setting. The opportunity to give councils the ability to effect social and economic change is denied. Fewer councillors will deliver fewer services in authorities that are dictated to by a central Government bureaucracy that has little knowledge or understanding of local affairs or priorities. I hope that I do not need to remind the Secretary of State that the economy of the Cynon Valley is in a fragile, if not critical, state, thanks to him and his Government.

The only motor for substantial change—the local council—is to be disbanded and relocated elsewhere. I only hope that the Secretary of State will explain to the people of Cynon Valley his reasons for replacing popular, effective councils with the sort of weak, unwieldy and hamstrung authority that the Bill seeks to create.

9.24 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): As my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) said, 22 years ago the House considered a Bill to reform local government which then, as now, was imposed by a Conservative Government on an unwilling Wales. What my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) said should be repeated: we should remember the county councils, which are by far the losers in this reform, as the providers of education, social services, the fire service and the police. Since those councils were created in 1888, a great number of Welsh people have benefited from what they have done.

The House should realise that my hon. Friends the Members for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and my hon. Friends the Members for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) were all members of local authorities 22 years ago when that reform came into operation, as I believe was the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales, as a member of the Oxfordshire county council. They will recall that all those years ago the cost and the upheaval of reform, as it was called, was much greater than Ministers predicted.

This time, the costs for local government reorganisation are grossly underestimated. Anywhere between £100 million and £150 million is the likely cost. The county councils say that the transitional costs will be something like £200 million over the period. When we bear in mind the fact that redundancies alone could cost anywhere between £50 million and £90 million, what will happen to our redundant offices, whether they be county halls or town halls? We already know that the estimate for changes in information technology has doubled to nearly £14 million for the whole of Wales.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) and the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) rightly asked where the money will come from. How will we pay for the reforms? There is nothing in the White Paper, little in the Bill and nothing in ministerial statements to tell us how the reorganisation will be financed. I suspect, as do many of my hon. Friends, that the reorganisation will be funded by cuts in the services that our local authorities provide for the people of Wales. When we bear it in mind that only a few weeks ago the Secretary of State introduced a revenue support grant settlement which will mean huge cuts in education, housing, roads and other services across Wales, we understand that Wales simply cannot afford the cost of this reorganisation.

The Bill does not address the problem of Welsh local government finance. It is not a question whether there should be rates. The system of grant allocation clearly needs to be examined, capping is universally unpopular, and there is a gearing problem in local government finance. However, none of those matters is addressed by the Bill. Nor does it address what the districts call the "burgeoning quangocracy" in Wales. The Bill ignores completely the growing concern about the lack of proper accountability of the unelected quangos in Wales. I believe that if the Bill had been called a Quango (Wales) Bill, it would have been much more popular in the hills and the valleys of Wales than the Local Government (Wales) Bill.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon and my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd all mentioned the question of government at an all-Wales level. There is growing support in Wales for a Welsh assembly. That is not just a reaction to 15 years of Conservative government, although it is a good enough reason. There is a genuine need for strategic decisions to be taken on an all-Wales basis. The main difference between what the Bill will do and what the creation of an assembly together with our local authorities would do is that we are talking about more elected representatives of the Welsh people taking decisions. The Bill reduces the number of people who are elected in Wales, and that cannot be good for democracy.

The absence of an assembly and the abolition of the counties means, as my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd pointed out, that there will be many joint boards and joint arrangements, about which the Bill is unclear. The Council of Welsh County Councils said recently that the Bill will introduce a second tier, which will be obscure in its operations and unaccountable to the person in the street. Local government will be one step further removed and accountability will be blurred as a consequence of joint arrangements.

All the services that the counties now provide, together with some which the districts provide, must deal with joint arrangements. Libraries, museums, planning, social services, highways, transport, magistrates courts, fire services and trading standards are to be subject to what the White Paper calls vaguely "joint arrangements".

The worst affected area, as my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly and the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) said, will of course be education. What will happen to county drama services, county youth orchestras, outdoor pursuits, the child psychology service, curriculum advice and special education? We are concerned about those areas, and we are rightly concerned about the creation of 21 local education authorities.

The Secretary of State has been sent letters from the Welsh Association for the Performing Arts and from Gwent's visually impaired children taking action group. They are concerned about the effects of so-called joint arrangements on the delivery of vital services for the education of our children. Many have doubts whether the Government are really serious about the new unitary authorities becoming education authorities. It was only at the very latest stage in the other place that the Government introduced a new clause which mentioned education at all.

The Minister of State went around Wales a number of months ago and told schools and head teachers to opt out of local education authority control, because they would not know what the future will bring as a result of unitary authorities. However, these are the Government's unitary authorities. They are their creations and either they believe that the authorities are proper LEAs or they do not.

What the district councils have said is absolutely right and the Government should suspend the opting out of schools in Wales until the reorganisation is complete.

One former director of education recently wrote to the *Western Mail* about the omission of education from the Bill. He said that it was a

"brutal insult to a century of Welsh tradition. Cllr Ferguson-Jones, the Conservative leader of the city of Cardiff council in the 70s, and always proud of the city's schools, would

[Mr. Paul Murphy]

have found a salty, maritime word to describe this arrogant Bill". The Government have tried to appease, and the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) has introduced what has been called the "Powys model". I am not quite sure what the hon. Gentleman wants for his area, but if it is the status quo he should say so. Opposition Members are concerned about the area committees. They will lead to a confused relationship among health authorities, housing associations, police authorities and, of course, the electorate. The districts have said that they will lead to a confused, inefficient, chaotic, unaccountable, unco-ordinated two-tier system. They are absolutely right.

It was particularly interesting that when the Secretary of State was asked this afternoon about the financing of the area committees he was not sure, but could come up with something. Like Mr. Micawber, he believed that something would turn up. We have to be much more definite about how the area committees will work, who will pay for them, what money they will control and where the money will come from. There was not a word about that in the White Paper and certainly there has been nothing since. We look forward to the Committee stage so that we can question the Secretary of State and his Ministers about how the committees will be financed.

The Secretary of State complained that we had argued that he was increasing his powers. But he is increasing them. He will have more powers affecting the direct provision of services, privatisation and joint arrangements. There is no question but that the Bill is a centralising measure. The Prime Minister talked at Question Time this afternoon about the Labour party being a centralising party. Yet the Bill is all about the centralisation of Welsh local government.

Opposition Members believe that councils should be, as well as enablers, providers of services. The Government see authorities in terms of management and service delivery, but they are more than businesses. They are proper, elected, accountable representatives of communities. Local government is a pillar of any democratic system and it should be able to speak out on behalf of a community. We believe that that is right. That is why we are worried that there is little in the Bill or in the White Paper about the role of members of local authorities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly rightly compared the number of councillors, even with the increase, with the number of members of quangos. There will be 1,200 councillors compared with 1,400 members of various quangos and advisory bodies. Not all those 1,400 members are appointed by the Secretary of State. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] No, they will not all be appointed by the Secretary of State—I understand that. Nevertheless, they serve on bodies that are not elected. The purpose of democracy is to elect people to take decisions on one's behalf.

There is a need to encourage council membership from a wide cross-section of the community. There is nothing in the Bill to review the wholly inadequate system of remuneration for members of local authorities. There is nothing in the Bill to review the restrictions placed on the staff of a council in participating in local democracy. Unless that is altered, after the creation of the unitary authorities, 10 per cent. of the working population of Wales will be debarred from holding local public office.

There is no real consensus for the Bill in Wales, even though the Government have argued for months that there is. There is a consensus for unitary authorities, but that is a world away from saying that the type of unitary authorities that are encapsulated in the Bill is what people in Wales want. The Confederation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress are together in their opposition to the Bill. Some of the districts, all the counties, all the political parties, except the Conservative party—even it is split in different parts of Wales—and the vast majority of Members of Parliament who represent Welsh constituencies oppose the Bill.

Wales has a proud history of local democracy. Even Conservative Secretaries of State have said that Welsh local authorities are responsible and proper bodies. The Bill undermines the effectiveness of Welsh local government. Every Act affecting local authorities introduced by the Government in the past few years—there have been 150 of them—has increased the powers of central Government and weakened local government. Every grant settlement in Wales in those 15 years has robbed our councils of necessary resources and tightened the grip of the Welsh Office over all Welsh local authorities. The result has been a scandalous democratic deficit in a country which is proud of its history of fighting for democratic rights. The Bill blurs accountability, with its joint boards and lead authorities. It fails to address the problems of an over-complex and unfair system of local government finance, it does nothing to satisfy the Welsh people's worries about the growing number of quangos in Wales and it ignores the obvious need for an all-Wales democratic body. In fact, it is a bad Bill. It is bad for democracy and bad for Wales. The House should reject it.

9.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): I am glad to have the opportunity of following the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy)—as he acknowledged, one former councillor following another former councillor—as we debate this great step forward in reorganising local government in Wales.

We can fairly say that it has been a good debate—an even-tempered one. There have been constructive contributions from my hon. Friends, and even some penetrating questions from my hon. Friends the Members for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) and for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), to which I shall refer later. A breadth that does not always characterise debates on Welsh affairs was provided by my hon. Friends the Members for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan).

However, there was a more mixed contribution from Opposition Members. It was no small delight to hear from the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). He again confirms that he is probably the most effective voice on the Opposition Benches, but his anti-European credentials ensure that he stays on the Back Benches.

It was with nostalgia that I heard the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris). Obviously the spectre of the elephant still looms so large in his mind that he, diplomatically, does not want to discuss the Welsh assembly.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) made the usual disappointing contribution. He could not take every

intervention; he could not give answers. Perhaps he had not read his speech—he did not know what had been written for him to say. There were some matters about which he could not give a response to earlier interventions. He had not thought them out. My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor pursued him about his attitude towards the county councils; he could not answer. Then, when he was drawn out, he said that he was thinking about 25 to 30 councils. What vagueness to offer at this stage in the debating of the reorganisation of local government in Wales! The closest he can get to it is give or take five or six councils in Wales.

Inevitably, the hon. Member for Caerphilly made the token references to a Welsh assembly as the answer to everything. Amazingly, there was no reference to the costs that a Welsh assembly would add to the burden of all the taxpayers in Wales, in addition to the costs of the increase to 25 or to 30 councils—however many the hon. Gentleman might conjure up on the back of an envelope. My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) mentioned the absence of a reference to that in the reasoned amendment.

It was no surprise that the hon. Member for Caerphilly confessed that he had written the reasoned amendment. My only surprise was that he managed to obtain the signature of the lone Liberal in Wales and the four Welsh nationalists. We are well aware how apprehensive the Labour party has been, in the valleys in south Wales, about the Welsh nationalist party breathing down its neck. Now that very poorly worded reasoned amendment can be waved at the voters in the forthcoming elections in Wales, and it can be said, "There is no difference between the Opposition parties; they all sign up to the same thing."

The reasoned amendment says that the Bill will concentrate further power in the hands of the Secretary of State for Wales—untrue. It says that the Bill

"abolishes a democratic tier of local government in favour of joint boards"

— untrue. It says that the Bill

"threatens to undermine the viability of local services"

— untrue. It says that the Bill

"provides opportunities for further privatisation".

If competitive tendering means that, local government reorganisation delays that coming about. Then the amendment criticises the

"creation of even more Welsh quangos,"

but the hon. Member for Caerphilly welcomed one of those —the Staff Commission for Wales—and I am glad to have his welcome for that. The amendment says that the Government have done nothing to improve local government finance. We did that last year. The amendment suggests that the Welsh people will pay more, in spite of the even greater cost of the unthought-out version of local government reorganisation that the hon. Gentleman would foist on us.

In all those tensions, I enjoyed the references of the hon. Member for Caerphilly to the discussions that he has had with Councillor Graham Powell of Gwent and Councillor Harry Jones of Newport. It must have been in one of those smoke-filled rooms at a Labour party conference. I hope that I am never drawn into anything like that.

As well as the hon. Member for Caerphilly's welcome for the Staff Commission, I am grateful for his welcome of the Secretary of State's announcement about new councils for Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent and of the reassurance that my right hon. Friend sought to offer staff working for local government in Wales.

Many hon. Members asked about my right hon. Friend's powers under the Bill. Parts II and III contain no major new centralising powers for the Secretary of State. The reserve powers in clauses 29 to 31 are strictly time-limited to 31 March 1999. A safeguard against a possible breakdown in services is necessary, as was recognised in the debate in another place on archives, for example, but we hope that there will be no need to use them. We have said that we are happy to debate the details in Committee.

Most of the other new powers of the Secretary of State offer local authorities new opportunities. Clause 25 deals with cross-border trading; clauses 32 and 33 deal with experiments in decision making; and clauses 27 and 28 are about decentralisation schemes. Because of the continuous attempts to suggest that those are centralising powers with the Secretary of State, I shall go through them and show that the contrary is true. Clause 17 simply interprets or makes minor amendments to existing legislation and clause 18 introduces no new powers.

Clause 19 contains a power to establish joint planning boards. It replicates an existing power and is to be used to establish joint national parks boards. Clause 20 amends the planning legislation to take account of unitary authorities and contains powers comparable to those in existing legislation. Clauses 21 and 22 contain no new powers; clause 23 largely replicates existing powers; and clause 24 deals with the fire and police services.

Clause 25 provides a new power for local authorities for cross-border trading. My right hon. Friend's powers are designed simply to limit the potential extent of that new power. The clause empowers unitary authorities to provide services to each other. I should have thought that the Opposition would welcome an extension of local authority powers. The clause enables authorities to sell specialist services to each other in areas such as education, trading standards, social services and environmental health.

Mr. Murphy: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jones: I am afraid that I do not have time.

The Government do not think that clause 25 should be available for services subject to compulsory competitive tendering, such as refuse collection or school catering. Nor should it be available for those parts of legal or financial services that are to become subject to competitive tendering. The private sector is available to take on the financial risks of providing those services where authorities do not provide them themselves.

We should be willing to consider proposals that would enable authorities to trade in the full range of services if they would protect the position of council tax payers in the providing authority's area. That offer remains open. The clause is not about privatisation but about authorities providing services to each other.

Mr. Murphy: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jones: No. The hon. Gentleman was not interrupted and I must press on.

Clause 26 merely provides guidance on service delivery plans. Clauses 27 and 28 are about decentralisation schemes. My right hon. Friend's powers there are the minimum required to provide the guarantee. They can be invoked only when enough local members ask him to

[Mr. Jones]

exercise them. Clauses 29 to 31 deal with the reserve powers that I have already described. Clauses 32 and 33 deal with the experimental power that adds to local authorities' existing decision-making procedures following a request from an individual authority. It is right that my right hon. Friend and Parliament should have a role in that.

I wish to deal with all the questions that have been raised. My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor asked about clause 24 and the police. The clause simply preserves the status quo. A similar provision exists in the 1992 Act. The Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill in the other place may overtake that provision. He also asked about fire authorities, which are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. Service delivery will be protected and the proposals are designed to improve services.

On staffing matters, the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) asked us to reconsider our view of frustration of contracts and to announce compensation proposals. My right hon. Friend announced this afternoon that the Government would be looking again at clause 44, which deals with redundancy payments, to reassure staff that they would have full rights under employment protection legislation. So we are doing what the hon. Gentleman asks.

The Government will finalise their compensation proposals in the autumn and we shall consult before then. We shall consider all the views put to us about compensation, including those of the English Staff Commission and the Local Government Management Board for Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth asked about "Monmouthshire Council". I am certainly prepared to consider my hon. Friend's suggestion. He might like to pursue that in Committee.

As for consultation with community councillors, the power in clause 14 is permissive, enabling my right hon. Friend to intervene if unitary authorities are not consulting communities. If he makes an order, he may make exceptions to permit speedy action.

As for the experimental powers, it is open to new authorities to come forward with new ideas for the political management of the authority. We retain an open mind on such proposals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth asked about the Welsh Church Act funds. We have no plans to review their purpose outside the scope of the Bill. We are willing to consider my hon. Friend's suggestion about the operative date for control on disposals. Finally, he asked whether the Bill would create new Lord Lieutenancies. Yes, there is a power in clauses 58 and 59 to permit the creation of new Lord Lieutenancies, but we have no plans to use those powers at present.

There was the warmest of welcomes when my right hon. Friend announced this afternoon that he would amend the proposals to create new councils for Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent. That was welcomed particularly by the hon. Members for those constituencies. However, I fail to understand the construction that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) placed on that announcement. It was more like sour grapes when he tried to allege that our motivation for changing the boundaries was gerrymandering. I marvel at the breadth of the hon. and learned Gentleman's imagination if he thinks that the proposals for Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent were made on the basis that we are confident of winning those seats. We have no more than reasonable expectations in those constituencies.

I acknowledge that good cases have been made today and previously for differing forms of boundaries in Wales. The hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) cited the support of the local Conservative party in favour of the case that he was advocating. That was also true for Llanelli, where the local Conservative party has been to the fore. As the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery said, his noble Friend Lord Hooson said that nobody has been more assiduous in fighting the cause of Montgomeryshire than the Montgomeryshire Conservative association.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon referred to the position of Port Talbot. I rather thought it was an echo of my right hon. Friend Lord Howe, who made the same case in the other place on behalf of Port Talbot.

I was struck to hear the converse when I met representatives of Llanelli, who were arguing their case for being a unitary authority, but went on to suggest that if they had to be linked with anyone, they did not want to be linked with Carmarthen, but preferred to be linked with Swansea. They advocated as a reason for being linked with Swansea that Llanelli and Swansea rugby teams could be linked as easily as those of Neath and Aberavon. That seemed to substantiate what we are doing there. I rush to agree with the right hon. Member for Llanelli in his expectation of victory at Twickenham on Saturday—something which ought to unite us all.

I wish also to acknowledge the arguments similarly made by the hon. Members for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), and for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd). As the hon. Member for Meirionnydd and Nant Conwy reminded us, I had the opportunity of meeting him when he brought his council to discuss this matter.

The arguments of all those Members, not least that of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd and Nant Conwy, are not insubstantial. I recollect that his council said that by first choice it preferred to be a unitary authority, but if it had to be linked with anyone, it wished to be linked with Montgomery.

My hon. Friends the Members for Brecon and Radnor, for Bromsgrove and for Rutland and Melton made the point well that there is no template for a reorganisation of local government in Wales. It is a matter of trying to arrive at the best judgment for each part in Wales, trying to determine councils where, as far as possible, the boundaries strengthen and reflect existing community loyalties, while providing local public services, ideally of the highest possible quality, efficiently, effectively and economically.

The greatest apprehensions were expressed about Powys and Meirionnydd. Following the statement on 3 March 1992, we listened carefully to the arguments on numbers, most obviously to the view of the Assembly of Welsh Counties that there should be fewer larger authorities. That led us to look closely at all the pre-White Paper proposals for authorities that had particularly small populations. Montgomeryshire, with only 54,000, and Meirionnydd, with only 32,000, failed that test. We could not be satisfied that such a sparsely populated authority could be relied on to manage the provision of local services efficiently. We recognise that Montgomeryshire and a

number of the other areas mentioned today would have a case for unitary status if community loyalty were the sole criterion. To take account of that, we introduced in the Bill our proposals for the decentralisation schemes.

I am confident that we have come forward with the right structure, particularly for Powys, Caernarfonshire, Meirionnydd and the other 20 councils that we brought forward, including the three communities in the Vale of Glamorgan that were mentioned by the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). I believe that, with the added dimension of the area committees, we will provide exactly the right combination for taking forward local government in Wales.

We have not only been looking forward in Wales today. Some hon. Members have insisted on living in the past. As my hon. Friends the Members for Brecon and Radnor and for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) reminded us, some are harking back to 1979, when Wales voted 4:1 against the setting up of a Welsh assembly. What has changed since then? I know that an opinion poll has claimed that 45 per cent. might now be in favour of a Welsh assembly, but that is fewer than half the people of Wales and, if measured by those who say that they would vote for the Opposition parties, it is only about half the people who would vote for them. The other half are yet to be convinced. I doubt whether they will be.

It can be no surprise to anyone that the Opposition parties refuse to have a referendum on the subject. But I feel that the line is not holding. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery said that he would not be opposed, as did the right hon. Member for Llanelli. That proposal would be the first break up in the United Kingdom and no responsible political party could put such a major constitutional change forward without allowing the people of Wales to have a say in a referendum.

I feel that the time has come for us to press on with this important and right reorganisation of local government in Wales. I feel that this is where I came in, because 25 years ago this year I was elected to Cardiff city council, a pre-reorganisation council. I can even claim that I predate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State; mention was made of his being a councillor, but that was of a reorganised council. He was not only a member of his county council but a committee chairman.

My right hon. Friend described what we are doing here as a renaissance for local government in Wales. I fully endorse what he said. I think that the Second Reading will give us the first stage of real devolution—the way forward. That is what Wales wants, and that is what Wales should have.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 285, Noes 313.

Division No. 166] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*

Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. John Spellar.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve

Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading): —

The House divided: Ayes 313, Noes 285.

Division No. 167] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patrick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*

Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'ld'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. John Spellar.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Local Government (Wales) Bill [*Lords*] [*Money*]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Local Government (Wales) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by any Minister of the Crown under that Act;

(b) any increase attributable to the provisions of that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment; and

(c) the making of payments into the Consolidated Fund. —*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10.27 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It will be helpful if the Minister accounts to the House for the extraordinary money resolution before us. As a House of Commons we authorise Ministers to make expenditure, and, as usual, the resolution is couched in very general terms.

I shall link the general resolution with the explanation entitled

"*Financial effects of the Bill*"

in the explanatory and financial memorandum. We are giving the Secretary of State unlimited authorisation, but the limitation—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I am having great difficulty in hearing what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Will the House settle down? If hon. Members beyond the Bar want to hold committee meetings, will they please do so outside?

Mr. Cryer: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The money resolution is important because it covers taxation revenue, so we should have a look at it. As I was saying, its terms are unlimited. It simply authorises the Secretary of State to pay money for

"any expenses incurred by any Minister of the Crown under that Act;

. . . any increase attributable to the provisions of that Act . . . and

. . . the making of payments"—

that is, payments received under the terms of the legislation—

"into the Consolidated Fund."

The explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill qualifies the costs of putting the legislation into action, saying that they are

"estimated . . . to be between £65 million and £150 million over 15 years."

That estimate is based on a report prepared by outside consultants, who often have grand titles but, by and large, are guessing. They call them carefully calculated estimates, but they are guessing the amount of expenditure that will be involved. There are examples of previous Conservative Governments doing similar guesswork.

I want the Minister to assure me that the costs mentioned in the Bill and authorised by the money resolution will not be as extravagantly inaccurate as they were for the Local Government Act 1972, which applied to the United Kingdom and not to Wales alone.

I recall that a report, which became known as the Baines report, claimed that, for modest expenditure, local government could make huge savings through efficiency. The report recommended larger, often unitary structures and some two-tier structures in metropolitan areas. High salaries would be paid to chief executives—there would no

[Mr. Cryer]

longer be town clerks—and municipal boroughs, urban district councils and rural district councils would all be swept to one side.

Such arguments are not so far removed from those adduced for the Bill. It is claimed that, because some councils will be swept into oblivion, it will be easier for businesses to deal with the new authorities and they will therefore be cheaper to run. That was the argument contained in the Baines report in 1971. What happened? First, much more compensation had to be paid than was forecast when the 1971 Act was at the same stage as this Bill. Town clerks with years of service were retired with golden handshakes that cost an enormous amount of money. Reorganising local authorities proved much more expensive than had been calculated and the greater efficiencies claimed for the new system did not result. Local government became more expensive and not less.

The paragraph that details the Bill's effect on public sector manpower implies that there will be savings in public expenditure—a cost related to the money resolution —by virtue of a reduction in staffing levels, due to the abolition of local authorities. That was precisely what was claimed in 1971.

The Baines report, with all the weight of Government support, was supposed to create a new era of local government efficiency. Hosts of perfectly decent local authorities, which it had taken more than 100 years to build up, were shovelled to one side by larger units—by what the then Government claimed were the new super-efficient, super-organisations, but it was not true. Pay-offs for senior local government officials were highly expensive and the salaries of the new chief executives were astronomical. The system was based on the style of corporations, which were the private enterprise basis for the Baines report and subsequent local government reorganisation.

The huge, sprawling local authorities, which were often of a unitary pattern, were highly expensive and the claimed savings never materialised. The local government pattern that the Government are changing now is that established by previous Conservative Governments.

The Government's argument for the need to reorganise is that local authorities are not efficient. If they are not efficient, I point out that it was the Government's claims about efficiency which produced the legislation in the first place. If it is the same people with the same philosophy who are putting the ideas forward now, it is reasonable for hon. Members to say that our experience does not show that the claims—in this case, it is expenditure of between £65 million and £150 million on transitional costs over 15 years—are soundly based.

I know what the Minister will say. He will say that the Government had consultants. That is the growth area today. The Government do not make any decisions; they get consultants for some astronomical sum—many thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of pounds—

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): And Tory Members of Parliament on the board.

Mr. Cryer: —with Tory Members of Parliament on the board. There are Tories with their snouts in the trough, and they call themselves public consultants.

I want the Minister to accept that, when decisions are made, even on the basis of outside recommendations and outside consultancies, he takes the can. He makes the decision and he reads the report to decide whether it is valid. The Government may pay the bill for the consultation, but at the end of the day the Minister makes the decision. It is no answer for him to say, in this modest debate, that the Government employed an independent body to make an assessment. He has enough civil servants in his Department to make his own estimate, which is necessary to judge whether the outside consultants have earned their money. That is our first point. We want to know what estimate his Department has made of the costs of the transitional arrangements being

"between £65 million and £150 million over 15 years."

Secondly, in the past there have been so many changes since the Local Government Act 1972, which established the altered system of local government, because of the mistakes that were made then that we cannot be confident that in asking for wide powers in the money resolution the Minister is soundly based in his judgment that we will not go down exactly the same road once again. We have had a change of local government and vast claims about efficiency and savings, and we have got rid of a tier of government, yet at the end of the day we will have more inefficiency because the Government are like some renegade Trotskyist outfit—they cannot leave things alone. They must get their hands on every aspect of life. Even when things are running well, they must get their mad hands on everything in sight.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): With my hon. Friend's expertise and knowledge of money resolutions, could he explain whether the Secretary of State—the Secretary of State did not enlighten Welsh Members today as to the financial structure of local government—could impose a poll tax on the people of Wales? The Secretary of State was a great supporter of the poll tax until it was thrown out.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right to raise that important point. Of course, my task tonight is to keep within the terms of the money resolution—to go wider would invite criticism. My experience is that Deputy Speakers wish to allow the proper debate of money resolutions, but to go much wider calls on their patience, so I shall confine my remarks to the terms of the money resolution. I am concerned that Labour Members are the guardians of taxpayers' money. That is the bottom of it.

The Government are getting their hands on every aspect of our institutions. It is amazing that we are debating a money resolution which gives the Secretary of State the power to spend money on changing institutions in Wales, yet the Chief Secretary made a speech in which he said that there is an attack on institutions in an age of cynicism which is corroding the fabric of social life in the country. There are many criticisms of our existing institutions. That is exactly what the Secretary of State for Wales, and every other Secretary of State, is doing: every institution is under attack—not from the people at large, but from the Government.

The money resolution in effect gives the Secretary of State authority to spend up to £150 million on changing the local government organisation of Wales, irrespective of the views of the people of Wales as to whether they think it to be of advantage. There will be no local referendums or local polls. I have always taken the view that there should be local consultation on democratic issues. That has always been shrugged off by the Government, just as they shrugged off—this is by way of explanation, Mr. Deputy

Speaker—the calls for a referendum on the Maastricht treaty. We ought to have had such a referendum, but I am not going any further down that road. It is not quite within the terms of the money resolution, and I want to stick to those.

The Secretary of State has an explanation to give to the House tonight. We are the guardians of the taxpayers' money, and we do not agree with the sum of £150 million. The House must bear in mind that, on experience, it will not be £150 million. There is no legislation, by the way. That £150 million is not the limiting factor on the money resolution, which is unquantified. The £150 million is merely a figure to convince the House that the money resolution should go through.

The total could be £300 million and, frankly, had the money resolution not been debated, there would have been nothing on the record anyhow. If in 10 years' time the cost was £1 billion and going up, the Secretary of State could not check *Hansard* to see what claims and assurances he gave to the House.

I debate the money resolution because it gives an opportunity to the Secretary of State, who claims that he is concerned about public expenditure, to give an assurance to the House that the figure of £150 million is absolutely the top figure which will not be exceeded. We could then hold him to task in a couple of years, because that is all the time he has got until the next general election. He will then be out with a lot more Tories, and we will have a Labour Government who are concerned with controlling and holding to account the revenue from the taxpayer.

We hold that revenue dear because we represent working people, and we know what it takes for them to raise the funds to pay their tax bills. That is why this debate is important; and I know that some of my hon. Friends wish to speak in this debate. We are holding the Secretary of State to account. Many people in Parliament and outside say that the Executive gets away with too much, and this money resolution is an example of that. There are no figures or limitations—just an indication on the financial effects of the Bill. The figures have no legal binding effect on the Secretary of State, so he can, if he wants, go beyond £150 million without any recourse to the House. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman is prepared to give the House a comprehensive explanation of the money resolution.

10.43 pm

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): I did not intend to speak to the money resolution, but having sat through the debate today let me say that there are several questions which need to be raised with regard to the financial effects of the Bill. As an hon. Member representing a Welsh constituency, I remember vividly only a few months ago voting on the rate support grant settlement for Wales. Throughout my constituency and Clwyd, massive cuts had been made in spending by local authorities in Wales. Yet tonight we are debating a money resolution which promises expenditure of between £65 million and £150 million in 15 years.

That will be offset from April 1996 by continued savings in public spending, presumably from local councils which have already had cuts imposed on them through the rate support grant settlement which came before the House earlier this year. If my county of Clwyd had its share—one eighth of that £65 million to £150 million—it would find itself in a different situation. Last year, Clwyd's rate support grant was cut by some £12 million, and this year the cut is £11 million.

It is not possible to continue to reduce rate support grant to councils such as Clwyd without its having a serious effect on services. How can we find £65 million to £150 million for the cost of reorganisation when we cannot find money to provide a decent level of services elsewhere? I could list a thousand and one examples of how the money for reorganisation could be spent more effectively in Clwyd and elsewhere in Wales on promoting services rather than changing the organisation.

Several examples will suffice; I shall not detain the House by listing many. Only today further news came through from my constituency and county of the potential loss of some 200 teachers from the education system. Only yesterday in my constituency at Ysgol Maes Garmon the pupils staged a demonstration about the loss of six teachers at the school as a result of a loss of rate support grant.

Can the Minister justify to the House the £65 million to £150 million expenditure in the next 15 years when we face reductions in the level of public spending through rate support grant to local councils such as mine in Clwyd? How does the Minister envisage—this is a serious point—that the savings from April 1996 will be offset by continued savings in public spending? How will the savings be made? Will it be simply a question of losing staff? Will services be lost? How does he anticipate that local government will balance out in Wales in view of the potential in the Bill for further cuts in public spending?

The precise level of the savings will depend on decisions taken by the new councils on matters such as staffing levels and management structures. I can accept that with the decency with which I am sure it has been put into the Bill, but what strictures will the Secretary of State impose on councils when considering such matters? It is one thing to put in the Bill the bland statement

"The eventual figure will depend on decisions to be taken by the new councils",

but we do not know as yet what rate capping regimes will be in place for the new councils, what directions the Secretary of State may give them, or what rate support grant they will have. The £65 million to £150 million transitional cost will have to come from somewhere. Will it come out of next year's rate support grant settlement, or the settlement the year after? Those questions need to be answered this evening.

There has been a lot of discussion this evening about the establishment of a Welsh assembly or a Welsh parliament. Let us bear it in mind that 32 of the 38 Members of Parliament who represent seats in Wales have argued for a Welsh assembly and signed the amendment that was defeated this evening in the House. One argument that the Secretary of State and Conservative Members have made concerns the cost of implementing the proposal for a Welsh assembly. According to figures which Opposition Members dispute but which the Secretary of State and Conservative Members have suggested this evening, it would cost some £50 million.

If it is possible to spend £65 million to £150 million on transitional costs, is not it possible to find the resources, if needed, to establish democratic control over the many quangos in Wales which spend millions of pounds of taxpayers' money? Already we have said this evening that millions upon millions of pounds are spent on quangos. There are additional costs in the form of salaries for many

[Mr. David Hanson]

members, including some in my constituency who bring home £60,000 a year plus from serving on quangos. If the money can be found for that activity, cannot the money that is being earmarked today be made available to implement the policy on which the majority of Welsh Members of Parliament were elected—a Welsh assembly and a Welsh parliament?

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Nonsense.

Mr. Hanson: If the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) had spent the day in the Chamber, as many of my hon. Friends have done, perhaps he would be convinced of the arguments.

My key argument to the Secretary of State is that, if rate support grant cuts which hit local councils and services are being made in Wales now, how can we afford to spend money on reorganisation when that money can be far better spent on providing teachers and books for schools, and on support for local services that are much needed in my constituency and those of my hon. Friends? Until the Secretary of State gives reasonable examples of why those costs could be incurred, and until we can be sure that those costs are not at the expense of direct money provided for local government services, the House will not support the motion.

10.49 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) should take note of the fact that revenue support grant has been going up, not down, in recent years. There have not been cuts; there have been increases. He asks where offsetting savings would come from. Perhaps he should ask some of the Labour councils in Wales. The Council of Welsh Districts, with many Labour councils, has estimated that there would be annual savings of £17 million a year, because one council in each area should be cheaper than two as a result of cutting unnecessary administration and duplication.

The hon. Member for Delyn asks what other controls I would wish to impose on councils. I wish to impose no new controls, but when the year of transition arrives I, with the approval of the House, will have to judge the levels of capital investment and revenue support grant. I will take full account of the transition when approaching those items, and I am sure that the House will debate them vigorously then.

The hon. Members for Delyn and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) should remember that we are speaking about transitional costs being mainly in the form of one-off capital items, which will be controlled through the capital budgets. They cannot be compared with the annual revenue costs of an assembly, which the hon. Member for Delyn says that he wants, which would be an annual cost on top of the costs of governing Wales already, and well in excess of anything that we are discussing for improved local government.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Will the Secretary of State tell us how he arrived at the estimate of the annual cost of running a Welsh assembly?

Mr. Redwood: There are several ways of calculating the estimates. We have taken estimates based on our estimate of the number of members, the number of staff and the likely modest costs. On top of that, I think that the assembly would have huge spending programmes, which we have grossly underemphasised in the debate.

It is a pity that the hon. Member for Bradford, South did not do some preparation or thinking before he intervened in this Welsh debate. Indeed, it was a great pity that he did not attend the debate, because he would have heard many of the answers to his arguments. He should realise that the estimate provisions have been made for 1994-95 and subsequent years and laid before the House in the normal way with the public expenditure review, so that there will be plenty of opportunity to debate them in the years when the spending is incurred.

The purpose of the money resolution is to authorise modest expenditure in 1994-95, under those estimates, on the Staff Commission for Wales, which was welcomed earlier by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies). It was not to authorise the expenditure of large sums of money at which he has been guessing, which will take place in future years, which will require estimates and debates in the House and the revenue support grant and the capital settlement for the authorities. Those items will be settled by local councils elected in Wales. At the moment, much of Welsh local government is Labour controlled, which is why we would look to the Opposition to give us their thoughts about costs. It is interesting that they have presented us with a much wider range of estimates of costs than the range that consultants have come up with—and some of those consultants believe that the introduction of our proposals could result in substantial savings.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South muddled up the costs of potential job losses, new headquarters and the like for the new councils.

We have debated extensively today and in previous debates and I do not wish to detain the House at length by discussing the details again. Suffice it to say that I believe that the reorganisation can produce good value for the taxpayer. I think that the hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members are trying to exaggerate the costs. They do not understand the difference between the different types of budget and the difference between a one-off cost to save money and annual costs incurred to bloat and increase the costs of government in Wales in a way that we would find thoroughly reprehensible. I recommend the money resolution to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Local Government (Wales) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by any Minister of the Crown under that Act;

(b) any increase attributable to the provisions of that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment; and

(c) the making of payments into the Consolidated Fund.

Dental Services (Wales)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10.53 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): This year, 1994, is supposed to be Worldwide Year of Oral Health. Wales appears to be celebrating the year with the imminent total collapse of the national health dental service. The NHS was conceived in Wales and we have a commitment to sustaining it. In Gwent, Aneurin Bevan's county, there are 154 registered dentists, only 22 of whom offer a full NHS dental service. In Dwyfor, the home of Lloyd George, that other founder of the welfare state, there are now no NHS dentists in the whole district.

The degree of the collapse was described graphically in last Sunday's edition of *Wales on Sunday*. I pay tribute to Michael Settle for his report entitled "Crisis in Dental Care", which shows that the total number of dentists in Wales is 857, 316 of whom are already refusing to take new NHS patients. The position is getting worse by the week. Those staying in the NHS find more people turning to them as other dentists go private. An NHS dentist has an average of 2,000 patients on his lists while those taking private patients average 1,200 on their registers. Pressure is therefore increasing on the remaining dentists to go private.

The *Wales on Sunday* analysis showed that, of the 64 dentists currently employed in Gwynedd, 59 are refusing NHS patients in various circumstances. Of those 64, 48 are accepting no new adult patients on the NHS. Of the 16 who are accepting new cases, most have long waiting lists—one as long as six months—and some will not accept emergency cases on the NHS. In the Dwyfor area, no dentists are accepting new adult registrations. In Arfon, only three are accepting new adult patients, with 13 not accepting them. There is virtually no emergency cover in Arfon and none at all in Dwyfor.

In Gwynedd, the Welsh Office has provided for four full-time equivalent salaried dentists, but only one has so far been put in place, working three days a week—one day in Caernarfon, one in Pwllheli and one in Holyhead. A second salaried dentist is about to start on a three-days-a-week basis, but, apparently, it is a temporary appointment that will last for about six months. Those salaried dentists have potentially more than 100,000 patients to cope with.

I referred to the position in Dwyfor, where the NHS dental service in its traditional form has now totally evaporated. May I read from a letter from a constituent, Mrs. Ellen Owen of Rhoshirwaun? It is in Welsh but I shall furnish a translation afterwards. She said:

"Rwyf yn ysgrifennu'r llythyr yma i chwi oherwydd, ers peth amser rwan, rwyf yn trio cael hyd i ddeintydd sydd yn cymeryd rhywun ar y National Health, ond rwyf yn cael fy ngwrthod gan bob un. Dim ond dau ddeintydd sydd ym Mhwllheli ac maent hwythau wedi mynd yn breifat. Mae'n gywilydd o beth rwy'n meddwl bod rhaid trafeilio mor bell a Bangor hyd yn oed i gael triniaeth. Mae hynny tua deugain milltir o Rhoshirwaun . . . Mae'n iawn ar bobl sydd a digon o fodd i dalu, ond i rhywun fel fi sydd dim llawer o fodd sydd gyda gwr yn gorfod gweithio ar gyflog bach ac yn magu dau o hogiau bach mae'n anodd iawn."

That translates:

"I am writing this letter to you because, for a long time now, I have been trying to find a dentist who takes people on the National Health, but I am being refused by everyone. There are only two dentists in Pwllheli, and they have gone private. It's appalling that I may have to travel as far away as Bangor to receive treatment. That is about forty miles from Rhoshirwaun . . . It's fine for people who have sufficient means to pay but for somebody like myself, who hasn't much money, with a husband who has to work on a small wage and bringing up two little boys, it's extremely difficult."

That message will strike home with honourable Members.

A letter from another constituent, Mr. Frank Bolton of Borth-y-Gest in Porthmadog, said:

"My concern is firstly for those people, and Porthmadog is not short of them, who have a cash flow problem and will not be able to meet the costs of dental treatment as they escalate, which they undoubtedly will.

My concern is secondly that this privatisation of the Health Service has caused no comment except at 'grass roots' level, and not much there. This leaves one worried as to just how much of the system can be whittled away without comment or concerted action by those affected.

There is also the unfairness whereby one has paid National Insurance for thirty or forty years on the understanding that the National Health Service would provide treatment in return."

That message chimes home for many people.

Another constituent of mine wrote:

"My wife and I have recently been forced to take out a Denplan insurance in order to stay on our present dentist's list at Penrhyndeudraeth."

Many of my constituents have drawn that experience to my attention.

Another constituent from Llanrug in the Afon area writes:

"I am writing on behalf of my two children that have been in terrible agony for over a week. They have tried all dentists locally and no one wants to know."

That is the suffering that people are going through.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): May I congratulate my hon. Friend on obtaining time for the debate, which obviously reflects the current crisis in Gwynedd? I draw to his attention the astonishing fact that of the 12 dental practices in the borough of Aberconwy, only one is accepting new patients. That, if anything, must reflect the real crisis in the health service.

Mr. Wigley: Aberconwy in Gwynedd is another example and only last Saturday people in Llandudno drew that fact to my attention. My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

The problem is generally summed up by my constituent, Mr. Trevor Haines, who in lives in Llanystumdwy, Lloyd George's home village:

"I was very concerned when I learned from my dentist last autumn that he was withdrawing from the NHS. Since then every dentist I know in Dwyfor has withdrawn from the NHS. Many of the dentists are trying to persuade patients to insure for treatment with Denplan, a subsidiary of PPP, at a considerable cost for only partial cover. I have also found out that Denplan, and no doubt other medical insurers, have been actively encouraged by the Government to try and push people into taking out dental insurance. Many, if not all, are deprived of NHS dental treatment, and, since they cannot afford the private charges, a large number will be denied dental treatment. I am aware, like most others, of the duplicity of this Government, but I hardly expected them to destroy so quickly and blatantly an important part of the NHS."

Those letters are unsolicited; they come from my constituents who are facing the problem at the sharp end.

The problems are happening outside my constituency, too, and the position is deteriorating rapidly in other parts of Wales such as Denbigh and Mold. In Pembroke, it is virtually impossible for adults to get on to dental registers. In 1990 there were 138 dentists providing NHS treatment for adults and children in Mid-Glamorgan. That figure is now down to 69. Since July 1992, no fewer than 65 dentists in Mid-Glamorgan stopped taking on adults as new cases on the NHS.

[Mr. Wigley]

In South Glamorgan in the past 18 months, between 20 and 30 dentists have deregistered some of their NHS patients. Of the 138 dentists in south Glamorgan, only 36 are prepared to treat new NHS patients. The figures given to me by the South Glamorgan health officials are even worse than the indications of the *Wales on Sunday* report.

Along the Clwyd coastline there is an intriguingly difficult position. In towns such as Colwyn Bay, Abergele and Rhyl another phenomenon has developed—that of dental refugees. They are people from Gwynedd, who are unable to get treatment in their own county, travelling to Clwyd for treatment. They are in danger of overloading those dentists along the Clwyd coast who are still in the NHS.

The background to the problem is clearly of the Government's own making. In February 1992 the Government proposed to cut NHS fees for dentists by 13.8 per cent.—that figure was later adjusted to 7 per cent. As a direct result, the British Dental Association balloted its members, who voted not to take on new patients until the NHS dispute was totally resolved. We are now witnessing the effect of the working through of this phenomenon. During the past 12 months 500,000 people throughout the United Kingdom have been removed from registers by dentists.

The position is worse in counties such as Gwynedd, where the Welsh Office is unable to attract dentists to fill established posts, in addition to the failure to retain the remaining NHS dentists in the county. So there is a double factor exacerbating the problem in Gwynedd.

Over the years, Gwynedd has been below the authorised head count, so it is not a new problem, but it is one which the Welsh Office over the years has failed to rectify. The report on dental remuneration by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield in January 1993 is still awaiting a response from the Government. I find that amazing. The British Dental Association wrote on 9 February 1994:

"The present uncertainty about the Government's future intentions for dentistry is preventing dentists from making meaningful plans for their practices. Many have moved to the private sector to give themselves this much needed stability. In a recent survey of BDA members, we found that two in five dentists were not accepting new NHS patients and one in five were treating adult patients only on a private basis."

That is the extent of the problem. I am told that, currently throughout Britain, as many as 25 dentists a month are going bankrupt because of the failure of the Government's funding of this important profession.

The general position of dental health in Wales is serious. The standard of teeth in Wales is not high. The study by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys showed that, in Wales, only 68 per cent. of adults have sound and untreated teeth. That compares with 89 per cent. in the English midlands. In 1992, the condition of the teeth of five-year-old children in Wales was twice as bad as those in the west midlands or the south-west Thames areas. In Great Britain, only Scotland is worse. Forty-nine per cent. of five-year-olds in Wales have active decay in their teeth. In Mid-Glamorgan, the figure is as high as 60 per cent. That compares with only 25 per cent. in the south-west Thames area and only 20 per cent. in east Surrey.

There is a tremendous opportunity for oral health gain in Wales. The Welsh health planning forum set targets in 1992, including reducing the level of tooth decay in five-year-olds in Wales from 2.8 in 1990 to 2.0 in 2002, and to increase the proportion in the 35 to 44 age group in Wales with more than 21 natural teeth from 77 per cent. to 89 per cent. Those targets have no chance of being achieved on the basis of the current collapse in the NHS system.

This crisis is frustrating not only to patients, but to dentists. I received a letter from dentist in my constituency which says:

"In my opinion, the only way that the dental profession is going to attain sufficient funding to achieve a good, acceptable standard of dental care is directly from the patients. The Government has to solve the problem of properly funding the dental care of those who cannot afford it, not the dentists. Dentists are trained to fix people's mouths and not socio-economic problems. Having said that, it can be quite heartbreaking to see patients who could have a tooth saved but who decide to have it extracted for financial reasons. And this is happening more and more frequently."

What can be done about the problem? First, I believe that we must ask what has happened to the local incentive schemes for dentists, which began in Wales in 1990. They are supposed to help towards the cost of setting up and expanding dental practices in areas where there is a serious shortage of general dental practitioners. How many family health services associations in Wales are participating in the scheme? How much has been spent since 1990 and how many additional dentists have been set up? What are the targets for the scheme in Wales for 1994-95? Is it true that that scheme is on ice while the Government dither on how to act on the Bloomfield report?

Secondly, what happened to the promise made by the Welsh Office a year ago that we would have four salaried dentists in Gwynedd? Where are they? The Government cannot recruit, because they simply are not paying them enough. It is much more attractive for a young dentist to go to the private sector, where they can earn up to £60,000 treating private patients, rather than the £19,000 at which salaried posts in Gwynedd are being advertised.

Thirdly, I specifically call today for an immediate comprehensive response by the Government to the Bloomfield report and to the Select Committee recommendations; and for a commitment to substantial additional funding for NHS dental treatment fees. I ask in all seriousness for an immediate change in social security legislation to enable everyone on benefits, pensions, low wages, and for children to have full reimbursement of dental charges if they have to go for private treatment because no NHS dentists are available locally and quickly. That is the sort of self-correcting cash punishment that perhaps the Secretary of State for Wales would understand. If the Welsh Office failed to provide NHS treatment, it would have to pick up the bill for patients going privately, not the patients who cannot afford missing out on dental treatment. Can more dentists be trained and can we have an educational drive to that end? That would take years to work through, but it is needed. Can the salaried dentists' pay scale be increased to help the crisis areas and will the Government consider the ease with which a dentist can build up a practice on the NHS, then abandon ship and turn completely private, using the NHS list as a base?

Before the last election, the Government made much noise about the NHS being safe in their hands. Today, we see that promise for what it was: worthless, hollow words. The Government's complacency can be interpreted only as tacit approval of the privatisation by stealth that is taking

place in the NHS sector. The NHS was born in Wales and we have no intention of allowing the Tory regime to kill it off.

In terms of dental services, the NHS is certainly not safe in Tory hands. The Government must stand up and be counted—and perhaps the Minister can start tonight with a suitable apology.

11.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): I assure the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) that the Government remain entirely committed to an effective and accessible NHS dental service. The facts speak for themselves. More NHS dentists are practising in Wales than ever before; more NHS patients are being treated than ever before; and more money is being spent on NHS dentistry than at any other time in our history.

The progress made is obvious to all who examine the figures. The number of general dental practitioners in Wales has risen from 592 in 1979 to 807 in 1993, an increase of more than 36 per cent.; during that time, the population rose by only 3 per cent. Patient registration levels, at more than 1.7 million, are the highest ever, with 67 per cent. of all children and 57 per cent. of all adults currently registered with an NHS dentist. No wonder the number of courses of treatment for adults has risen to nearly 1.4 million in 1993.

With more patients registered and more treatment provided than ever before, expenditure levels are also at an all-time high. In the last financial year, nearly £74 million was spent on NHS dentistry in Wales, in real terms an increase of 87 per cent. since 1978-79.

I was disappointed when the hon. Gentleman lapsed into the usual "knock the NHS" conclusion at the end of his speech. He came out with, in effect, the same gross insult to the excellent staff who are working for the NHS in Wales. They are our greatest asset. They continue to achieve record increases in the number of patients being treated in Wales—and, moreover, to achieve improvement in the quality of health care. The most recent survey conducted by the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts showed that 87 per cent. of the public were satisfied with the NHS in Wales.

We in Wales are, indeed, fortunate to enjoy a good and productive relationship with the dental profession. Its members talk to my officials and to me. I last met representatives of the British Dental Association and the General Dental Services Committee on 8 December. They know that my door is open if they wish to explore any matter of mutual concern.

I am pleased to maintain an open door, if only because I recognise the huge strides that have been made, particularly in recent years. The other day, I talked to a constituent who, as a boy in the valleys, had had his teeth ripped out with no thought of conservation or health promotion. Not surprisingly, he took great pleasure in the fact that his two children—who are in their late teens and have grown up under the present Administration—have but one filling between them. That story can be repeated many times, and is an eloquent testimony to standards that the Government are committed to retaining.

I recognise, however, that if those achievements are to be sustained and improved in the long term, there is an overriding need to tackle the roots of the current problems in the dental remuneration system. The hon. Gentleman may be aware of some of those problems, but it may be helpful if I explain the background. Dental remuneration is determined by the Government on the basis of the recommendation of the doctors' and dentists' review body. In 1991-92, the review body recommended that dentists should receive an average net income of some £32,000; in the event, they received an average of about £12,000 more than that.

A cut in fees of some 23 per cent. would have been necessary if the target pay for dentists were to be brought into line with the review body's recommendation for the following year. We decided, however, to introduce a cut of just 7 per cent., which should still have enabled dentists to receive, on average, about £4,000 more than the net income of nearly £36,000 recommended by their review body. Although their income remained higher, on average, than that recommended, dentists, inevitably and understandably, reacted badly to the fee adjustment, and some decided that they would no longer accept new NHS patients or provide emergency treatment for unregistered patients. Others decided to offer only private treatment to patients not exempt from NHS charges. As independent contractors, they are, of course, free to do this if they wish.

Clearly, the situation was far from satisfactory and needed to be addressed in the interests of all parties. A fundamental review of the dental remuneration system was requested by the pay review body in its 22nd report and that request was repeated by the profession in 1992. The Government met the professions's request for an independent review, and Sir Kenneth Bloomfield was asked to produce a report identifying options for change. The report was published and widely circulated last year. Consultation was drawn to a close five months later, at about the time the Select Committee on Health published the report of its inquiry into dental services.

Unfortunately, and despite out extensive consultations, there was no consensus about solutions. That had been noted by both Sir Kenneth and the Select Committee in their inquiries. Indeed, it is significant that the Committee noted in its report:

"there was . . . more consensus amongst witnesses concerning the problems than concerning solutions".

Against that background, it was imperative that we should take time to consider all of the many options for change and all the views submitted on them. I am pleased to advise that we are now close to announcing our proposals. We shall, of course, be consulting closely and fully with the profession and others interested in the proposals. In the meantime, we are determined that the profession should be properly rewarded for its work in improving the oral health of the nation. Our commitment is underlined by our recent decisions to increase the level of fees paid to dentists—a 2.9 per cent. increase from 1 January and a further 3 per cent. from 1 April.

That does not sound to me like a service abandoned by the Government; rather, we see pay recommendations accepted and implemented in full and a willingness to inquire into the universally acknowledged problems in the present system, to consult and listen to the profession and to consider with the greatest care the many representations received. There is no hint here of lack of commitment.

The general dental service provides the vast majority of dental services, but we should acknowledge also the contribution made by other branches of the profession. The hospital services have an important role to play in dealing

[Mr. Gwilym Jones]

with the more complex and difficult cases. That sector, too, has seen growth in its activity, with a corresponding increase of 62 per cent. in the number of dental specialists employed since 1979. Wales now has more restorative dental consultants outside teaching hospitals and located in district hospitals than any other part of the United Kingdom.

However, the Government are not complacent—far from it. It would be misleading for me to imply that all in the garden is rosy. The hon. Gentleman has quite rightly highlighted the difficulties that are experienced in some areas of Wales in obtaining dental treatment in the location of choice. That has been caused largely by the less-than-ideal distribution of the services that are currently available.

We should recognise that dentists put their own money at risk when they open a new practice, and they may see that risk as greater when the population is sparse or where they feel that it would be difficult to establish a viable practice. But for every area where there is a problem, there are others where no difficulty is experienced in obtaining NHS treatment. Indeed, Gwynedd is the only area in Wales where the family health services authority has reported being unable to arrange NHS treatment for an inquirer. Even there, such treatment would have been available if the patient had been prepared to travel.

I am happy to report to the House that, as a direct result of the Secretary of State's permission to employ salaried dentists, the situation has improved. No one in Gwynedd should now be denied or totally refused NHS treatment, although I acknowledge that patients may have to travel. I recognise the need to address this problem. Patients should not have to travel long distances or wait for treatment.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the number of dentists who have closed their books. Those figures need to be interpreted with caution. Before 1990, dentists did not have lists as such. Following the new contract, all practising dentists would have open lists because their remuneration depended in part on the number of registered patients. It was equally inevitable that, in time, some lists would become full and would close. What matters is not the number of open lists but whether treatment is available. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that in Pwllheli the salaried dentist is offering two days' cover a week from Monday and that there is one whole-time equivalent community dentist available to provide emergency cover. In Dwyfor there are four dentists, all treating existing registered national health service patients but not accepting new NHS patients. In Pembroke the family health services authority and the profession's representative body advise that NHS dentists are available to new NHS patients.

Mr. Wigley: The Minister has stated that all four dentists in Dwyfor were accepting people currently on the NHS. That is not true. I have quoted letters from people who have been told that they have to move away from the NHS or go on to a private plan if they wish to remain with their dentist. If 300 of the 850 dentists in Wales have withdrawn from taking on new patients, does the Minister realise that most will continue not to accept them, whatever happens? How on earth will he get the NHS dental service back on the rails?

Mr. Jones: I am seeking to give the hon. Gentleman the latest information. The advice to me is that the four dentists in Dwyfor are treating existing registered NHS patients but not accepting new NHS patients. That is the latest information.

The Welsh Office is doing much to assist family health services authorities to attract dentists to the areas of greatest need. We have introduced the highly successful location incentive scheme. Under it, grants are available to dentists who wish to set up or expand their practice in areas where there is a shortfall of dentists. Seven schemes are funded in the current year.

In addition, the Welsh Office is funding various local initiatives throughout Wales that aim to improve the standards and level of services available. Those initiatives are usually targeted on areas of greatest need, and the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that 50 per cent. of the current funding is directed to the Gwynedd family health services authority to finance initiatives in that area. Further initiatives from Gwynedd and elsewhere are under consideration.

However, those initiatives and the location incentives that I have already mentioned are not always sufficient in themselves to secure comprehensive general dental services for an area. In those circumstances, the community dental services are providing a valuable safety net function to patients who would otherwise be unable to obtain treatment. We are committed to the continuation of this service, and the health authorities who manage it are charged with keeping the need for such services under review and with making appropriate provision for it.

My officials are exploring innovative ways of expanding and strengthening the community dental services safety net function in Wales. There have been discussions with the staff side of the profession with a view to identifying arrangements particular to our needs. Those discussions are well advanced and principles are agreed. I hope that the outcome will provide greater flexibility of services and better targeting of resources, particularly in those areas of Wales where general dental services have been weaker.

It is also open to family health services authorities to apply for approval to appoint salaried dentists if they consider that that is necessary to ensure adequate provision. This scheme can be attractive to dentists who, for whatever reason, do not wish to practise on their own account or as part of a managed service. To date, five authorities have made applications and seven posts have been approved. Three salaried dentists are already in post —two in Gwynedd and one in Dyfed. A further dentist is shortly to commence work in Powys. Other applications are under consideration, and I expect shortly to announce approval of additional posts.

I have already shown that I support innovation. Family health services authorities bringing forward proposals for new authorities will find that I shall deal with them sympathetically and expeditiously, provided that they demonstrate need. The picture is not one of failure and complacency, such as the hon. Gentleman sought to paint.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-three minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 16 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 2) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 3) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

BRITISH RAILWAYS ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Association Rents

1. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average housing association rent.

2. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average rent for a housing association dwelling in 1978-79 and at the latest available date.

The Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction (Sir George Young): The average housing association rent in England on 31 March 1993 was £34.03 per week.

Although the data were not collected on a comparable basis, the average housing association registered fair rent in England and Wales in 1978-79 was £10.08 per week.

Mr. Miller: Does the Minister accept that, following the proposed cuts in the Housing Corporation budget, those rents will increase significantly—probably well ahead of inflation? That must be added to the difficulties facing local authorities, particularly lean and well-managed authorities such as Ellesmere Port and Neston. Does the Minister accept that, if those factors are added together, his policies will have dire consequences for people who need low-cost affordable homes? Will he reverse his policies and act positively in the interests of tenants both of housing associations and of local authorities?

Sir George Young: I find it hard to take seriously the remarks that the hon. Gentleman has just made. On Monday, the House was invited to vote to give an extra £213 million to my Department, part of which would go to the Housing Corporation budget. I regret to have to tell the House that the hon. Gentleman voted against the provision of that sum. Against that background, I am surprised that he has the nerve to ask about resources for the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Wicks: Given the average rent figures, and not least the higher figures in many metropolitan areas, does the Minister believe that ordinary families can now afford to be in unsubsidised housing association accommodation? Is not the effect of the policy to drive up housing benefit expenditure? How does that square with the declared policy of the Secretary of State for Social Security to drive down such expenditure?

Sir George Young: I believe that £34 a week is a reasonable rent for housing association property, especially as so much of it is of good quality. The hon. Gentleman must ask himself a question. If he wants to keep rents down, he will find that there are fewer homes being built to meet the needs of those who have a housing problem.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Is not the real issue the speed with which we move towards market rents, to ensure that any assistance through housing benefit is given directly to those who need it, rather than through subventions to the corporation, which are spread among rich and poor alike?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is right. We have made it clear that we believe that a more effective use of public resources is to move away from indiscriminate bricks and mortar subsidies towards more sensitively directed personal subsidies. It inevitably follows that the housing benefit bill will rise, but we believe that it is a more sensible use of public resources and will enable us to build more homes.

Mr. Devlin: Is my right hon. Friend aware of how proud we in Teesside are of the new housing association rented properties that are coming on stream on the Teesdale sites? Those have been built with the assistance of Teesside development corporation as part of 155,000 properties that have come into being since the general election as a direct result of Government policy.

Sir George Young: The House will be delighted to hear of the good-quality accommodation that is being provided in my hon. Friend's constituency. He is right to point out that the number of units provided by the Housing Corporation have exceeded by 25,000 the commitment that we gave at the general election.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Minister reconsider his earlier answers and tell the House the figures that the National Federation of Housing Associations supplied to his Department recently, which show that the average rent for all housing association lettings in England is £43.86 a week and that the average for new lettings, which is obviously the most crucial figure, is no less than £51.12 a week? Will the Minister stop misleading the House with figures that are not accurate and tell us the truth? Those rents are not affordable.

Sir George Young: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that the answer that I gave to Questions 1 and 2 was incorrect. They were the correct figures. The figure for new properties is, indeed, about £51 per week. That is not the figure that is paid by the vast majority of housing association tenants. Those tenants who are invited to pay the newer rents are eligible for housing benefit if they do not have the income with which to pay.

Construction Industry

3. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken within his Department to support his sponsorship of the construction industry.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): We have established a construction sponsorship directorate committed to doing everything possible to ensure, in partnership with the construction industry, that United Kingdom construction is as successful as humanly possible.

Mr. Heald: Will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming the unemployment figures announced today showing a fall of 39,000? Does he agree that that is excellent news for the unemployed and their families? Does he agree one reason for the fall is the recovery in the construction industry shown yesterday by the increase in orders at home and by the fact that exports in the construction industry are running at £6 billion a year? Does he agree that more could be done to help our construction exporters? What exactly will the directorate do?

Mr. Baldry: We all have every right to be proud that British construction skills, experience and quality are in such demand throughout the world. That means jobs at home. This year, together with the industry, our construction export promotion division is promoting trade missions, task forces and numerous country-specific events to ensure that United Kingdom construction wins as much business in the world as possible.

Mr. Pike: In the Prime Minister's references yesterday to the construction industry and particularly to housing, was not he ill-advised to refer to an increase in housing construction, when last year's figures show that construction was at an all-time low of 155,922 new starts? Will the Government give the industry the news that it wants to hear and say that some of the capital receipts can be used and that mandatory grants will continue?

Mr. Baldry: I simply refer the hon. Gentleman to the most recent statement by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Only days ago, it said:

"As confidence among buyers grows, we are experiencing a heartening buzz of genuine interest in many areas. As spring unfolds, the market will continue to develop. The economic soil is looking fertile and capable of sustaining growth. New house starts are going up at a very fast rate indeed."

Mr. Garnier: Does my hon. Friend accept that, although I am delighted to see any resurgence in the construction industry, my constituents will not be pleased to see construction in the shape of new supermarkets in two places in Oadby in my constituency? Will my hon. Friend ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to bear that in mind when he considers the applications that will be on his desk before long?

Mr. Baldry: I commend to every Member of Parliament planning policy guidance note 6, which gives new planning guidance on out-of-town retail developments. It is an excellent publication.

Energy Saving Trust

4. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current budget of the Energy Saving Trust.

5. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the funding of the Energy Saving Trust.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins): The Energy Saving Trust is an independent organisation. Funds for its schemes will come from a variety of sources. I understand that its budget for 1994-95 is currently under discussion.

Mr. Barron: Will the Minister comment on the evidence given by British Gas to the Select Committee on the Environment last year that its funding of the Energy Saving Trust would be £2 million last year, £10 million this year and even hundreds of millions in years to come? In the past 24 hours, I have learnt that, in seven days' time, the Energy Saving Trust will give notice that it intends to cancel the gas condensing boiler scheme, which is the most effective thing that it has done towards reaching the Rio limits on emissions. Why have the Government changed the regulator of British Gas, and why has that regulator sought to change the opinion of British Gas on the E factor in gas pricing and, therefore, cut the funding of the Energy Saving Trust?

Mr. Atkins: There are a number of questions there and I am aware of your caution in these matters, Madam Speaker. I do not want to answer too many questions from one Opposition Member. Perhaps I can pick the one to which I know the answer, which is that the appointment of the regulator is not a matter for me.

Mr. Dafis: Notwithstanding what the Minister has said, it is clear that the Energy Saving Trust is in big trouble, having had its primary source of finance cut off. Will the Minister bear in mind the fact that, if it survives, the efficient delivery of its programmes will depend on obtaining adequate information about energy efficiency, not least in the domestic sector? In that regard, may I draw the Minister's attention to the Energy Conservation Bill which was presented by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)? That Bill would ensure that such information would be available because it requires local authorities to carry out an exhaustive audit of the energy efficiency of domestic properties. Will the Minister give an absolute undertaking that the Government will do nothing to undermine that Bill on Report?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman suggests that the Energy Saving Trust will be without funds, but that is incorrect. We already have a commitment for some £25 million from the electricity companies. That means that, at least until the discussions about the future of the British Gas contribution, plenty of money will be available to provide for the continuance of the Energy Saving Trust.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Is not my hon. Friend confused by the signals from Opposition Members in wanting not to burn coal when gas was coming in? All their policy papers suggest that we should increase energy prices enormously through carbon taxes, but, of course, they voted against VAT on fuel.

Mr. Atkins: Like many Conservative Members, I am constantly confused about what the Opposition represent on energy matters.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Energy Saving Trust and the Government should look closely at the use of energy-efficient lighting, which would greatly cut the amount of CO_2 emitted into the atmosphere and save people a considerable amount of money that would more than cover VAT on electricity?

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who raised this matter for the benefit of all hon. Members in the recent debate on his ten-minute Bill. I was pleased to be here to listen to him and I entirely agree that the message that we all can take is that energy-efficient lightbulbs are much better than existing ones and that the more that we can use them, the better it will be for all concerned.

Mr. George Howarth: I congratulate the Minister on his characteristic candour in his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron). There is a serious dispute between the Government and the Energy Saving Trust and the Director General of Gas Supply about the director general's precise role in this. Although the Minister is not responsible for appointing her, does not he agree that it would be a good idea to sit down, run through the difficulties and try to resolve them, because the Energy Saving Trust's role is clearly being prejudiced by a lack of clarity about her role in the matter?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman is right and fair to draw attention to this concern. It is clearly a matter that we did not anticipate because at the moment OFFER—the Office of Electricity Regulation—does not see a particular problem. The problem that has been highlighted by the Ofgas regulator, Miss Clare Spottiswode, was unexpected, and the matter is being discussed through my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry to see whether there is a way round it. Failing that, we may have to consider other ways by which the matter may be addressed, and that might involve legislation.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My hon. Friend will be aware that this country spends about £50 billion a year on energy and that the Energy Efficiency Office has estimated that we could save approximately 20 per cent. of that, or £10 billion. My hon. Friend is also aware that his Department has set the Energy Saving Trust a target for carbon reduction of 2.5 million tonnes to meet our Rio target by the year 2000. To do that, the Energy Saving Trust will need to spend about £400 million a year. As well as benefiting consumers, it will cost them only an extra 1.5 per cent., but will benefit our balance of payments by £300 million and create up to 40,000 jobs. Will the Minister confirm that that is the sort of target and the sort of agenda that he will set the Energy Saving Trust?

Mr. Atkins: Yes, Madam.

Coal Mining Effluent

6. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about pollution of waterways with coal mining effluent.

Mr. Atkins: Discharges from coal mines in England and Wales are subject to regulation by the National Rivers Authority. It is for the operators and owners of those mines, in consultation with the National Rivers Authority, to determine what measures are necessary to avoid pollution.

Mr. Hain: Is the Minister aware that, notwithstanding his factually accurate answer, many hon. Members are frustrated by the buck-passing between British Coal and the National Rivers Authority? Is he aware that the Neath canal has recently been declared ecologically dead because of mine pollution? The Neath river is now heavily polluted and the Pelenna river in my constituency is regarded as the most polluted river in Britain? Will his Department please institute an urgent examination of the problem in conjunction with British Coal, its successors and the National Rivers Authority and will he make a statement in the House about this growing problem, which will get worse as more mines close.

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman thinks that my answer is factually correct. That in itself is an achievement. [*Laughter.*] I should perhaps have said that it was an achievement for the hon. Gentleman to have recognised it. Under the Water Resources Act 1991, the NRA has powers to prosecute any offence involving pollution from mines. In the particular case that the hon. Gentleman raises—the River Pelenna in his constituency—I understand that the NRA and West Glamorgan county council have joined forces to undertake a £1 million project aimed at restoring the quality of the river to support wildlife and removing the discoloration caused by mine water. If there are any other points relating to individual constituencies, I suggest that hon. Members take them up directly with the NRA.

Mr. Batiste: Does not the question highlight the need for debate in the House on the environmental impact of the coal industry, preferably before the Coal Industry Bill returns to the House on Report and Third Reading? Perhaps my hon. Friend would discuss the matter with his colleagues and suggest to them that there is considerable feeling on both sides of the House that such a debate should take place.

Mr. Atkins: I will certainly ensure that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is aware of my hon. Friend's concern.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister also take account of Coalite, which produces coke from coal and the fact that the dioxin effluent coming out of the factory into the River Doe Lea is 1,000 times above the requisite safety level? What steps are the Government taking to ensure that that is stopped? Is the National Rivers Authority doing anything about it? It seems rather laggardly in its action.

Mr. Atkins: I am very disturbed if, as I am sure it is, what the hon. Gentleman says about that river is true. I will ensure that the attention of the NRA is drawn to that case and that if action needs to be taken urgently it will be.

Council Tax

7. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the correlation between political control and the top and bottom 10 council taxes so far declared.

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): Of the 10 councils that have fixed the

highest council taxes, seven are Labour controlled, two others have Labour county councils, which are the principal precepting authorities, while I understand that Liverpool is split between rival Labour factions.

Mr. Duncan: will my hon. Friend confirm that band for band—A for A and B for B, right up to H for H—Conservative councils cost less? Will he also confirm that while the Labour party continues to play its childish games, the Conservatives will stand and deliver better local government?

Mr. Curry: It is true: those who live in Conservative council areas and whose properties are in band A pay less than they would under Labour. Those who live in Conservative council areas and are in band B pay less than they would under Labour. It applies right through the bands. Whether one has modest means and lives in a modest house, whether one has a middle income and lives in a middle-income house or even if one is relatively well-off and in band H, one will always pay less under the Conservatives than under Labour or the Liberals.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: Will the Minister confirm that the Secretary of State's press release issued this morning recognised that Liverpool's band C figure does not represent what most people in Liverpool will be paying and that although there will be an increase, that is almost entirely due to the unfairness of the standard spending assessment for the city? Will he consider that a fairer way of comparing council tax levels is to look at averages? Liverpool's average of £550 compares favourably with councils such as Wokingham and Ribble Valley, both of which are Conservative controlled.

Mr. Curry: I cannot think of a less intelligible way of comparing council taxes than using averages, for the simple reason that no one pays an average council tax. Everyone pays one band from A to H and that enables us to make a direct comparison. What matters is how much one pays and one pays less under Conservative-controlled authorities than under Labour-controlled authorities, including Liverpool.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my hon. Friend agree that council tax levels would be much lower if Labour-controlled councils, such as Islington, Liverpool and Manchester, cleared their enormous debts so that they could use some of the capital receipts?

Mr. Curry: It is true that if councils collect their debts, council house rents and taxes, that money can go through into services. That has given councils that have improved their tax collection rates much room for manoeuvre this year. That is one of the keys to good services, not an optional extra. It is part of delivering a good service to council tax payers, and Conservative-controlled councils do it best.

Mr. Straw: A moment ago, in the hearing of the House, the Minister said that the use of average household bills per dwelling was a less intelligible way of comparing what people were spending. If that is so, why did the Department of the Environment, in its press release last March, use average household bills per dwelling? Will the Minister also explain why the research department of Conservative central office, in a brief dated last March, also used the average council tax per dwelling? Did Conservative central office use those figures before it discovered that average household council tax bills per dwelling are £40 lower in Labour-controlled areas than they are in Conservative-controlled areas and that, whether locally or nationally, the Conservative party costs people more?

Mr. Curry: We are clearly getting under the hon. Gentleman's skin. I challenge the hon. Gentleman to demonstrate that the council tax paid in any one of the eight bands is lower in a Labour-controlled authority than in a Conservative-controlled authority. He cannot do it. A council with houses predominantly in the lower bands will have a lower average council tax than a council with houses predominantly in the higher bands. That is a matter of statistics, not politics. The hon. Gentleman cannot escape from the basic fact that Labour-controlled councils are setting higher bills. If the hon. Gentleman wishes, I can read to him the 10 councils with the lowest bills, and he will not find a Labour-controlled council among them.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend mentioned the high levels of uncollected rents and council taxes in many Labour-controlled areas. When will the Government do something to force those councils to collect the rents that they should be collecting on behalf of the rest of the population?

Mr. Curry: If councils collect rents and taxes, they can spend more on services. A lack of services is the result of incompetence on the part of the councils.

Rent Increases

8. **Mr. Hoon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the relative rate of rent rises in the public and private sectors.

Sir George Young: Rents in all sectors have risen during the past few years. Public sector rents have increased to bear a closer relationship to the value of the accommodation being provided. That reflects, in part, our policy of moving away from direct subsidies to suppliers, towards paying personal subsidies to tenants to ensure that help goes to those who really need it.

Deregulation of rents in the private rented sector since 1988 has enabled landlords to achieve a more realistic return on their investment and has contributed to a revival in the number of private lettings.

Mr. Hoon: Rent assessment panels agreed private sector rents in the east midlands for the first quarter of 1993 at an average of £46 a week. Will the Minister congratulate east midlands local authorities on keeping average local authority rents down to £28 as at April 1993? Does not that show how much better local authorities are at providing affordable housing than the private sector?

Sir George Young: The rent officers in the hon. Gentleman's constituency are operating under the Rent Act 1977. That regime shows how they operate. As to other rents in the private sector, Conservatives want investment in the private rented sector to be restored and more good-quality accommodation to be provided by private landlords. If that is to happen, those landlords are entitled to a realistic return and that means higher rents than the controlled rents supported by Labour Members.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the level of rents in the public sector is determined, in part, by the number of voids in the public sector? Is he

aware that, in the London borough of Barnet, 0.9 per cent. of council houses are empty, whereas in the London borough of Hackney 9.2 per cent. are empty? Is he further aware that, in certain London Labour boroughs, rent arrears equal more than 20 per cent. of the annual rent roll? Is that not a national scandal?

Sir George Young: As always, my hon. Friend's remarks are perceptive. It is unacceptable for local authorities to leave accommodation empty when people are in housing need in those boroughs. I urge all local authorities to do better in bringing back into use the voids under their ownership.

Mr. Battle: Is it not the reality that the Government are intervening and deliberately engineering high, rising rents in all sectors, forcing council rents up, pricing people out of being able to afford a housing association home, coercing council tenants to buy out, draining housing benefit into the private rented sector and forcing people to choose between a home and a job offer? When will the Minister realise that unemployment and low incomes into high rents just will not go without generating more homelessness?

Sir George Young: None of that happens. If the hon. Gentleman is making commitments for higher public expenditure, I wonder whether he has cleared that with his hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw).

Housing Waiting Lists

9. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make housing waiting lists more effective.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): Our consultation paper proposes a single local waiting list so that social housing is allocated as fairly as possible.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Will he confirm that, under the proposals, there will be adequate measures to take care of the most vulnerable members of our society?

Mr. Gummer: Certainly, I would not have introduced the consultation paper unless that was an absolute, basic fact.

Mr. Hardy: With millions of people in need of decent homes and scores, if not hundreds, of thousands of construction workers unemployed, is not the best answer to the length of housing waiting lists to build affordable low-cost housing for people to live in and to provide the jobs that mean that construction workers do not have to go abroad to make a living?

Mr. Gummer: That is why we have already exceeded the target on which we fought the previous election. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that we should spend more, perhaps he has not talked the matter over with his hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), because that sounds to me like another promise to spend more money if the Labour party were elected.

Mr. David Nicholson: I agree with my right hon. Friend that we must clamp down on abuses in the housing waiting list system, but will he take the advice that my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) put to him—young women with children should not be put at risk as a result of these measures? Will he also concentrate on continuing to revive the private rented sector and, therefore, take care that none of those measures damages the Government's rent-a-room initiative?

Mr. Gummer: I quite agree with my hon. Friend's first point, which is why we want equal access to the waiting list on the ground of need, instead of the present system. I agree that, as far as possible, we should revive the private rented sector, as we want as many homes as possible, particularly to provide for those who are without decent accommodation.

Single Regeneration Budget

10. **Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he had in the development of the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: Some 10,000 copies of the draft bidding guidance on the single regeneration budget have been distributed, 11 seminars organised and several hundred written responses received.

Mr. Simpson: Does the Minister accept that the new measures that he is introducing are little more than camouflage for a further cut in the funds available for urban regeneration? Does he acknowledge, in the context of the east midlands, that the three cities of Nottingham, Leicester and Derby received some £10 million under the previous allocation of urban aid funding, whereas under the single regeneration budget they will be invited to bid for a total of £10 million for the whole east midlands region? Does he accept that 40 or more authorities bidding for an open pot amounts to a descent into game show politics and economics, which reduces the status of funding to little more than the game show "Don't Forget Your Toothbrush"?

Mr. Baldry: That is all complete bunkum, and I shall gladly write to the hon. Gentleman with the figures to demonstrate the fact. The single regeneration budget straightforwardly fulfils our manifesto commitment to bring together resources for targeted inner-city programmes in a single budget, so that funds go where they are most needed locally, rather than according to a set of priorities determined in Whitehall. I should have thought that every hon. Member would welcome that.

Mr. Straw: Surely the Minister does not wish to mislead the House. Will he confirm that the annual report of the Department of the Environment—published only last week, on 8 March—states that there will be a cut of nearly £200 million in the single regeneration budget over the next two years?

Mr. Baldry: We are spending £4 billion on urban regeneration this year. In so far as there is any reduction, it is caused by the fact that some institutions, such as those funded by urban development corporations, are beginning to wind down. Those are the straightforward facts.

Council Tax

11. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reports he has had so far about council tax levels.

Mr. Curry: The average band C headline council tax is £516. [HON. MEMBERS: "Average?"] Within that average, it will be found that the average for Conservative authorities is a great deal lower than the average for Labour or Liberal authorities. That represents an increase of 2.2 per cent. on the 1993-94 average.

Mr. Thomason: Has my hon. Friend read the speech that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) made to the Labour local government conference on 4 February, when he said, "I am proud of the"—

Madam Speaker: Order. The Executive are responsible for Government policies; they are not responsible for the activities of any Opposition Member. Will the hon. Gentleman come to his point and ask a question right away?

Mr. Thomason: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Labour party has—

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me explain. I think it only right for me to explain to the House that the Government are not responsible for the activities or the policies of the Labour party at Question Time. *[Interruption.]* No, it is right for me to be heard, so that the House understands me. The Executive are responsible for Government policies only; that is their accountability during Question Time.

Mr. Thomason: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government have consistently demonstrated that Labour is a party of high spending and high taxation in local government?

Madam Speaker: Not very well done, but just about passable.

Mr. Curry: I do not need to demonstrate that fact; I let it speak for itself.

Mr. Betts: Would the Minister care to admit that his use of band comparisons in regard to council tax is spurious and bogus? Let us suppose that two comparable authorities raise the same amount from the same number of properties, and their average council tax is the same. Very different comparisons could be made in respect of different bands. Authorities containing more properties in band A, the lowest band—which are more likely to be Labour controlled—would, as a consequence of that fact alone, have higher rates for the other bands. That is a simple mathematical truth. Perhaps the Minister would like to verify it, and also verify the political truth that Labour authorities cost less and give better services.

Mr. Curry: I notice that, whenever someone is about to say something that is manifestly not the case, it is described as some sort of irrefutable truth. It is not the case that Labour authorities cost less. The only sensible basis for comparison is comparing like with like, and that can be done only by making comparisons across the bands—which clearly demonstrates that Conservative councils are setting lower council taxes.

If the hon. Gentleman is saying that the total volume of tax depends on the configuration of properties in a council area, let me tell him that that is so evident that it is hardly worth debating.

Mr. Pickles: Further to the point made by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts), is not my hon. Friend being unkind to the Labour party, because surely the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) clearly said that his spurious claim was based solely on the fact that Labour authorities have more properties in the lower bands? Has my hon. Friend noticed that similar Conservative authorities are a lot cheaper, so, band for band, Conservative councils cost people a lot less?

Mr. Curry: Perhaps my hon. Friend would mention the fact that if Labour authorities have more properties in the lower bands, they are much more likely to get more revenue support grant from the Government and to benefit from council tax relief and various other forms of relief. That means that, despite the fact that Labour councils get more support, they still cost more—they could choose to lower their council tax.

Nitrogen Dioxide

12. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the principal sources of nitrogen dioxide emissions; and which of these are currently increasing and which are decreasing.

Mr. Atkins: Road transport, with 51 per cent., and power stations, with 25 per cent., are the main sources of nitrogen oxide emissions. I am pleased to report that the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics", No. 16, which will be published this April, shows that all the major sources are decreasing.

Mr. Ainger: In the light of the increasing evidence that there is a direct link between nitrogen oxide emissions and asthma and other respiratory diseases, will the Government introduce mandatory standards of air quality in line with World Health Organisation guidelines to protect the health of our children and that of other vulnerable people?

Mr. Atkins: An investigation is considering the problem of air pollution and subsequently, I hope, there will be a report. As the parent of an asthmatic, I am only too well aware of the importance of air quality to asthmatics and others with breathing difficulties, especially in certain urban areas. We expect to be able to make a judgment in the not-too-distant future. The House is aware that the expert panel on air quality standards is considering the issue, and I am only too well aware of the importance of the matter to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mrs. Gillan: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great contributions to reducing greenhouse gases comes from the United Kingdom's nuclear industry, especially Nuclear Electric, which, in 1992-93, reduced carbon dioxide emissions by more than 55 million tonnes and reduced sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions by more than 870,000 tonnes? Does he also agree that, by reducing the United Kingdom's reliance on fossil fuels, we are contributing benefits to the global and national environment?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend put the point as succinctly and as well as it needed to be recorded.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Minister accept that one of the best ways to tell whether we are improving air quality is by increasing the scope of air monitoring stations because we are far below all comparable countries in testing the quality of air? Will he ensure that we have the facts so that we can tell what is happening, as a matter of public record and information?

Mr. Atkins: At the moment, we spend about £4 million per annum on air quality monitoring, and the figure has doubled since the 1991 White Paper. There is always a need to have a pretty fair understanding of air quality and the hon. Gentleman makes a fair point, but it is certainly our intention to ensure that air quality monitoring is improved, not the reverse.

"This Common Inheritance"

13. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now intends to publish the third annual update of "This Common Inheritance".

Mr. Gummer: Very soon; the report is currently with the printers.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that "This Common Inheritance" was published in 1990 and reported in 1991 and again in 1992? Why is it six months late this time? One of its recommendations was that we should not export toxic waste, but it has now been proved that some non-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries are used as routes for dumping such waste. Does he agree that we should be reporting the recommendation made by the Danes at the Basel convention?

Mr. Gummer: I made the decision, which was widely welcomed, that we should not publish the next White Paper until after the sustainable development report so that it could be taken into account. I do not think that anyone has objected to that and it has been widely understood to be a sensible order.

We export toxic waste only for reprocessing so that it may be used as a secondary raw material. We export it only to places that have the proper equipment and ability. I intend to continue doing that, and not to export to countries that do not want the waste. If there is any question of this method being used as a means of dumping, I shall examine it at once and cease to allow it to happen. I do not think that the Danish proposition is sensible, because a country that has the proper resources should not be excluded from the possibility of using the raw materials that have been created. Countries must have the proper resources. They must be able to control the waste and they must ensure that it is not used for the purposes that the hon. Gentleman states. We are on the same side and if he has any case that he wants to bring to my attention, I shall be happy to take it up.

Mr. Chris Smith: Following the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray), the Secretary of State will, of course, be aware that paragraph 14.61 of "This Common Inheritance" claims that Britain has taken a world lead in calling for self-sufficiency in national waste disposal. However, that does not apply to the export of toxic waste. The Secretary of State may nowadays be unimpressed by the fact that 15 Anglican bishops have called for an end to the export of toxic waste to developing countries, but he may take rather more notice of the call that has been made by Pope John Paul II. Will he, therefore, support the Danish proposal at next week's meeting of the Basel convention for a complete ban on the export of toxic waste from Britain to the developing world?

Mr. Gummer: I know of no ecclesiastical personage who would support the imperialist view that a country that has exactly the same means of reprocessing toxic waste to help its industry should be denied that opportunity because it happens to be a developing country. Those people want to ensure that none of that toxic waste is dumped on other countries and used improperly. I am determined to ensure that, but I am not acting imperialistically.

Council Tax

14. **Mr. Rendel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will introduce transitional relief for those new authorities which, as a result of the local government review, will face disproportionate increases in their council tax bills.

Mr. Curry: We are discussing with local authority associations the arrangements to finance new councils. When a new council receives a standard spending assessment that does not reflect its inherited commitments, we shall consider whether we should provide transitional help to protect council tax payers.

Mr. Rendel: In the light of that response, will the Minister assure us that, in practice, he will not enforce local government reform on any area against the wishes of the local community?

Mr. Curry: The purposes of local government reform are perfectly clear. They are to achieve a more accountable form of local government and to achieve more efficient local government. It is also a reform which corresponds to the needs of local people. If first tests demonstrate that changing the system of government will deliver those benefits, that is what we shall do. But if a fairly clear case can be made that that is not so, the Government have no national blueprint. We are not doing it just for the sake of change.

Mr. Oppenheim: What is the likely effect on a new authority's council tax levels? In Derbyshire county council's dying days, the deputy leader has been thrown into gaol for fraud and continues to draw his council's allowances; the former leader has resigned in disgrace, having squandered millions building a millionaire's complex in Yalta in the Crimea; and, habitually, close friends and relatives of senior Labour politicians get top jobs in the council. Is that not real corruption and gerrymandering and will not a cost be passed on to any new councils that are formed after the county council is abolished?

Mr. Curry: I am sure that all of us want the new councils to start with a completely clean inheritance and perhaps with a different set of values, as well.

Mr. Henderson: The Minister will be aware from his consultations with local authorities and others, especially Conservative colleagues, of the many anxieties about the cost of local government reorganisation. Has the Department commissioned a study to assess the overall cost in England arising out of any changes in the local government review? If such a study has not been commissioned, will the Minister tell the House why?

Mr. Curry: It is very simple. Let us be clear: there is a distinction between transitional costs and net costs. The net costs will be met. At the end of the day, we think that

the realisation of efficiencies, and so on, will pay for the transitional costs. However, until we know what shape local government will take, until we know what the commission comes forward with and until we know what the House will accept, it is utterly impossible to come to any conclusions. We have made it clear that we shall make available to local authorities credits to finance those transitional costs. All the commission's projections show that there will be a pay-back period in efficiency and in avoiding duplication, which will finance the transitional costs, including the rolled-up interest.

Mrs. Lait: Does my hon. Friend share my anger and that of my constituents at the blatant politicking that Lib-Lab-run East Sussex county council puts into its magazine "Countywide", which merely defends its current position? Is that not as bad as the loony left councils, and will it not be a cost to council tax payers, now and in the future?

Mr. Curry: I never cease to be amazed by the number of councils that tell me that they need more standard spending assessment because they are so hard up that they cannot finance essential services, yet they always manage to finance consultants, Queen's counsel and other people to argue for their own survival. Several councils have put out misleading propaganda, such as polls that can have only one result. I have seen East Sussex's literature, and it has been one of the most conspicuous authorities in doing that. A genuine debate about the merits of local government reform and how best to deliver services is to be encouraged, but simply trying to protect one's own job by misleading the public shows local government at its worst. We shall examine most carefully the costs incurred by such councils.

City Pride

15. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what actions have been taken in relation to city pride.

Sir George Young: The partners in the three city pride cities, Birmingham, London and Manchester, have all formed partnerships to take forward the preparation of prospectuses for their areas and they are making good progress.

Mr. Orme: Does the Minister agree that that is a competition of the poor versus the poor, instead of providing proper funding for inner-city areas such as Salford? Government policy is not working in that regard. We need more resources. What does the Minister intend to do about that?

Sir George Young: We tried to get more resources on Monday night, and I am ashamed to say that the right hon. Gentleman again voted against more resources for my Department. The sum was £213 million, some of which would go to the urban programme. I invite the right hon. Gentleman to hear what Manchester city council said about city pride:

"The City Council is determined to respond very positively to the Secretary of State's invitation."

If Manchester—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about Salford?"] Salford is part of the committee involved in city pride. If Manchester city council can respond in that generous way, I hope that the right hon. Gentleman can do so as well.

Dogs

16. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to encourage local authorities to deal with the problem of dog fouling of parks, beaches and other public places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are very concerned about the unpleasant nuisance of dog mess, but we believe that that is primarily a matter for local authorities.

Mr. Mullin: The Minister's reply is hopelessly inadequate. Is it not a fact that our parks, beaches and other public places are ruined by the selfishness of some dog owners? Does he agree that it is about time that the Government took a lead in making those parks, beaches and other public places available to all our citizens?

Mr. Atkins: I have considerable sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman says. It is true that a recent Tidy Britain Group survey revealed that one in six streets was fouled by dogs and that, for 76 per cent. of adults, dog fouling was one of the worst aspects of environmental damage of which they could think. However, one has to recognise that there is a difficulty, between the people who believe that their pets can do no wrong and others who take a different view. I do not want to fall between two stools.

Mr. Hendry: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, as a result of compulsory competitive tendering, Conservative local authorities are more efficient at cleaning up dog dirt than Labour authorities? Does that not mean that, in a Labour authority, one has to watch not only how much one pays but where one walks?

Mr. Atkins: We can also say that, at any rate, we have a better class of dog in Tory authorities.

Ms Eagle: Will the Minister explain how the Government could possibly help the nation to clean up its dog mess when they cannot even clear up their own mess?

Mr. Atkins: I am always concerned at the fact that the hon. Lady is so unhappy about these matters. As I said, this is a serious matter and one which the House should take seriously. It is something which we should encourage. I suspect that there is agreement on both sides of the House about the serious message to give—we want to encourage owners to recognise the importance of not leaving dog mess in places where it can do damage to children, other people and society as a whole. If that message gets across on both sides of the House, that will go a long way towards solving the problem.

Water Charges

17. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Office of Water Services about the basis of charging for water supply in the south-west.

Mr. Gummer: The Department is in frequent discussion with Ofwat on the basis of charging for water.

Mr. Streeter: Is my right hon. Friend aware that water charges in Devon and Cornwall in 1993 were substantially higher than in the rest of the country, and we are now facing an increase in our water charges of more than 12 per cent? Does he understand that the patience of the residents

of Devon and Cornwall is wearing thin? Can he assure me that the Government are leaving no stone unturned to reduce our water bills? When can we have some positive news on this important subject?

Mr. Gummer: We are certainly seeking to do all that we can to reduce water bills. However, we must also meet the standards that not only are expected of us by the European Community but which we ourselves want to meet. We are trying to do both at the same time.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: Does the Minister recognise that, because of the frightening increase in bills in the south-west, there is a growing feeling up and down the country that what is wrong with the water industry is that the customer—the consumer—is not coming first? Does he agree that it is crucial that both the water regulator, Mr. Ian Byatt, and the Government should start to listen to consumers about the unfairness of compulsory metering, the wrongness of disconnecting homes and the impossibility of meeting the very steep water increases?

Mr. Gummer: My constituents want us to meet the highest standards. They believe that it is a major protection for the consumer that water companies can cut off the supplies of people who refuse to pay their bills when they have the means so to do.

Mr. Harris: May I press my right hon. Friend on what my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) said—people in the south-west will not put up with such bills for much longer? The fact is that many people cannot pay their bills. We are looking to my right hon. Friend and Mr. Byatt to find a satisfactory solution that will end the misery.

Mr. Gummer: I understand what my hon. Friend says. As he knows, he has been pressing me on these issues for some time, as have other Tory Members for the south-west. There is a difficulty in trying to deliver the standards that we want at a price that is acceptable to the consumer. I am seeking to find every means to do that. However, in the end, those standards cost money, and I know that Mr. Byatt has that point very much in mind.

Energy Audits

18. **Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take to ensure that local authorities carry out an energy audit of buildings within their area.

Mr. Baldry: We encourage local authorities to carry out audits of their own buildings as part of good practice and to play a wider role in energy efficiency thinking in their areas.

Mr. Faulds: As you know, Madam Speaker, I am always overkeen to get the business of the House completed. I have a very straight question and will be obliged if I get a very simple answer. Can I have an assurance that the Government will support the Bill of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) —the Energy Conservation Bill—without amendment?

Mr. Baldry: We are considering that matter. However, as I made clear on Second Reading, we will not add to the burdens of local authorities unless it is absolutely necessary.

Air Quality

19. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that all urban areas have effective monitoring of air pollution and quality.

Mr. Gummer: We shall cover all major cities within three years and are currently considering responses to our consultation paper, which proposes a national system.

Ms Lynne: Can the Minister confirm that air pollution has increased in urban areas? Does he agree with the advice that the Government are giving to the millions of asthma sufferers like myself—that we should stay indoors when air pollution is bad? Does he not think that he should be looking at the causes of pollution, rather than recommending voluntary house arrest?

Mr. Gummer: I agree that it is the causes of pollution that matter. Indeed, the air in our cities has improved considerably, but lately the increased use of cars has resulted in a return to a rise in pollution. That is why I announced yesterday, for example, planning policy guidance 13, which will change the balance in planning in relation to transport. I am sure that the hon. Lady will agree that, in the end, that is the way down which we must go, as well as having cleaner cars.

Mr. Barnes: May we have a full environmental survey of Staveley in north-east Derbyshire, where there are a mass of airborne pollution problems other than those resulting from transport, which has already been mentioned? Problems arise from the works in the area and from dioxin. I have raised that matter several times in the House. It would be fruitful for the Government to adopt procedures whereby they can solidly investigate asthma and other problems in such areas.

Mr. Gummer: If the hon. Gentleman cares to write to me, I will certainly look into the possibility of doing something special in his area.

Single Regeneration Budget

20. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations took place in the development of the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson).

Mr. Etherington: In view of the Secretary of State's statement last November and the projection that there will be a 40 per cent. reduction in urban aid programmes between 1990 and 1996, will the Minister reassure the House that urban areas such as my constituency will not suffer even more drastically than they have done for the past three generations because money has been diverted into more prosperous areas that have only recently suffered because of recession?

Mr. Baldry: Millions of pounds have been spent on the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and nearby, through the Tyne and Wear development corporation, city challenge and other initiatives—for example, estate action and the single regeneration budget—and millions of pounds will continue to be spent in his constituency on urban regeneration.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your help in respect of a letter from the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd). It apparently goes to Conservatives, although it is addressed "Dear Colleague", and it deals with the Conservative party and the European People's party, so it is rather long and embarrassing. I will just read the last paragraph:

"Over the next four months, the responsibility for us all is to campaign for a Conservative victory in June's election. A centre-right majority in the European Parliament will strengthen our hand in building the free-market, deregulated and decentralised Europe to which all Conservatives are committed."

It is signed "Douglas"—or it could be "Dougie". The important point of the letter is that it has been written under the Foreign and Commonwealth Office letterhead and is addressed from the Secretary of State.

The help that I seek is to know whether the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has moved to Smith square or whether the Secretary of State does not know his departmental elbow from his party's arriere-pensee. Will you ask him to come to the House to explain the Foreign Office's new policy of supporting the Conservative party in the forthcoming elections?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's point of order is not a matter for the Chair, largely because no House of Commons writing paper is involved. I assume that the Government have their own rules covering these situations. The accounting officer at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office may be interested in the circular. It does not, however, raise a point of order for me, and I cannot help the hon. Gentleman further on it.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that if an hon. Member's question is being dealt with on the Floor of the House the hon. Member should stay at least until the exchanges have ended? As the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) did not do the House the courtesy of waiting until the exchanges had finished, can you tell us why he hurried away? Was he being sought by the district auditor who is looking into the affairs of Westminster council.

Madam Speaker: Out of the corner of my eye I caught sight of the hon. Gentleman leaving before answers to his question had been completed. I consider it a great discourtesy to the House and to me as Speaker in calling the Member, and I hope that all Members will note that in future, when their questions are being debated on the Floor of the House, they should remain in the Chamber until their questions have finished.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): I unreservedly apologise, Madam Speaker, for leaving as I did. I did not realise that question 7 was still being discussed. I apologise fully for leaving as early as I did.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that in another place yesterday Earl Ferrers, the Minister of State, Home Office, announced that it was the Government's intention to introduce and railroad through a one-clause Bill rectifying their error on the Railways Act 1993 in order to restore the right of arrest to the British Transport police. First, is it correct that the other place should be told on a different day from the House of Commons of the intention to introduce emergency legislation? Secondly, will a Minister make a statement about this legislation to rectify the Government's botch-up?

Madam Speaker: Nothing out of order has taken place. We shall, of course, be informed about the Bill when it comes before the House.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether you, as the ultimate authority on the good running of the House, have received any report about this morning's proceedings in Standing Committee A with regard to scrutiny of a document. The Select Committee on European Legislation referred the document to the Standing Committee 16 months ago, but it arrived only today—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman, as a long-standing Member of the House, understands our proceedings. This Chamber cannot concern itself with developments in a Committee until the Committee's Chairman has reported to the House on any irregularities that may have occurred. I should hope that, in the case of any irregularities, the Chairman would report to me so that they could be dealt with in the normal way.

Mr. Harris *rose—*

Madam Speaker: If this is a point of order with which I can deal, I must, of course, hear it. However, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear in mind what I have just said and will not raise matters occurring in a Committee upstairs, which should have an opportunity to report to the House.

Mr. Harris: I accept what you say, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate the point. That is why I asked the Chairman of your Panel to refer the matter. It is absolutely disgraceful that it has taken 16 months for such an issue to be referred to the relevant Committee. I hope that the Panel Chairman will pursue the issue at the request of the Committee.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich) *rose—*

Madam Speaker: It is not a matter for me, but as the hon. Lady has an involvement in the matter I must hear whether she has a point of order.

Mrs. Dunwoody: It relates to the same point of order, Madam Speaker. The difficulty for the House of Commons is that ours is a scrutiny Committee and this is an auditor's report. Whatever the rights or wrongs of the situation, we ask for the protection of the Chair. If the House of Commons makes arrangements for Committee scrutiny of European legislation, and if that legislation is not referred in good order and in good time, the House of Commons fails to perform its proper task. That is the point that the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and the rest of us wish to bring very forcefully to your attention.

Madam Speaker: In that case, I shall certainly look into the matter.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster any

communication about the need for a statement on the citizens charter? As you may know, the second report under the charter is being published this afternoon. On every previous occasion, a statement has been made to the House. Indeed, the Minister concerned spoke on the radio this morning about the charter programme. We have been told that the charter is the centrepiece, the flagship, of the Government's programme. Does the absence of a statement indicate that the flagship is being allowed to sink?

Madam Speaker: I have not been informed that a Minister is seeking to make a statement. Of course, the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity later in the week to seek further information from the Government.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, who is present today, will recall that on Friday the Civil Rights (Disabled People) Bill was given a Second Reading, with more than 200 Members voting in favour of it, and none against. The Bill that my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) introduced, which also went through unopposed, has now been saddled with countless amendments, many of them tabled by the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry). Will you, Madam Speaker, allow the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People to tell us whether he will permit a practice designed to obstruct the Bill, and will he give us a guarantee of extra parliamentary time to enable the legislation to go through all its stages?

Madam Speaker: Ministers do not require my permission to make a statement. This is not a point of order for the Chair. However, Ministers will no doubt have noted the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: It cannot be a further point of order as the last point was not a point of order in the first place.

Mr. Hendry: It is a new point.

Madam Speaker: Very well.

Mr. Hendry: Is it in order for an hon. Member to criticise another hon. Member for tabling amendments to legislation that will affect every consumer in the country? It seems that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) would allow two and a half hours for debate or seek to have the legislation put through on the nod. Is it in order for him, without giving warning, to try to deprive other Members of an opportunity to debate such an important matter in detail?

Madam Speaker: I said originally that the hon. Gentleman did not have a point of order for me. I think that it is a matter of personalities. Hon. Members might try to have their exchanges elsewhere, not in the Chamber.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it a new one?

Mr. Riddick: It is a new point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Has the hon. Gentleman just thought it up?

Mr. Riddick: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes, I thought as much.

Mr. Riddick: I have just thought it up, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Or dreamed it up.

Mr. Riddick: Might not the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) have had to ask his question because he never serves on Committees—

Madam Speaker: Order. I knew that I was making a mistake when I agreed to listen to the hon. Gentleman. We now have a ten-minute Bill, which will make much more sense, no doubt.

Social Security Regulations (Chronic Bronchitis and Emphysema) Amendment

3.39 pm

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Social Security (Industrial Injuries) (Prescribed Diseases) Regulations to reduce to ten years the aggregate period of underground work required to qualify for benefits in cases of chronic bronchitis and emphysema; to amend the rules relating to medical assessment of percentage levels of disablement in people suffering from these conditions; and for connected purposes.

I should like to declare an interest. I am sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers.

My Bill would change in four main ways the prescription test that was introduced in the Social Security (Industrial Injuries) (Prescribed Diseases) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1993. First, it would reduce the qualifying period from 20 years to 10 years. Secondly, it would reduce the disablement threshold from 14 per cent. to multiples of 10 per cent. Thirdly, it would specify that soft exposure X-rays should be used for diagnosing dust retention. Finally, it would replace the FEV1 test with a thorough and sensitive medical examination.

I want to consider the background to the original regulations and to explain the rationale on which my amendments are based. The original regulations were based on the recommendations of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council. After more than 20 years, the council has finally accepted that there is a causal connection between the exposure to coal dust and the development of chronic bronchitis and emphysema. As a result, it has recognised that the disease should be prescribed in relation to deep coal mining and recommended the application of a prescription test. That test has already proved to be too harsh.

The failure rate in South Yorkshire, according to the Department of Social Security office in Doncaster, is estimated to be 90 per cent. of applicants. I am advised that the overall failure rate nationally is the same. That means that, of the 23,477 applications received in the first wave, about 21,000 will be turned down. That cannot be what the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council intended.

Let me give the House an example of the sort of case that is being rejected. Last Saturday week, I received a telephone call from Mr. G. Scott, a former miner. He told me that he is so enfeebled by breathlessness that he has to use a nebuliser to assist his breathing. He has been treated for chronic bronchitis and emphysema for years, but when he was recently subjected to the prescription test he was told by the examining authorities that he did not have a sufficient degree of the disease for a disablement assessment. Mr. Scott is not unique. I have received letters from former miners who are similarly disabled and have had the same experience at the hands of the medical authorities.

I shall explain the rationale that underpins the amendments in my Bill. Pneumoconiosis, chronic bronchitis and emphysema have the same causation: coal dust in the lungs. It is an established fact that pneumoconiosis, which is defined as fibrosis of the lungs, is a more complicated stage than dust retention and can be contracted by an exposure of 10 years or less. That fact is recognised in the regulations on pneumoconiosis that specify a qualifying period of 10 years. It is, therefore, illogical that the less complicated stage of dust retention should require a longer exposure period.

The second and related difficulty that my Bill seeks to amend involves the level of disablement threshold. Under the original regulation, that level is 14 per cent., but my Bill proposes to reduce it to multiples of 10 per cent. For my reasoning, I again turn to the example of the pneumoconiosis regulations. In cases where that disease is accompanied by chronic bronchitis and emphysema, and where the examining authorities consider that the former disease worsens the latter, additional assessments are given in multiples of 10 per cent. It is, therefore, unreasonable to move away from the already established principle of assessing chest diseases, particularly chronic bronchitis and emphysema in relation to coal miners, in multiples of 10. On those two matters, one cannot avoid the conclusion that the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council saw itself as the controller of the Government's purse.

I have referred to the case of Mr. Scott. Let me now give the House two hypothetical, but extremely realistic, examples of miners who were suffering from the disease but could be ruled out of benefit because they did not meet one or other of the criteria. Two miners who work together underground for 17 or 18 years both leave underground work together. One continues working in the colliery on the surface in dusty conditions, and the other takes a job as a school caretaker. When they reach retirement age, both have respiratory conditions and both apply to the pneumoconiosis medical board.

The former miner who left the pit is found to have pneumoconiosis with attendant chronic bronchitis and emphysema. He would receive 10 per cent. for the pneumoconiosis, plus 10 per cent. because the pneumoconiosis worsens the chronic bronchitis and emphysema, and would finish with an assessment of 20 per cent. The miner who had spent all his life at the colliery is examined and is found to have dust retention with very acute chronic bronchitis and emphysema. However, as he is not a pneumoconiotic, he cannot be afforded an assessment under that regulation. He is referred to the chronic bronchitis and emphysema regulation, but immediately is ruled out of benefit because he does not meet the 20-year criterion. Again, I contend that that cannot be a fair procedure.

My second example relates to redundant miners. Tens of thousands of former miners have now been made redundant and have not been able to work for 20 years underground. Sadly, but inevitably, some of those young men will develop chronic bronchitis and emphysema due to coal dust retention in the lungs. However, under the qualifying period of 20 years, they will be ruled out of benefit.

In preparing the Bill, I sought medical advice from an eminent chest physician who sits on the regional medical appeal tribunal, and that advice was of particular value for the third and fourth amendments of my Bill. Diagnosing dust retention in the lungs from X-rays is an extremely precise art. I am advised that it is made difficult because the normal type of hospital X-ray may not show the condition. A surer way of making an accurate diagnosis—it is called for in my Bill—is to use specific soft exposure X-rays.

Finally, my Bill calls for the replacement of the FEV1 test by a more sensitive medical examination. I am advised that, medically, although the test measures the overall lung function, it is possible for a man to be more breathless due

to coal dust induced chronic bronchitis and emphysema and, because of that, to suffer greater disability than a man who has a one litre reduction in the lung function test. Clearly there needs to be an examination to eliminate other causes of breathlessness, and there needs to be a more sensitive examination under the pneumoconiosis regulations. The disease is diagnosed from X-ray evidence and medical examination.

Even when it is accompanied by chronic bronchitis and emphysema, the degree of disability is determined by a medical examination. The amendments in my proposed Bill would make the prescription test for diagnosing chronic bronchitis and emphysema in coal miners and former coal miners a fairer and more just procedure. I urge the House to accept the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Michael Clapham, Mr. Eric Clarke, Mr. Eric Illsley, Mr. Mike O'Brien, Mr. Terry Patchett, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Kevin Hughes, Mr. Ted Rowlands, Mr. Alan Meale and Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

Social Security Regulations (Chronic Bronchitis and Emphysema) Amendment

Mr. Michael Clapham accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Social Security (Industrial Injuries) (Prescribed Diseases) Regulations to reduce to ten years the aggregate period of underground work required to qualify for benefits in cases of chronic bronchitis and emphysema; to amend the rules relating to medical assessment of percentage levels of disablement in people suffering from these conditions; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 April, and to be printed. [Bill No.75.]

Madam Speaker: We now come to the ways and means motions.

Ways and Means

CAPITAL ALLOWANCES: BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That provision may be made for balancing charges under Part I of the Capital Allowances Act 1990 where any of the value of the relevant interest in any building or structure is realised otherwise than on a sale.—[*Mr. Dorrell.*]

3.49 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Are we taking the motions together or singly, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: For the convenience of the House, we are taking with the first motion the two following motions relating to PAYE and pre-entry losses:

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made relating to the Income Tax (Employments) Regulations 1993 and the Income Tax (Employments) Regulations 1973.

That provision may be made amending Schedule 7A to the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992.

Mr. Beith: Some words of explanation on the third resolution from the Financial Secretary would be helpful in view of the extent of argument that we have had about the treatment of indexation losses in Committee. We are dealing with the ways and means motion after we have dealt with some aspects of the matter in the Standing Committee that is considering the Finance Bill.

The House is entitled to know whether the resolution is designed to enable some refinement of the provisions for indexation losses that members of the Committee do not yet know about, or to do something else. The point that I have sought to put to Ministers is that to remove what have become known as the Lawson reforms on indexation losses is a strange move for the Government to make. The abuses that have led the Government to believe it necessary to abandon what they regarded as important and long-lasting changes in tax law could be dealt with by more specific means.

On the face of it, the ways and means resolution appears to open the way to more specific means of tackling abuses by companies that use subsidiaries as devices to create losses that can be set against gains and, thereby, avoid taxation. That type of abuse could usefully be dealt with, rather than abuses by individuals who, under the changes that the Government propose, will no longer be able to set tax losses in one security against tax gains in another. Of course, if people have their funds in unit trusts, the problem will not arise because the net gains will be considered. However, if people have a small portfolio of shares, they will face a problem.

The resolutions appear to provide an opening to deal with the problem in a better way than the Government are doing. That made me especially intrigued to know what they were up to.

3.51 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) should be congratulated on his ingenuity in raising again on the Floor of the House a subject that we debated last night in the Standing Committee that is considering the Finance Bill. The resolution and the new clause for which it is a paving measure is not intended to deal with the subject of loss

[Mr. Stephen Dorrell]

indexation allowance per se. Loss indexation is to do with the quantum of loss relief that is available to a particular taxpayer.

The two defects that will be dealt with as a result of the ways and means resolution are connected with the transferability of losses between companies within a group. Therefore, they deal with a different issue from that which the right hon. Gentleman is worried about. The issue that he raised was dealt with in last year's Finance Bill,—capital loss buying and the abuse, which is perceived as an abuse by hon. Members on both sides of the House, which derives from companies buying capital losses and setting them off against capital gains elsewhere in the group.

We introduced last year anti-avoidance measures to deal with that problem. The measures that will be built on the ways and means resolution which we ask the House to approve now will deal with that aspect of the problem. So the resolutions are directed at the transferability of capital losses rather than the quantum of capital losses.

3.53 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The official Opposition would have been happy to take the three ways and means resolutions formally, but a few words of explanation are called for following the remarks of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

The three resolutions that facilitate the blocking of three separate potential avoidance devices do not relate to the matter that the right hon. Gentleman raised. I have every sympathy with him in the matter of substance to which he referred. He was right to say that we had a long and not particularly fruitful discussion of the matter yesterday in Committee.

The three resolutions with which we are dealing all aim to facilitate anti-avoidance legislation. They have the support of the parliamentary Opposition in that. In particular, the second resolution has our support because it is a measure which I called for in the Committee which considered the previous Finance Bill. The Financial Secretary assured us that it was not necessary.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That provision may be made for balancing charges under Part I of the Capital Allowances Act 1990 where any of the value of the relevant interest in any building or structure is realised otherwise than on a sale.

WAYS AND MEANS

PAYE

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made relating to the Income Tax (Employments) Regulations 1993 and the Income Tax (Employments) Regulations 1973.

PRE-ENTRY LOSSES

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending Schedule 7A to the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Redundant Churches

3.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): I beg to move,

That the draft Grants to the Redundant Churches Fund Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 11th February, be approved.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage is empowered by section 1(1) and (2) of the Redundant Churches and other Religious Buildings Act 1969—as successor, for this purpose, to the Minister of Housing and Local Government, named in the section—to make by order, with the approval of the Treasury, grants to the redundant churches fund up to a specified maximum, over a specified period.

The redundant churches fund was originally set up in 1969, and the statutory provisions relating to it are currently embodied in the Pastoral Measure 1983. The fund has as its object

"the preservation, in the interests of the nation, and the Church of England, of churches, and parts of churches, of historic and archaeological interest, or architectural quality, vested in the Fund by Part III of the 1983 Measure, together with their contents so vested."

Its chairman and members are appointed by Her Majesty after advice has been submitted to her by the Archbishops of Canterbury and of York, through the Prime Minister.

The fund is now celebrating its quarter century and currently holds 290 churches, ranging from 18th century inner-city churches such as Holy Trinity, Sunderland and St. James, Toxteth, to rural ones, such as the 12th century St. Pendock near Tewkesbury and the 14th century St. James, Luffincott in Devon. What they have in common is that they are all of outstanding quality—a matter on which the Church Commissioners, who decide on vesting, have the expert advice of the Advisory Board for Redundant Churches, which is also provided for in the 1983 Measure. Together, they form a most impressive portfolio and, along with churches still in pastoral use, a lasting witness to the strength of our ecclesiastical heritage.

The draft order provides for grants to the fund in the period from 1 April 1994 to 31 March 1997; that is, in the next three financial years. The five previous orders each covered a five-year period; the present order is the first to cover only three years. That change implements one of the recommendations in the 1990 Wilding report on the care of redundant churches. Five-year periods were, as Mr. Wilding saw, originally helpful in establishing an assured future for the fund for five years ahead on each occasion, but the fund is now sufficiently well established for that assurance to be unnecessary and there are several reasons for preferring a shorter three-year period.

In particular, the long lead time needed for preparing a quinquennial budget and obtaining approval means that figures have had to be worked out and presented for discussion up to two years before the beginning of the quinquennium. Those figures are now in cash terms and the process therefore involves trying to take a view, of the rate of redundancy, the rate of vesting and above all the rate of inflation for the next seven years. In our view a three-year period provides a much greater encouragement to realistic forward planning and fits the general public expenditure framework.

For the period 1994-97, the draft order provides for grants to the fund up to a maximum of £7.2 million. That

figure includes £2.2 million for the financial year 1994-95 and £2.5 million for each of the following two financial years, as already notified to the fund for planning purposes. The maximum figure in the order has been approved by the Treasury.

The order as made requires the signature of two Lords Commissioners of the Treasury as well as that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage. The annual figures included within the overall grant fall within the relevant public expenditure totals already made public.

The figures also represent the Government's 70 per cent. contribution towards the fund's expenditure, with the Church Commissioners providing the remaining 30 per cent. The Government's proportion has risen steadily from 40 per cent. in the first quinquennium to 50, 60 and, in the quinquennium just ending, 70 per cent. Therefore, the fund's maximum overall budget amounts to £10.3 million for the coming triennium. That allows for some new vestings and the necessary initial repairs as well as for continuing repairs to churches already vested.

I would not want to pretend to the House that the level of funding envisaged in the order is ideal, but public expenditure needs to be kept under proper control and the language of priorities rules.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The Minister has mentioned possible new vestings. His attention may have been drawn to the fact that during the debate on the Pastoral (Amendment) Measure, I drew attention to a gap between the redundant churches fund and the historic chapel fund in relation to private chapels and chapels of ease that belong to the Church of England but which the redundant churches fund cannot take on. Nor does the historic chapels fund consider it appropriate to take them on—I speak as a trustee of that fund. Is the Minister looking into that problem and will he come back to me about it?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I will look at the important problem that the right hon. Gentleman raised and I shall come back to him in due course.

However, within that framework, we can take a measure of satisfaction from the fact that the maximum provided in the order, taken with what is provided in the Church Commissioners' parallel order already approved—the Payments to Redundant Churches Fund Order 1993—amounts to an increase in cash terms for 1994-95 of 13 per cent. over the current year's figure and a further increase of 16 per cent. planned for 1995-96 and 1996-97.

The fund's powers under the Pastoral Measure 1983 include the power to hold, manage, repair and maintain the churches vested in it and the power to license the occasional or temporary use of its churches. The Church Commissioners may also divest it of churches vested. The House will recall approving last week the Pastoral (Amendment) Measure, which now awaits enactment. That Measure gives the fund some useful further powers, including the power to grant leases, and clarifies its power to charge admission for churches it holds, thus adding to its ability to make good use of the resources provided.

There is another change in prospect that it might be helpful for me to set out as a background to the draft order. Section 1(1) of the Redundant Churches and Other Religious Buildings Act 1969 will be amended to enable the Department's grant to be paid to the Church Commissioners for the purposes of the fund, rather than directly to the fund itself. That change will implement a further recommendation of the Wilding report and is aimed as making the Church Commissioners

"a focal point for the review of policy and the selection of priorities and the matching of expenditure with resources."

Relations between the Department and the fund in respect of the Department's grant are currently regulated by a financial memorandum, setting out both parties' financial responsibilities as approved by the Treasury. In the new circumstances envisaged, there would be a similar memorandum regulating relations between the Department and the Church Commissioners to ensure proper control over the public expenditure element.

The Church Commissioners are already at the centre of the decision-making process—proposals for redundancy come to them from the dioceses and they decide which churches shall be vested in the fund—but the change proposed would give them a clearer role in the determination of policy and the choice of priorities. My predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) announced in November 1992 our intention to introduce legislation to that effect when room could be found in the Government programme. I hope that it will be possible to implement it at some stage in the coming triennium.

There is one final point that could be worrying some hon. Members. The draft order relates to grants to the redundant churches fund, but the Pastoral (Amendment) Measure provides for the fund's name to be changed to the churches conservation trust. That reflects the fact that vested churches are no longer fairly described as redundant, but have a role to play that is of value to Church and state and to their local communities. I can assure the House that the change of name will be automatically applied to the interpretation of the draft order as soon as the measure is enacted. With those few words, I commend the draft order to the House.

4.4 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I thank the Minister for moving the order, which has the Opposition's support. That is hardly surprising as it was a Labour Administration who, in 1969, introduced the original Measure. I am glad that it has the continued support of the hon. Gentleman's Administration.

I welcome, too, the change to a three-year period and accept the valid arguments that the Minister made. The fund is well established and there is no danger, in the light of Mr. Wilding's report, in the move to a three-year period.

The order is important, as is this short debate. People all over the country who are worried about the future use and role of their parish churches will be listening to the debate, anxious to know what chance their churches have of being reprieved and restored and of continuing to play a part in the community. The debate is important to many communities because churches are a key architectural and community resource long after they have ceased to have an ecclesiastical use.

In previous debates, not least the one on 8 March, to which the Minister referred, my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has made it clear that in both rural communities, such as those in East Anglia and in his own part of the country, and in cities, churches are invariably the focus. Historically, they have always been centres for the community for festivals, feasts, music,

[Mr. Mark Fisher]

debate from the pulpit and charitable matters such as alms giving. In particular, churches are invariably the most outstanding architectural point in a community, often the most visible, dwarfing all others.

The future of redundant churches is an important matter to communities and to our architectural heritage. Therefore, it is good that the Minister has moved the order in such a constructive way. There is an element of urgency about it. The noble Lord Templeman's report on the fate of London churches shows the scale of need and the seriousness of the problem.

The Opposition support this excellent measure, but I should be grateful if the Minister would answer certain questions when he replies to the short debate. He should tell the House something more about the scale of need. Between 20 and 30 churches become redundant every year, but, as far as I am aware, no figure is published of the number of redundant churches for which another use has yet to be found. The Government should make clear the number of churches that are potential recipients of the fund.

Only when we look at the scale of need and the queue of applications can the House decide whether the fund of £7 million during the next three years and the total fund of something over £10 million are adequate. The Minister recognised in his brief remarks that the amount of money is not ideal. He referred to public expenditure controls and the language of priorities, but he owes it to the House to give some idea of the scale of need. How many applications have been received and what is the total cost?

The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), who usually takes part in these debates but cannot be in his place today, because he is chairing a committee on Bosnia, would have liked to be here. He is a trustee of the Historic Churches Preservation Trust and knows only too well that literally hundreds of applications are received by that trust each year, each one of which runs into six figures—more than £100,000. Very few applications to the trust are for amounts of less than six figures.

The House can see the scale of need and the size of budget required. Even the most modest re-roofing of a church runs into hundreds of thousands of pounds. Communities all round the country are doing noble work in raising money by voluntary means, but they cannot address the scale of need and the urgency that such problems present. When the Minister replies, he should tell the House how many churches are queuing up for the money and what the scale of budget is. We could judge what he admits is not an ideal sum in the light of need and the ability to respond to that need.

When the Minister gives that figure, will he also say how it was arrived at, what the Church Commissioners and others have asked for and what was the range of consultation, not only with Church figures but heritage bodies, to establish that this is the correct sum and that we are not underestimating the need? When we come to renew the order in three years' time, we should be better informed and more aware of how we are responding to the heritage and historic needs of churches. Is the need growing or static? Are we dealing with the backlog slowly or is it beginning to escalate out of control? We need to hear more from the Minister on those matters.

How are we to address those needs? Does the country have the conservation and restoration skills that are necessary to respond—£7 million is a lot of money to spend even on the few churches that will benefit—for example in masonry, joinery and stained glass? Do we have the architectural and ecclesiastical expertise and the historical understanding of the context of the churches? All that must be addressed. All that is expensive. Hon. Members who have been, for example, to Wells cathedral or Hereford cathedral and seen the high quality of the restoration and conservation work there will know how difficult such work is, and how, on those projects, there has to be a great deal of in-house training to train young stonemasons to deal with the enormous skills that mediaeval stonemasons had but which we have lost over the years.

It would be useful if the Minister said something about the training and skills that will be implicit in the grants and whether those training skills respond to the level of need. Will the Minister reassure the House that an element of training will be in each of the grants so that we build up a store of skills in masonry, joinery and other ecclesiastical skills and thereby benefit from the good spending of the grant?

I reiterate that the Opposition thoroughly support the measure and look forward to a report by the Minister on how the money is being spent.

4.12 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): I apologise to you, Madam Speaker, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for not being present when the order was introduced. The business galloped ahead with such unaccustomed rapidity, and my hon. Friend's speech was so succinct and to the point, that it overturned and exceeded my capacity to get across the road from No. 1 Whitehall in time to hear even the tail end of it. Fortunately, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), who is the Opposition spokesman, in his elegant and helpful speech of welcome to the order, touched on most of the important points that my hon. Friend made so I am now as familiar with it as though I had heard it myself.

I am therefore glad to be able to express warm thanks and appreciation on behalf of the Church Commissioners and the Church of England more widely not only for the substantial financial benefit that will accrue to the Church of England from the order but for the personal interest and concern that my hon. Friend has taken in it and in this part of Government policy. There is bipartisan agreement that it is a responsibility of Government, but nevertheless a demonstration of civilised Government, that they should be prepared to dip hands into the taxpayer's pocket for what is a comparatively rarefied part of public expenditure that will produce no dividends in immediate political popularity but will, nevertheless, preserve things into the future and bring enormous appreciation and value to successive generations.

Mr. Fisher: May I ask the right hon. Gentleman a specific question about the criteria with which he and the Church Commissioners, for whom he speaks, approach the selection of churches?

I believe that the right hon. Gentleman has received some correspondence about St. John's, Hanley, a church in my constituency. That beautiful church, which stands in the centre of the city, is one of Hanley's few fine buildings.

The Commissioners have been asked to approve its use as a climbing centre, and to deem that use appropriate, although what the community needs is a place for contemplation and repose.

As the right hon. Gentleman probably knows, a strong body of local opinion in the centre of Hanley—led by the rector's wife, Mrs. Janice Owen—is in favour of keeping the church for the community. It would be very helpful to those people, and to other communities in the same position around the country, if the right hon. Gentleman said something about the Commissioners' approach to issues which—as he will appreciate—are of great concern to my constituents, and to others.

Mr. Alison: I am not sure whether it was the hon. Gentleman who wrote to me about that church; I think that it was. A substantial draft response has been prepared and I feel that it would be improper and undesirable for me to rehearse it now. As a result of the hon. Gentleman's intervention, however, the case that he has specified has been subjected to microscopic examination.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will at least derive from the answer that I am about to send him some fairly encouraging insights into the series of filters—some would call them baffles—that lie between the decision of a local diocese, through a pastoral committee, to consider a church for redundancy and the stage at which various architectural and other expert bodies, such as English Heritage, are brought into play under a broad Commission aegis to conclude whether the church should be considered for inclusion in the redundant churches fund. Rather than speaking for a long time now, I shall send the hon. Gentleman a note explaining exactly how we "pick the winner", so to speak.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Can the right hon. Gentleman shed any light on the number of churches seeking succour from the fund? That would give us a better idea of the extent to which it will be able to deal with applications.

Mr. Alison: I am tempted to respond to the hon. Gentleman's request, but I do not want to spoil my hon. Friend's winding-up speech, of which that relevant information will be an important feature. Rather than trespassing on his speech, I shall leave that little gem of information for him to hold up and allow to sparkle before the House.

I thank my hon. Friend warmly for the proposals that he has introduced: he has carried out his departmental responsibilities helpfully and generously. The Pastoral (Amendment) Measure, which we passed the other evening, is the kind of vehicle that makes the essential infrastructure provision for the order, but my hon. Friend's proposals represent the living fuel that enables the machinery to turn over and function. These important resources are the essential key to the Measure.

4.18 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am delighted to follow the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison). He said the other day that, although we were discussing redundant churches, the Church—partly because of the population shift—is now building a significant number of new churches each year. That is right: the Church must respond to the needs of the present, rather than giving priority to maintaining the heritage. I fully recognise, however, that across the Church—and, indeed, more widely—there is a general acceptance that the Redundant Churches and Other Religious Buildings Act 1969 was far-sighted and wise; I think we should ensure that its purpose continues to be served.

I shall make two points. First, I echo the important contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and those of one or two other hon. Members who mentioned churches that are not Anglican but which have architectural or other merit. I hope that the debate will send the signal that organisations such as English Heritage will maintain that part of our inheritance.

Mr. Beith: I hope that the hon. Gentleman recalls the fact, because it featured largely in our recent debate, that English Heritage has been determined in its support for, and its help in creating, the Historic Chapels Trust to do precisely that job.

Mr. Hardy: One hopes that the Treasury will not prevent English Heritage from continuing that obligation. It would be useful if, in his wind-up, the Minister would assure the House that that purpose will continue as a priority.

Secondly, I relate an incident that occurred in my constituency in the past two weeks. It concerns security. Although the grant is welcome, the challenge facing those responsible for redundant churches as a result of the increased crime rate is quite frightening. I can illustrate the point using a local case.

The old parish church in Wentworth is the only redundant church in my constituency. It is a 12th century church, which was replaced by a new and much larger building in the late 1870s—I cannot remember whether it was in 1877 or 1879. The new church was built by a very large and powerful Whig family, the Fitzwilliams, who by that time had become very important and presumably very affluent. A much larger church was required for their retinue, miners, gamekeepers and domestic servants, but the old church is of enormous historic and social importance in South Yorkshire.

In that church lie the mortal remains of the great-great-great-great grandfather of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Stafford. The church is still used from time to time; it is used in the summer, but cannot be used for services in the winter because it has no heating. The two local residents who take charge of the church—Mr. Roy Young, a retired headmaster of the local school, and Mr. Tom Tinker—devote an enormous amount of energy to maintaining the building as an important part of South Yorkshire life. Mr. Young sometimes arranges exhibitions in the church; indeed, he arranged one recently.

Among the exhibits was a collection of photographs of paintings that were last displayed in the 1930s in Sheffield. Since then, most of the paintings have disappeared, so the photographs in the exhibition are of considerable importance. A number of other artefacts and books were included in the exhibition, but two weeks ago there was a burglary. Thieves got into the church and removed a number of artefacts, including the bible presented by the Marquess of Rockingham, the father of the Rockingham Whig leader who was Prime Minister twice in the 18th century.

The bible was bound in silver and velvet. The thieves also removed a prayer book which I believe was presented in memory of Viscount Milton, who was the son of the

[Mr. Hardy]

great Whig reformer. I often suspect that the family declined after they ceased to be powerful Whigs and I think that their descendants are largely Conservatives—but that is another matter. It was once a very powerful family and Lord Milton was one of the great architects of political reform. The Bible, a very important book which commemorated that fact, was stolen. Other books were also taken, some of which have been recovered. One important book has been recovered, but has been damaged by damp. It was a dreadful theft of important items. As I said, one book that was bound in silver may have been destroyed so that the thieves could extract the silver that bound it.

To ask the local community to provide 24-hour security is impossible because of the cost of that sort of operation. With the development of interest in antiques and historic artefacts, even the churches in use, as well as the redundant churches, are under grave threat. We tend to assume that the Redundant Churches Fund Order of the Churches Conservation Trust is concerned about the architecture of churches that are vital landmarks in our environment, but often churches may be included in that list because of their interiors. It would be outrageous if we had to insist, because of the rate of crime in our society, that everything inside a church that made it a vital part of our inheritance had to be taken out for safe keeping. Security costs money. One important church in York has to have an attendant and the cost of such attendants can be substantial.

I wonder whether the arrangements that have been made adequately reflect the soaring rate of crime through which heritage is pillaged and valuable artefacts are broken down and sold in the burgeoning antique business. It is rather disturbing that in our generation we see a greater threat to our heritage as a result of the soaring crime rate than has been the case in the past. Until relatively recently, many of our churches could remain open so that people can go in for prayer and reflection. However, few churches can be left open now. When a church is redundant and the artefacts in it may be attractive, it is extremely vulnerable. When the local community is small and the church already depends on the dedicated service of its people, we cannot expect those people to devote more time to patrol all the churches during the hours of darkness and in inclement weather.

Wentworth church was burgled during extremely bad weather. However, I am delighted to say—my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) will especially appreciate this in view of his close connection with our local police—that the South Yorkshire police, unlike some police forces, tend to be very successful and the burglars have been apprehended. Whether we recover the artefacts remains to be seen. I have no guarantee, and no one in the village of Wentworth and the surrounding areas can have any guarantee, that the next time Mr. Roy Young, in the pursuit of the growing interest in local history, stages an exhibition in that church, it can be held with a feeling of security that other priceless items will not be stolen.

The grant envisaged of £7,200,000 is hardly enough to cope with the challenge presented by the soaring rate of crime. In due course, will the Minister consider finding out how much damage has been done, the value of the items that have been stolen and what assessment should be or could be made to provide support for the newly named organisation in its efforts to preserve heritage, which I hope that the whole House supports?

4.28 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): It is fairly unusual for the Church of England to get such a prime-time slot. It strikes me as more like a General Synod debate on a dull day than the excitement of the mother of Parliaments. However, such is the product of non co-operation and the timetabling that ensues.

May I make one significant point, following the debate last week, on the City of London churches? It relates to the amount of money and the demands on that money, which is available through the grant and the order, which I hope will be passed and which my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and I shall support with our colleagues. As the Minister will know, a recent report by Lord Templeman, to which the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) referred, came to the view, with which I do not disagree, that many City of London churches are no longer needed for the purposes of parish ministry. I hope that all of us in the Church realise that there comes a time when the venue of a church is no longer an appropriate centre for a parish and should not be sustained for that purpose. In rural areas, that happens when the village moves from its original site to a new development elsewhere and we are left with a little church up on a hill and the people living further away, down below. My sister-in-law, who is to be ordained a priest in the Church of England in a few weeks, is a curate in such a parish in Essex. The new daughter church is down in the valley and the original church is on the hill; the population has moved on.

The same happens in and around cities. In the middle ages, and in the time of Sir Christopher Wren and others, the demand for churches was in the City of London and not in the other places that have been built since. The demand for churches is not there any more. We understand why things have changed. However, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed and others said in the previous debate, many churches were built in excess of requirements even in the middle ages, as presentations to God of the glory of what human beings could create; they were not necessarily all required because of the number of people crowding into the pews.

In the City of London, we are left with a huge and wonderful array of churches which, to be honest, are not being used by thronging millions for daily or Sunday worship, so I guess that it would be right for the diocese of London to say that many of them are surplus to requirements and are no longer needed as parish churches.

However, it would be a tragedy if those churches were not to remain publicly available, and available for other uses. I am sure that the Minister would not want that to happen. He was not on the Front Bench during the debate last week, but the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), who speaks for the Church Commissioners, mentioned some of the many churches that have come to be used not as parish churches but as churches for special types of congregation or types of worship.

One church that has been chosen for such a purpose —it was mentioned last week—is the church of St. Agnes and St. Anne, in the City, which is now used as the base for the Lutheran Church in London. Lutherans from Europe

and America regularly come there and it is a lively church with brilliant music, jazz evening services and all sorts of other good things. That has great merit and contributes to a *multi-cultural and diverse population*, both those who live in London and those who come to London to visit the church.

I ask the Minister how the negotiations will proceed, and how far his Department will be involved this time and, more importantly, in debates to come—this will be a three-yearly grant, if approved. How will we be able to ensure that from among the Church Commissioners—for reasons that we will not go into today, they are hard up and do not have much spare money—the Department of National Heritage and others, we can find the funds to enable the churches to survive in a good state of repair? They are the heritage of all of us, they are in the capital city, there is a large number of them, and they will not be needed for the parish ministry. Other people are willing to take them on for other uses, but it will be no good if we leave them to pick up the tab, because they cannot afford it.

I should be grateful to hear at the end of the debate how the Department intends to make progress on the Templeman report and on working with the Church Commissioners. To use a phrase out of context, I wish to ensure that our beautiful historic legacy of the City of London churches does not fall between the two stools of the Department and the Commissioners, which would prevent us from doing our best to ensure that, as they move from the parish ministry to other work, the churches remain among the glories of the City of London in this wonderfully endowed country of ours.

4.33 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I shall speak briefly, following on from a brief intervention that I made in the debate on the Pastoral (Amendment) Measure last week. I speak not as a member of the Church but from an agnostic point of view. I do not approach the matter from the point of view of the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), who represents the Church Commissioners and who feels that spending the money may be appreciated by only a narrow section of the population. I believe that the beauty and the majesty of churches in the townscape and in the landscape generally are widely appreciated by a vast cross-section of the population and by far more people than actually attend churches.

The churches are part of the rich pattern of diversity in our townscape and landscape. Sadly, in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, that diversity was much reduced by philistine architecture, which changed from buildings with curves, shapes, nooks and crannies that hold, arrest and entertain the eye, to square utilitarian blocks with little to commend them, not even the internal comforts for the occupants. Indeed, in the case of tower blocks, there has been an enormous number of problems.

The churches of the Church of England are an important aesthetic pleasure—they are part of our art museum. Redundant churches are part of our national art museum and, therefore, it is right that the money envisaged in the order should be spent. As I said last week, the grant will help the Church of England to resist the god of mammon. Occasionally, the Church of England has been tempted to ensure that a church is demolished, so that it can obtain revenue from the church site because it wants the money. I hope that the order will help to preserve some of the magnificent buildings that so many people appreciate.

I hope that the Minister has taken note of the point made by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). It is not only churches of the Church of England which provide pleasure to the eye when they are redundant and should be retained—chapels are also part of the rich nonconformist tradition, especially in the north of England. For example, a beautiful chapel at Cleckheaton—where else—which is a magnificent testimony to the spirit of nonconformity, is being turned into a night club. I would rather see it as a night club than demolished. But, at the same time, we have lost a great many churches and chapels which potentially could have had some use and given pleasure if they had been retained.

Architectural buildings of magnificence are not simply buildings; they are a message from the people who built them. They were built with great care and devotion. They are a testimony to the beliefs of the time and, especially in the case of chapels, a testimony to dissidence. Testimonies to dissidence should be retained, because it is a spirit which I regard with affection.

The Minister said that he will tell the House what demand there is for the money—just over £7 million and a total of £10.3 million in three years. Will the money be adequate, or will we see the continuing erosion of some buildings because it is inadequate? I understand the priorities that affect any Government and about which tough decisions must be made. However, it will be useful to know what demand there is for the money.

The Minister helped the House by saying that the order will be changed when the legislative process of the Pastoral (Amendment) Measure is completed—the change from the redundant churches fund to the Churches Conservation Trust will be automatically applied in the order. That is all well and good. However, I hope that that sort of useful information will be added to the explanatory note in the future so that people are informed when they read it. We should try to make legislation as clear as possible before it leaves the House. The explanatory note is not part of the order and, therefore, does not depend on the passage of the Measure for its authenticity. It could be made clear that the change in name depends on the passage of the Measure. That would help in any future reference.

The order is probably the only legislation introduced by the Labour Government which the Conservative Government are likely to support, so we should certainly welcome it.

4.38 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I do not intend to repeat what I said in the debate on the Pastoral Measure last week, but I shall pick up two or three points made in the debate.

The Minister need not go as far as Cleckheaton to see a chapel converted into a night club. He need walk only as far as Charing Cross road where, just on the left, he will see a very substantial, former Welsh calvinistic Methodist chapel which, during my time in the House, has been converted into a night club. There are many conversions of churches and chapels in London and elsewhere.

That leads me to make the point that the redundant churches fund and the Historic Chapels Trust cannot hope to cope with the full range and number of buildings that

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

may cease to be used for parish or congregational worship. There is a quite widespread public feeling that, if possible, fewer buildings should cease to be used either as parish churches or as places of congregational worship. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) said that people in parishes all over the country would be interested in this order, so that they can discover what will happen to their churches. Many will hope that their church does not fall into the hands of the redundant churches fund because they will want it to continue in use.

There is an understandable view in the churches that buildings must be secondary to the Church's mission. However, there is a view in the community that if the Church wants to serve the community one thing that it can do is continue to keep open places that the community has for centuries regarded as sanctified by worship, which are of special architectural quality and which provide a place of repose and meditation that many people find important. There is, therefore, a certain tension between what the Church feels impelled to do and what communities want. I underline the point that we do not want an excessive number of churches and chapels to be made redundant. When they are, some of them must be considered for alternative uses and some can appropriately be put to other uses, particularly those whose visual contribution is primarily their exterior, which adds a great deal to the townscape.

Mr. Hardy: I would not necessarily object to a redundant church becoming licensed premises. We have in my constituency a former church run by Mr. Joe Hodgson who calls it the St. James' club, and it is conducted wholesomely. However, a building owned by our parish church in Wath upon Dearne was acquired by a brewery company; it secured planning permission for "upmarket purposes" and subsequently called it the Jailhouse Alehouse. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if church buildings are to become licensed premises they should be given reasonably suitable names?

Mr. Beith: Anyone who takes over an historic building should have some sympathy for the building in the use that he makes of it. Generally, it is commercially a good thing to draw on the traditions and qualities of a building when one uses it for some other activity. Many nonconformists, however, are uncomfortable with their buildings becoming licensed premises, and some have trust conditions and covenants expressly to prevent their use as such, which complicates the situation when a sale is in prospect.

Incidentally, therein lies a fundamental difference between the redundant churches fund and the various other schemes, including the Historic Chapels Trust, which try to save churches. The fund's churches are handed over to it by the Church Commissioners; they do not have to be acquired at a price. Any attempt to save a nonconformist building, including an attempt by the Historic Chapels Trust, needs money to buy it, perhaps against the competition. The church concerned may want to sell the building for another use in order to reuse the funds as part of its "development strategy", as they like to call it these days.

Some nonconformist denominations have even sought to sell their buildings in such a way as to ensure that they do not go to other denominations lest they provide competition for their own congregations. I recall a case in New Mills where a Methodist church, in my view wrongly, sought to prevent a chapel from remaining in use because it thought that it would attract some of its present congregation and deter them from moving to the place where they were supposed to go as part of the rationalisation scheme. So all sorts of factors enter into nonconformist buildings, and some of them are relevant to the point that I made in an intervention on the Minister about a category of Church of England buildings with which, at present, the redundant churches fund cannot deal. They are those which are separately owned, either as private, proprietary chapels, such as St. John's, Matlock Bath, or hospital chapels or other buildings which fall firmly within the tradition of the Church of England but which are not in its direct ownership. That is a problem which we must address because, as a trustee of the Historic Chapels Trust, I find it difficult to envisage that a trust with so many responsibilities for nonconformist, Roman Catholic and Jewish buildings could take on a whole batch of Church of England buildings as well. The redundant churches fund could do that particular job. The prospects for co-operation between the redundant churches fund and the Historic Chapels Trust are very good. We are already on good working terms.

I particularly want to say that English Heritage has been very supportive in setting up the Historic Chapels Trust and in its continuing work, and I hope that the Government will continue to take a close interest in what we do. It is of considerable importance that we apply the same efforts to key redundant nonconformist buildings as the redundant churches fund has applied so successfully to many redundant Church of England churches.

Many of these churches are hugely valued by the community. The work that has been done to conserve and protect them is of lasting value for many generations to come. We strongly support the order.

4.45 pm

Mr. Sproat: With the leave of the House, I shall respond to this extremely interesting debate—more interesting than perhaps it looked at the beginning when the Benches were rather sparsely populated.

I thank the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) for welcoming the order on behalf of Her Majesty's Opposition. He said that the debate would be heard all round the country and I am certain, from the contributions that have been made this afternoon, that he is absolutely right.

The hon. Member referred to the Templeman report. Perhaps I may come to that in the context of the contribution of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and say one or two things about it later. He also mentioned my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). My hon. Friend did me and the House the courtesy of coming to apologise for being unable to be present because he is chairing a meeting of a committee on Bosnia, but he told me how much he welcomed the purport of the draft order.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central asked about the number of redundant churches likely to come up and whether the funds were sufficient. It is an absolutely central question and it is fair and proper that he should ask it. Some 290 churches are currently vested. During the 1980s, roughly 10 churches asked for help. The number

then fell off, for reasons on which I cannot speculate—it was probably just a mathematical fluke—to between six and eight churches a year from 1991 to 1993. Once again, however, as we have this debate, something like 10 cases are in the pipeline. It looks as though that is the order of magnitude about which we are talking.

The hon. Member also asked whether the funding was sufficient to deal with those churches. We hope that it is. We expect that it is. It is true that the fund wanted rather more money than we gave it: it wanted some £16 million and we have given it £10 million. The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) mentioned a figure of £7.2 million. That is the Government's contribution, and the Church Commissioners' contribution takes it up to just over £10 million. In answer to the hon. Member's question, therefore, the situation does not appear to be escalating out of control. We will keep a close eye on it, but at the moment we think that it is under as much control as something so unpredictable can be.

The hon. Member also asked whether we had the necessary skills in this country, such as stonemasonry and carving, to deal with the problem. We do. If we look at cathedrals—the hon. Member mentioned Wells and there are others such as Ely—we see excellent examples of work, proving that we still have the skills in this country. English Heritage set up a new training centre where those skills are taught. Its name escapes me—it is something like Fort Brockenhurst, but I will check and let the hon. Member know. It is very important that this marvellous tradition be kept alive and well. Although that is not one of the purposes of the fund, it will be one of its most beneficial side effects.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) for his contribution, which, as he is one of the Church Commissioners, is particularly welcome.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) raised the very sad question of the security of churches. I agree that this is a disturbing trend. When I was in Birmingham yesterday, someone told me about people who had fired guns at stained glass windows during church services. This is not quite the same thing, but it is an indication of the lack of respect with which such places are now treated.

For the purposes of the fund, contents are regarded as integral to a church. Thus, we shall certainly look very carefully at the problem of burglary and at the question of security in general. So far, the problem does not seem to have been unmanageable. We have been monitoring the situation and the indications are that, in so far as one can ever say that such things are under control, it is not wildly out of control.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey mentioned the Templeman report. Templeman said that 12 churches should be withdrawn from use. It is absolutely unthinkable that those buildings should be demolished. The Templeman report will be addressed by the diocese of London in the autumn. Technically, this is not a matter for my Department—

Mr. Simon Hughes: Not yet.

Mr. Sproat: As the hon. Gentleman says, not yet. However, we shall take a very close look at the situation.

My understanding is that the question of funding could be resolved in one of the two ways that have so far been suggested. One suggestion is that a new city churches trust be set up and that will be looked into by the diocese of London. The second suggestion is that city churches be made eligible under the normal fund provisions. When we make our arrangements for funding for the next triennium we shall take into account whatever decision the diocese of London arrives at. I agree strongly with the point about the beautiful legacy of London churches. We shall make sure that the situation is not allowed to slip to such an extent that churches have to be demolished.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said something with which the whole House will agree: that the rich pattern of architectural diversity that these churches represent is crucial. All of us—to whichever church we belong, or whether to any church at all—will have agreed with the sentiment expressed by the hon. Gentleman. He said that we should be concerned not only with Church of England churches but with nonconformist chapels and the great tradition that they encapsulate in brick and stone. Because what the hon. Gentleman has said is so true, we recently set up the Historic Chapels Trust. The first two chapels have already been acquired and they will be eligible for English Heritage grant. As the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said, English Heritage has been very helpful in this respect. The right hon. Gentleman will know that that body is looked after by my Department. We intend to see that it continues to be as helpful as it has been.

The right hon. Gentleman made a good point about the change of name to Churches Conservation Trust. Perhaps it should have been included in the explanatory memorandum. It is a good idea, but it did not occur to me. In fact, we intend to include it when the order ceases to be a draft, if the Pastoral (Amendment) Measure is enacted.

The right hon. Member mentioned the tensions that so often arise between Church and people. He is very right, but I am glad to say that it is not usually my job to resolve tensions.

With this brief reply, I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Grants to the Redundant Churches Fund Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 11th February, be approved.

Rateable Values

4.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): I beg to move,

That the draft Mines and Quarries (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th February, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motions:

That the draft Industrial and Freight Transport (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th February, be approved.

That the draft Football Grounds (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th February, be approved.

That the draft Telecommunications Industry (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th February, be approved.

Mr. Stewart: The four draft orders concern the determination of rateable values. Three of them could reasonably be described as technical. The first two continue derating in Scotland for the coming financial year for industrial and freight transport lands and heritages and for mines and quarries. The fourth concerns the annual recalculation of the rateable value of the telecommunications hereditament in England and Wales. The third order, which may be of particular interest to the House, introduces a revenue-based scheme of formula valuation for Scottish Football League club grounds for the present financial year and for 1994-95.

As we move towards full harmonisation of rating valuation north and south of the border and towards a common level of rate poundage, the justification for industrial derating obviously diminishes. We have, therefore, undertaken to phase out industrial derating in Scotland in parallel with the progressive reduction of rate poundages that continues this year. Measures have already been introduced to secure a further reduction of £60 million in non-domestic rates next year. That allows us to reduce the level of industrial derating from the 1993-94 level of 17.5 per cent. to 10 per cent. for 1994-95. That is achieved by the draft Industrial and Freight Transport (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order. The Mines and Quarries (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order provides for the same level of derating to apply to mines and quarries.

With regard to formula valuation, the Football Grounds (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order relates to the valuation of Scottish Football League club grounds. That subject has been of considerable interest to hon. Members—in particular, perhaps, those who are members of the all-party Scottish sports group, chaired by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), which has taken a special interest in the matter. The order prescribes a formula to be used in determining the rateable values for 1993-94 and 1994-95. The objective is to mirror the effect of the non-statutory scheme of valuation that is used for similar subjects in England and Wales.

As hon. Members who are interested in this subject will recall, following the 1990 revaluation the Valuation Office agency and the Scottish assessors assured the Government that, although different methods of valuation had been used north and south of the border for league football grounds, broad harmonisation had been achieved. However, that was not the view of the Scottish Football Association, the Scottish Football League and their members, who maintained that there were still significant differences, resulting in an unfair rating burden falling on Scottish clubs. As there is a discretionary element in the English scheme, it is not possible to prove some of these things with certainty. However, we have decided that it is right that the method of valuation for this class of subject should be seen to be as similar as possible on both sides of the border. The draft order therefore seeks to mirror the effect of the non-statutory English scheme of valuation for league football grounds by assigning to each Scottish Football League club ground a valuation by formula based on the club's home league gate receipts in the season 1987-88, as that is the year in relation to which values were struck for the 1990 revaluation.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the order have any consequential effects on junior football clubs? As the Minister knows, many of their grounds are becoming dilapidated and funds are extremely scarce. There is a problem with junior football grounds.

Mr. Stewart: I do not dispute what the hon. Gentleman says, but the scheme applies purely to league football grounds. The issue of Highland league clubs was raised, but if the formula were applied to them, most would pay rather more than at present. We sensibly decided not to extend the formula.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): The Minister will appreciate that the Scottish Football Association is concerned about its clubs in the Highland and East of Scotland leagues. Will he gave a commitment to consider the situation because of the genuine concerns of the SFA?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is right. The SFA has genuine concerns and we have considered them. The issue is not covered by the order, but he asked us to keep the matter under review and I give him the commitment, without making any promises, that we will continue to consider the matter. We are approaching a general revaluation, which may be of assistance.

Hon. Members may be interested to know that the draft order will be of particular benefit to clubs that have either moved recently to new purpose-built stadiums or have incurred significant costs in modernising their grounds to meet the requirements of the Taylor report. Most clubs will see their valuations reduced as a consequence of the order.

The fourth order deals with the way in which the rateable value of Mercury Communications is recalculated annually between England and Wales. The matter has been discussed with Mercury Communications, which is content with the fact that the technical recalculation introduced by the order corrects a discrepancy that was not originally appreciated. I hope that the orders commend themselves to the House.

5.2 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): As the Minister said, three of the four orders are technical. The one involving the rating of football grounds is of greater interest to us. The Minister will know that the order has been a long time coming. The Minister first took the matter up way back in 1983 during a previous incarnation in the Scottish Office. For us to make any progress, he had to leave the Scottish Office, return to it and be the subject of lobbying. At that time, a White Paper expressed the view that Scottish sports

grounds generally paid more in rates than their counterparts in England and Wales because the two systems used differing rate poundages and methods of valuation. As he knows, Scottish football clubs petitioned against the system. In 1985, a number of appeals were heard involving statutory provisions by the Lands Tribunal for Scotland and the Lands Valuation Appeals Court. Clubs such as Celtic, Hibernian and Heart of Midlothian appealed and Celtic received a 25 per cent. amendment to its rates.

The disparity between the position for clubs in England and those in Scotland has been highlighted. The Minister mentioned the building of new stadiums. I remember that a comparison was made between Scunthorpe United and St. Johnstone regarding the building of new stadiums. Both grounds had a capacity of about 10,000, but the 1990 assessments were £10,500 for Scunthorpe United and £65,000 for St. Johnstone—a gross disparity between clubs in England and Scotland. Nothing much happened, however, and Scottish clubs continued to press the Minister.

In April 1991, the Scottish Office wrote to the Premier League clubs to gather information to enable detailed consideration to be given to the effect of a change to a revenue-based approach to valuation of football grounds in Scotland. In March 1993, the Scottish Office stated that there was insufficient time before the 31 March deadline of that year for a statutory instrument to be introduced. We are delighted that, this year, that has happened.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): What are the consequences of the order for Berwick Rangers and other Scottish teams?

Mr. McFall: The Minister could guide me, but I think that the smaller clubs, rather than the larger ones, will benefit from the order. During his regular forays across the border to see Berwick Rangers, my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) may see things getting better in the coming months as a result of the statutory instrument.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I had intended to raise the subject later, but I shall do so now following the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes). There is an anomaly in that Berwick Rangers plays in the Scottish league, but its ground is located in England. Presumably, therefore, it will not benefit from the provisions. It will be interesting if the Minister will tell us—perhaps he will receive inspiration from someone on his left-hand side in due course—whether Berwick Rangers will be significantly better off than other Scottish league clubs as a consequence of the continuing difference between the rating systems north and south of the border.

Mr. McFall: I think that it is up to me to give a typical "Yes Minister" reply by saying that, at present, I do not have that information at my fingertips, but I shall do everything to ensure that Berwick Rangers prosper in the future. I am sure that the Minister will agree with me on that.

I mentioned our qualified support for the order. The Scottish Football League and the SFA are glad that the order has been laid before the House and do not wish to impede its progress. Some issues, however, should still be brought to the Minister's attention because there has been insufficient focus on some aspects. For example, as I mentioned, last year the order was not laid before the House in time. The inability to implement the statutory instrument in the previous rate year led to a greater loss of benefit to Scottish clubs than was envisaged by either the SFA or the Scottish Office. It would have been beneficial if the formula in the statutory instrument had been adjusted to compensate fully for that period, but I believe that that will not happen.

In addition, the formula, although available only until the 1995 valuation, does not allow for major physical changes that would result in significant changes in the pattern of income. It appears that total loss of structures or loss of individual structures in grounds cannot be reflected in the formula, as instanced in the case of Aberdeen football club. Under the formula, 1988 is the date for valuations in terms of rental evidence for the 1990 roll and the physical circumstances are those pertaining at 1 April 1990. The formula does not allow for the correct adjustment for clubs that have moved league positions as well as grounds in the intervening period. A particular problem faces St. Johnstone football club, which has moved to a new ground.

The 50 per cent. rule in the formula excludes Queen's Park football club from the calculation. The clubs and the SFA reckon that the rule is inequitable and bad. Queen's Park FC is termed as a rateable occupier of Hampden Park, and although Hampden is used by others—for example, it is used for international events for which payment is made to the rateable occupier—the statutory instrument seeks to exclude Queen's Park from the formula, thereby prejudicing its position with regard to rateable value and rate payment.

Queen's Park and the SFA would like the position regarding Hampden to be put into two categories—one for Queen's Park exclusively and the other to recognise that it is a national football ground. The exclusion that is built into the statutory instrument for the purposes of leaving Queen's Park to be valued on a contractor basis is wholly inappropriate and has no foundation in rating law, vis-a-vis the point that the club, as a rateable occupier of a football ground, is treated differently from other similar rateable occupiers of football grounds.

The Minister mentioned that the statutory instrument has been written to apply only to clubs in membership of the Scottish Football League notwithstanding the fact that, from the outset of discussions relative to the rating of football grounds on a revenue-based method, the SFA has sought to have consideration given to applying the agreed scheme to all member clubs that participate in other leagues, such as the Highland league and the East of Scotland league.

The exclusion of such clubs, whose circumstances are similar in many instances to those of clubs in membership of the Scottish Football League, is considered to be inequitable and is an issue which the Opposition and the SFA would wish to have addressed in the lead-up to the 1995 revaluation. I am pleased to note the Minister's comments on that point.

A number of problems have resulted with the current system in relation to the Taylor report. For example, my understanding is that if a Scottish club improves its stadium, the rateable value will increase. In addition, a club's overall income might very well fall as a result of finished improvements that lowered the ground's capacity

[Mr. McFall]

and because parts of the ground had to be closed while improvements were in progress. That particular point was made regarding Celtic and Parkhead this year.

The result is that clubs would spend large amounts of money on improvements while their incomes suffered as a result of lower capacities and, at the end of the day, they would face higher rateable values for the work that they had undertaken. The current situation partly explains the reluctance of Scottish football clubs to improve their grounds. I do not accept that proposition and I hope that the Minister agrees. It is important for Scottish football clubs to come into line with the Taylor recommendations as soon as possible.

I hope that, for the sake of the fans and of safety at Scottish football grounds, the Minister will cast a critical eye towards clubs, particularly those in the Premier League, regarding implementation of the Taylor report.

I give the example my local club, Dumbarton. The income of clubs at its level may depend on getting a good Scottish cup tie. For example, Dumbarton played Rangers a couple of months ago at Ibrox, with a hefty sum of money as a result. That money will take the club over the year, and that was good for Dumbarton. But many clubs in the lower divisions do not have that opportunity, and they are up against it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) mentioned junior clubs. I know that they are not included in the statutory instrument, but if we want to keep our heritage and our football culture alive, we must look at such issues as time goes on.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I would just caution my hon. Friend about his enthusiasm for the Taylor report and the need to implement crowd safety. Clubs are confronting problems because of delays in planning processes. That has meant, for example, that Hibernian FC is faced with the requirement to have an all-seated ground before the start of next season. The club has plans to move from the existing Easter road stadium to a facility at Straiton.

The difficulty is that it has encountered problems in planning that have meant that it must spend money that has been allocated for the prospective Straiton project on Easter road because the club is required to have an all-seated ground by the end of July in preparation for next season.

Money that should be going on future improvements will have to be spent on a stadium which, frankly, will be redundant at the end of the season after this. Therefore, there should be qualification of my hon. Friend's enthusiasm for the Taylor report. The way in which it has been interpreted and applied by Mr. Farry of the SFA seems to suggest that there is a requirement on every club to have an all-seated ground by the beginning of next season.

That is regardless of the good endeavours of clubs to meet serious slippages in the planning processes. Hibernian FC has to spend on the old stadium money that it does not really have and which was identified for the new stadium because of the narrow and unhelpful interpretation of the rules that have been laid down somewhat brutally and simplistically by the secretary to the SFA.

Mr. McFall: I take the point that my hon. Friend makes. I know that that problem applies to Hibernian, and also applied to Celtic before the present board took over. I believe that Celtic FC was to put in plastic seats in Parkhead. As a general principle, I believe that football clubs should have had their houses in order on this issue years ago, as provincial clubs such as Aberdeen and Dundee United have done.

If clubs are there to satisfy fans and to breed success on the park, they must have the best facilities possible. In that context, I would say that the Taylor report is pointing in the right direction, and the quicker that clubs comply with it the better, although there are certain caveats.

With those comments—I am rather surprised that the order has generated such debate—I welcome the proposition, but, like Oliver Twist, I come back to ask for more.

5.17 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I will say a few words, initially to congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on introducing the statutory instrument on football grounds. I believe that it measures up to the needs of Scottish football and certainly recognises the difference between the major and minor clubs. The formula is a good one which recognises the pulling power of the major clubs and the fact that there are differences in cost between access to second division and Premier League games. That is a major factor in the formulae that have been devised.

I can identify with most of what was said by the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall). Perhaps one disagreement would be with his use of the term "provincial clubs" when he referred to Aberdeen and Dundee United. Those clubs would see themselves as slightly more than provincial, and the way in which the teams perform would certainly suggest that.

My hon. Friend stressed the importance of ensuring that Scottish clubs were not paying more in this way than their counterparts south of the border; that happened in the past. The changes seem to be another example of the drive towards a uniform business rate, which we all wish to see in Scotland.

I should be interested to hear my hon. Friend's comments on the point raised about Berwick Rangers a few minutes ago. He suggested that the valuations would reflect the amount of capital investment made by clubs in bringing their stadiums up to standard. That, again, is an important point which my hon. Friend recognised, and I congratulate him on dealing with it.

As for the Taylor report and the comment that was made about the Hibs, I should have thought that there would be powers of derogation. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister would clarify that point. Perhaps it does not lie entirely with the secretary to the Scottish Football Association. I should have thought that a realistic approach would allow us to ensure that the overall objectives set by Taylor could be reached in a way that did not place unnecessary expenditure in the path of those clubs that drive towards the Taylor recommendations.

With those few words and my congratulations once again, I am pleased to welcome the statutory instrument.

5.19 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I should like to raise three subjects: first, football; secondly, mines and quarries and thirdly, Mercury.

I begin by reiterating my comment that money is desperately needed for many of the junior football clubs. The Minister and everyone here knows that the stadiums are often crumbling. There simply is not enough money to allow the necessary capital expenditure to be found. I realise that the matter is on the periphery of the order that we are discussing, but it raises the question whether some of the money that finds its way to the senior football clubs should find its way to the junior clubs. After all, the junior clubs are the feeders. If junior football is not flourishing, that is detrimental not only to the Scottish game as a whole but to many communities. What is the Government's thinking about junior grounds?

I wonder whether I could turn the Government's mind to a constituency problem that has wider implications. I am deeply and increasingly worried about the position of the Polkemmet pit. I should explain the background. Polkemmet used to be the second biggest pit in Scotland. I am glad that the Minister for Energy is here. He may recollect that, unfortunately, during the miners' strike after weeks, indeed months, of good relations between the police and the National Union of Mineworkers, the pit was flooded, in the most horrendous circumstances, partly because of the infiltration of individuals who crossed picket lines. Mrs. Rimington has to take her responsibility for that matter, which has been raised in an Adjournment debate.

Be that as it may, Polkemmet was flooded. Now we have a double problem. First, there is the question of purification of water. It is a matter of considerable concern to the Lothian purification board that the amassing water from Polkemmet is finding its way into all sorts of underground water supplies throughout the Lothians. The second and even more immediate problem is that the fire at the top of the pit has not been put out. I say that in the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), who speaks for the Opposition on mining matters. The fact of the matter is, and he knows it, that the cone of fire is still burning. It is very difficult to put out a fire without massive development on the surface. One has to tackle the fire by vast opencast expenditure. Is any Government finance likely to be available through the order to help the local authorities?

The Mines and Quarries (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order says:

"after consultation with such associations of local authorities".

When the Government are doing their best to create mayhem among the local authorities, this is not the easiest moment to get the full attention of local authorities on an urgent problem. Incidentally,

"such associations of local authorities"

is slightly unusual wording. I wonder why it is not "after consultation with the local authorities". Is there any significance in the wording "such associations of"?

At a time when it becomes ever more clear that British Coal is willing to take less responsibility for its residual problems—Polkemmet is such a problem—what will be done about a major pit fire? Will it be entirely left to West Lothian district council? If it is, the Government will see in full focus the problems that a small local authority has when faced with a major problem. I would rather that Lothian region was there to cope with the problem of Polkemmet, or at least help cope with it, than the problem being left to the small district councils.

The last subject that I wish to raise—I see that you are on the edge of your seat, Mr. Deputy Speaker—is Mercury. I am not sure whether you had taken over the Chair when the Minister mentioned Mercury Communications. I do not know whether the reference was to the English order. I asked the Clerk at the Table to let me have a look at the order, which is not immediately available in the bunch in the Vote Office. The order refers entirely to England. In any case, I shall continue until such time as I am told that I am out of order.

There is an immediate issue in connection with Mercury Communications and Hutchison Microtel. It can be encapsulated in what happened at Cairnpapple a year ago. It may be within the recollection of Ministers that Hutchison Microtel, which is based in Hong Kong—I make no complaint about that; it is a big international company—decided to erect a mast on the perimeter fence of what Historic Scotland claims is the most important bronze-age site—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman deploys his argument, let me say that the Telecommunications Industry (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order covers England and Wales and is exclusive to England and Wales. It is about the valuation of Mercury's cable in those two parts of the United Kingdom. So unless the hon. Gentleman intends to deploy his argument in relation to parts of England and Wales, I shall have to ask him to cease giving the example that he had begun to give us.

Mr. Dalyell: The cable will be temporarily extended to Scotland. In defence of that attitude, apart from the fact that I have wanted to air this grievance for a long time—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. All of us have wished to express certain views and opinions for a long time, but there are times when they are in order and times when they are out of order. That cannot be the basis of the hon. Gentleman's argument. A temporary move or alleged temporary move of certain cables is equally not a sound basis on which to take the argument further.

Mr. Dalyell: All of us have to plug into our parliamentary opportunities when such occasions arise. Could you spend a minute thinking about why the Minister could raise the subject and I could not? It was the Minister who sparked me. Had it not been for him, I would not have had the opportunity to raise the matter. I ask briefly—it will be in one sentence—whether the Government are giving any careful thought to the planning considerations in determining whether masts should be put up near historic sites and in areas of natural beauty.

I am coming back to England straight away. I gather that after the Cairnpapple episode, which received a great deal of national publicity, there were considerable complaints in Bradford and elsewhere about masts being erected without proper consideration. In this rating matter, I wonder whether I could stretch the point—that will be the end of the tube as far as I am concerned, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and ask whether the Government will consider that point and at least write to me about it.

5.29 pm

Mr. Stewart: Of course I always listen carefully to the hon. Gentleman. Some of the matters that he mentioned are the responsibility of my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy and he, of course, will also have listened to the hon. Gentleman. The English and Welsh order applies simply to the calculation of the rateable values of cables, not masts in England and Wales or Scotland, and the order applies only to England and Wales.

I thank the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) for expressing the Opposition's welcome for the orders. He is right to say that they have been a long time coming. Many people have done a great deal of work and the hon. Gentleman will recognise, as my hon. Friends have recognised, that this is a complex matter. The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) spoke about Berwick Rangers. As he knows, Berwick Rangers is located in England and its ground is therefore harmonised with other English football grounds. That means that Berwick Rangers is unaffected by the order.

Mr. Boyes: We are in an interesting situation. May I put a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I am not absolutely sure—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman has a point of order for the Chair I will have to listen to it.

Mr. Boyes: I am not sure whether the Minister has finished or is expecting an intervention from me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I can clarify that. The Minister has the Floor and he has given way to the hon. Gentleman for a short intervention. When the hon. Gentleman has made that intervention, the Minister will resume his speech.

Mr. Stewart: I thought that I had not wholly satisfied the hon. Gentleman and that he wanted to intervene. If he does, I am happy to give way.

Mr. Boyes: I want to make a small contribution to the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot make his contribution at this point.

Mr. Stewart: I was dealing with the points made by the hon. Member for Dumbarton. I am happy to reassure him about the effects of the order on a number of the clubs that he mentioned. He will be glad to know that Dumbarton benefits under the order. He specifically mentioned St. Johnstone, which had a rateable value of £65,000 under the previous system. Its estimated rateable value—it is an estimate at this stage—is £18,000 under the formula in the order. The hon. Gentleman spoke about improvements in relation to the Taylor report.

Mr. Boyes: Whether it relates to Scottish or English football, this is an important issue. It is a major problem for many football grounds because of the amount of revenue needed to increase the value of the team. Some of us are a little worried about whether smaller clubs will have enough cash to provide all the seating that will be needed. In general, we accept Taylor's thesis, but the smaller grounds have big problems and a number of them will not be able to determine the number of seats that will be needed in the next few years.

The Minister must accept that some clubs will not be able to provide all that the Taylor report requires, and he should consider granting leeway for some of the smaller clubs. Some clubs in Scotland and England are very small and are strapped for cash and much money will be needed to satisfy the demands and needs of the Taylor report. As I say—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a long intervention. The hon. Gentleman can catch my eye when the Minister has finished if he wishes to make a speech.

Mr. Stewart: Perhaps I could help the hon. Gentleman and the House by saying, in relation to a number of clubs, that the certainty of valuation under the order would protect clubs such as Hearts and Hibs, which were referred to by Opposition Members, from any potential increase in their valuations for 1994-95 which may have occurred under the contractor's principle if they had embarked on significant modernisation work to meet the requirements of the Taylor report. In principle, the same point applies to Aberdeen, which is undertaking a major ground improvement. That would have been reflected in a substantial increase in its rateable value under the previous system compared with the present one. Under the formula system that we propose, the club is bound to be better off.

The main criticism of the order by the hon. Member for Dumbarton, which I have not dealt with in my short speech or in answer to interventions, related to Hampden Park. Of course, that matter has been raised with us. We appreciate that Hampden Park is a national stadium. Its 1990 valuation of £80,000, which of course could have been subject to review because of phase 1 of redevelopment, compares with £560,000 for the National Stadium of Wales, £226,500 for Murrayfield and £1.25 million for Wembley. Like other football grounds, Hampden Park will, of course, be subject to the 1995 revaluation.

The hon. Member for Dumbarton said that this was not a perfect order. We recognise that, but the objective was to bring Scottish valuation into line, as far as was possible, with the treatment of clubs south of the border. We have substantially achieved that and I commend the orders to the House.

5.38 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I have three small matters to raise with the Minister. First, Berwick Rangers is in an interesting situation because it is an English club and is in a Scottish league. At times, it is difficult to resolve that dichotomy. From time to time, Berwick Rangers has a good season and about two or three years ago it was doing extremely well. Generally, it does not do too well. It is vital to sustain our small clubs, of which Berwick Rangers is one.

A host of clubs in Scotland will have some difficulty in satisfying the requirements of the Taylor report. There is a similar situation in England where some football grounds will have big problems. I watch about 50 football matches every season and that means that I visit clubs of varying sizes—some with large parks and others in great difficulty. Consequently, that affects the rateable value of the grounds.

I confess that it would be a damned sight easier for me to talk about English football clubs than about Scottish ones, but in a sort of algebraic way there is a means of getting from the poorer English teams to the poorer

Scottish teams. I think that Hampden Park is being equipped and transformed and will have an official opening in the near future. The Minister may be able to confirm that. For us, Hampden Park is like Wembley is for England. It is is one of the most important places for football in Scotland.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman mentioned poorer teams in England and Scotland. In Scotland we have great teams and good teams, but no poor teams.

Mr. Boyes: There is always one, and today it happens to be the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie).

Hampden Park is one of the great places for football. When I was a young boy, my uncle used to take me to football matches up and down the country and a visit to Hampden Park was extremely special. I remember seeing a film of thousands of people running on to the pitch. I hope that, through the formula of the rating valuations, we can make Hampden Park even better. That is a value judgment, but many clubs would like to be in a similar position. A number of them might not have as much cash as they might have had because of what is happening at Hampden Park.

I shall return to Berwick and Hampden in a moment, particularly as Berwick is an English club in the Scottish league.

Mr. O'Neill: It may be interesting for my hon. Friend to note that a Scottish club from Gretna Green participated in the FA Cup last season, so there seems to be two-way traffic.

Mr. Boyes: I am glad that my hon. Friend nudged me on that point. I understand that Gretna Green has had a good run and is top of the league. It would have been remiss of me not to mention a Scottish football club that is in the English league. We have to recognise the smaller clubs and the bigger clubs and how they work, or not.

I mentioned seating in a short intervention that was too long for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Seating is a major problem. We all understand the need for it and why the Taylor report was necessary in view of the tragedies that had taken place. However, it represents a problem for a number of clubs. If we are not careful, some grounds will be half seating and half standing. That is the opposite of what we want.

Some fans like to stand. I would not give a jot for standing on a football ground. At the 50 games that I attend, I sit in the seating section, but many people want to stand and there has to be an area for that, even though, as a consequence, there will fewer seats. The Minister will recognise that it is an important point.

Mr. McFall: Does my hon. Friend accept that all-seater stadiums help prevent behaviour problems at football matches? For example, at the last Rangers-Celtic match at Ibrox I had the opportunity to view the security arrangements with Chief Superintendent Lawrence McIntyre. I asked him what his experience had been over the years and he said that undoubtedly all-seater stadiums have contributed immensely to good crowd control and good behaviour.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This has developed too far. Seating does not affect rating.

Mr. Boyes: It is all about the rating and valuation of football grounds.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am well aware what the order is about, but football behaviour does not affect rating valuations.

Mr. Boyes: It affects us when massive hordes of people come down from Scotland and start breaking up Newcastle. That happens occasionally, but in general we have a mutual trust and it is probably the most wonderful experience of all to be in a good, big stadium. The noise, the charm, the players, the referee, the whistle and the rest are extremely special.

Mr. Gallie: Is not it a fact that all-seater stadiums tend to charge more for access? The cost of sitting down in the ground is higher and the club's income is increased. With precise emphasis on the valuation, higher ticket prices increase the value of the ground so that seating has a profound effect on the rating implications for the clubs in future.

Mr. Boyes: The hon. Gentleman has made the point for me. There is greater revenue at all-seater football grounds. They produce more cash, often to the detriment of some fans. There are occasions at football grounds when people chant the name of the club and so on and that becomes an important part of the match. It is as much a part of football as kicking the ball. It is vital.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) made an important point about all-seater stadiums, which have allowed the police to control the crowds better.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot develop that side of the argument. I ruled that out of order.

Mr. Boyes *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am quite clear on that and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not return to that point. Behaviour is not a factor in relation to rating valuation.

Mr. Boyes: Recently I went to a stadium to watch the police in action.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I went to watch Northampton rugby football club, which is in the first division and plays wonderful rugby football. The fact that the police were there is irrelevant to the rating valuation of Franklins Gardens and is equally irrelevant to any of the football stadiums that the hon. Gentleman is about to mention. I should be grateful if he would desist on that particular line of argument.

Mr. Boyes: I accept what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you allow me to mention it, I recently went to Sunderland football club to watch how the police managed crowd control. I go to football matches regularly and recently I visited Northampton, not for the rugby but for the football. That certainly needed some rating valuation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that Northampton town football club, the Cobblers, is bottom of the third division. I hope that his presence was not part of the reason we lost at home recently.

Mr. Boyes: That is how the expression cobblers originated.

Your information, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is spot on. The Northampton club was solidly rock bottom, but, under new management, it is now moving up the league. I played rugby as well as football, so I can understand why you

[Mr. Boyes]

enjoy both. You enjoy the football, knowing exactly where the team is in the league, and the strong Northampton rugby union team. That shows how the two parts can make a whole.

5.50 pm

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): I fully intend to keep in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the order is tightly drawn.

It will not come as a surprise to the Minister or the House that I want to say a few words about the first division team, St. Mirren, which is internationally known and plays at Love street in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams). One reason why that team is internationally known is that it has twice won the Scottish cup. It does so every 30 years. It won it in 1957.

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): It has won it three times this century.

Mr. McMaster: I remember the celebrations in Paisley when we picked up the title again in 1987. I am coming to the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I want to illustrate my background in this matter. I do not go to St. Mirren games all that often, but then that is the hallmark of a true St. Mirren supporter. I will be at the game on Saturday along with a constituent of mine, Jim Crawford.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): My hon. Friend says that honesty is the hallmark of a true St. Mirren supporter. If so, does my hon. Friend accept that, when St. Mirren won the Scottish cup in 1987, Dundee United was robbed because it was by far the better team?

Mr. McMaster: That is a scurrilous allegation and I am surprised, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you did not call my hon. Friend to order. I was there and it was a fair game —but I shall not go down that track.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McMaster: I will, but reluctantly.

Mr. Gallie: The honest team is Ayr United, whose players are known as the honest men. St. Mirren are known as the buddies. The real link between St. Mirren and Ayr United is the fact that both play in black and white, but Ayr United is marginally superior.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This tour of the Scottish league is interesting, but it needs to be related to the order. If the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) intends to talk about valuation matters, he is in order, but any more descriptions of former matches or former glories are out of order.

Mr. McMaster: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was taken in the wrong direction by hon. Members. I shall come to the point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North and I met St. Mirren during its attempt to put together a package to improve its ground, which it has now done. Recently, we received a letter from the Football Trust saying that it had been awarded £1 million for a collaborative venture to improve the ground. Its partners in that venture are Paisley university, which will benefit from additional student accommodation as part of the deal, and Scottish Homes.

Can the Minister give us an assurance that the order will not work to the detriment of St. Mirren because it is improving its ground? The Minister referred to that in general terms in his opening speech. St. Mirren is not only improving its ground but providing student accommodation. I hope that the housing element will not give rise to a dispute about the football ground benefiting in whatever way it can from the order. I shall understand if the Minister cannot answer that specific point tonight, but I shall be grateful if he will deal with the general point and write to me later.

Given the Minister's ability to get parts of his constituency mentioned in legislation, I am surprised that there is no mention of Arthurlie in the order. That, too, is an excellent team—even if it is not quite as good as Johnstone Burgh.

Will the Minister clarify three points? First, the order refers to circumstances in which two clubs share the same football ground. Many football pundits have predicted that that will happen more and more in the years ahead, especially with small football teams. Will the Minister clarify the exact position in respect of two football clubs sharing one ground?

Secondly, will the Minister clarify the reference in the order to the revenue from executive boxes? Some football clubs, by their very nature, are likely to benefit from corporate marketing techniques. For example, Glasgow Rangers and, even more so now, Glasgow Celtic will benefit from corporate marketing. But what about small clubs that do not have tremendous executive facilities? Likewise, the order refers to the revenue earned from season tickets. Will the Minister clarify how the order will impact on the sale of season tickets?

The third issue is currently receiving some attention because of the proposed reorganisation of local government in Scotland. Yesterday, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), made a statement to the effect that each of the more than 30 new police authorities in Scotland will be responsible for policing football grounds in its area and that the cost will be rechargeable to the club. The Minister specifically said that the cost of policing within football grounds was rechargeable to the club. What charges will be levied for crowd control outside the football ground but within its immediate vicinity?

Can the Minister give me an assurance that the order contains safeguards against the possibility of a police authority that sees a reduction in its revenue as a result of the order being tempted to increase police charges in order to compensate for that? That is an important point because, if that happened, the order would be meaningless. Opposition Members have welcomed the order today, but we would be concerned if that happened.

I leave the matter there and hope that the Minister will deal with the specific questions that I have asked.

5.58 pm

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) took me back to my boyhood days as an extemely poor and inadequate footballer. I played at the

Johnstone Burgh and Arthurlie grounds. They were some of the worst grounds on which I ever played; I would have been as well off playing on a farmer's field. If the Minister could use any good graces to try to improve those grounds for the generations ahead that might use them, I should be grateful.

I welcome the order. In my boyhood days, I used to watch Morton at Cappielow. Hon. Members may have worked out that I come from Greenock so I would follow Morton at Cappielow; the only possible reason for my following Morton was that I came from that part of town. I remember the days when Morton was owned by T J Thompson. The ground had no enclosure. We had to stand in the pouring rain with the tide coming in because the drains were dammed back. Anything that encourages any football ground to develop and not be penalised as regards its rateable value is to be welcomed. I welcome the order because it is based on income and receipts rather than on an ability to preserve historic buildings within grounds or to develop the grounds in any way.

My constituency does not have any league football teams, but it has the junior football team of Kirkintilloch Rob Roy. I reiterate the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) about junior football going through a bit of a struggle nowadays. I should be grateful if the Minister would see what he can do to preserve teams such as Kirkintilloch Rob Roy and to help them with their difficulties, because most of my constituents disperse on Saturdays to watch the major teams in the city—Partick Thistle, Rangers and Celtic.

I ask the Minister to find out what will be the change, if any, in the amount that will be paid by Partick Thistle under the order. It has a smaller income, an excellent, well-preserved ground and splendid buildings in the east stand. The order particularly helps such teams.

I should be grateful if the Minister would clarify two points in connection with the order. Page 4 says:

"'league ground' means a ground being used by a club in membership of the Scottish Football League as at 1st April 1993 as its sole or main ground for staging league matches."

Will the Minister confirm that if a league club possesses a second ground, it will be rated under a separate system? Suppose that a club played its reserve games at the second ground. Would it be rated under a second system? Would any income from the reserve games—remember that they are based under the Scottish Football League—be considered for the evaluation of the rateable value? That is more of an academic point, as I understand that there is a football league club that has a second ground and is making it into a car park rather than using it for the second team. That is an important point. Is the second ground rated under the old system? If so, what about the income that it may get through the box from that?

Just how far out does a ground go for rating purposes? Is there some technical easy answer? What about car parks that are owned by the club and surround grounds? They may be contiguous with the ground or they may not. If they are, do they come under the rating arrangements? If they are not contiguous with ground, is that considered? There is a great problem with parking at football matches, with people parking up every side street. More and more clubs are trying to develop their own car parking spaces and that is a welcome move.

What about buildings on the car parks? Would they be part of the old or part of the new system? I hope that the order will lead to improvements in grounds such as Cappielow park, where I remember those bitter early days, and will help to preserve some of the attractive buildings that some clubs have at the moment.

6.3 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Like other hon. Members, I welcome the order. I apologise for my earlier absence from the debate, particularly as I hold the position of secretary of the all-party Scottish sports group. Perhaps I should have been here at 5 o'clock. I can explain my absence because I am not good at reading the Order Paper and I did not realise that the statutory instrument was being debated at this point.

Mr. McMaster: That is no excuse.

Mr. McAllion: Perhaps more of an excuse is the fact that I was involved in a sporting activity between 5 and 6 o'clock, when I attended, with my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) and for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) the betting shop along the road to collect our winnings on Lady Polly, who romped home at four to one last night and is owned by my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun. Had we not been collecting our winnings, I am sure that we would have been here from the beginning of the debate and heard what the Minister said when introducing the order—

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Just condemn him anyway.

Mr. McAllion: Usually, as the Minister well knows, I am quick to condemn him at every opportunity, but when he is doing something positive, he deserves the congratulations of hon. Members on both sides of the House. As the Minister is aware, the all-party Scottish sports group has a long history of campaigning for precisely the kind of measure that has been introduced today.

I have a note of the minute of the meeting that the all-party Scottish sports group held with representatives of the Scottish Football Association and the Scottish Football League on 4 February 1991, in which they drew our attention to the problem of the rating of football grounds and the continuing differences in the rating evaluation as applied to football clubs in Scotland and those south of the border. At that time, they were saying that, whereas the Inland Revenue had agreed a formula for assessing the liability of clubs in the south that was based on their income and ability to pay, in Scotland, the traditional assessment of liability in accordance with capital values included assessments of the value of capital improvements still applied.

That was very unjust. I remember that, at the meeting with the SFA, it drew a comparison between Scunthorpe and St. Johnstone FC in Perth, which, as the Minister knows, were similar clubs. Yet because of the way that rating evaluation was carried out in England, Scunthorpe was paying only £12,000 a year in rates whereas St. Johnstone would have been required to pay £90,000.

I remember being told at that time by the SFA that the reason why the Government were finding it difficult—even the Minister explained at some point their problems in introducing a similar system north of the border—was because of the Scottish assessors, who were reluctant to give up the formula that existed at that time. I am grateful

[Mr. McAllion]

if the Minister was able to break down the resistance of the Scottish assessors and ensure that, at long last, Scotland can be placed on the same footing as the rest of the country, particularly England and Wales.

I welcome to the debate my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), the chairman of the all-party Scottish sports group, who perhaps more than any other Member, has been active in promoting the order.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman has just demonstrated the Labour party's ability to cause inflation. In the figures given earlier by the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) the sum paid by St. Johnstone was £65,000. The hon. Gentleman has now put that up to £90,000. Perhaps that is just an aspect of his exaggeration. Other than that, I agree with him.

Mr. McAllion: It is not an aspect of my exaggeration. I have here the manuscript note that I took at the meeting in Glasgow in February 1991, which was addressed by the Scottish Football League and the Scottish football authorities who gave us those figures. I took them down at the time. I have just removed them from my file upstairs, so that figure is reasonably accurate given that it came from the SFA and Scottish Football League, who know something about that.

Following that meeting, we wrote to the then Chancellor in 1991—I am not allowed to use his name and I do not know his constituency but he was the Chancellor with a haircut like a badger, if I may describe it in those terms. We wrote to ask him whether perhaps in the Budget that year he would introduce measures to equalise the position between Scotland and England and Wales. He wrote back on 1 March 1991 saying that he could assure us that our comments would be taken on board, but that naturally it would be inappropriate for him to comment before he introduced his Budget for that year. Budgets have come and gone since and we are no nearer to getting such measures introduced.

We continued to lobby after that. I remember writing to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), asking him to meet a delegation from the all-party sports group to discuss the matter. I must apologise to him: shortly afterwards, we failed to show up on the date that had been arranged. That was not the all-party group's fault; the fault was entirely my own. I, as secretary of the group, had got the date wrong, and had failed to warn the Minister.

I am grateful for the fact that, after a long history punctuated by disappointments, we have at last reached this stage. I hope, however, that—given my earlier absence—the Minister will say something about the impact of the changes on Dundee's two football clubs, Dundee United and Dundee FC. Their positions are very different: as the Minister knows, Dundee United has carried out an extensive refurbishment of its ground at Tannadice, while Dundee FC has a long way to go in terms of the refurbishment of its own ground. I am sure that—despite its present lowly position in the Premier League, and the threat of resignation hanging over it—Dundee FC will, in the long term, become one of the mainstay clubs in the Premier League, with a very bright future.

Will the Minister tell us how the new system will affect the capital investment that clubs must make to meet the requirements of the Taylor report? Will any limits be set for investment to improve football grounds? Could two clubs benefit from an incentive to share a single ground?

My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) mentioned the revenue from executive boxes. I hope that the Minister will deal with the question of all the outside revenue received by some clubs, which has nothing to do with attendance at matches. The big clubs—Rangers and Celtic in particular—sell a range of products, through shops and other retail outlets: tracksuits, strips, pillow slips and duvet covers, for instance. [HON. MEMBERS: "Celtic shares?"] Given the kind of money that Celtic offers for players, sometimes a duvet cover would be all that it could get. That is probably all behind the club now, however: I am sure that everything will change, now that there is a new management at Celtic park. I do not mean a new football manager; I am talking about the directors.

What about the expenses incurred by clubs in paying for policing—not only inside the grounds, but outside, to deal with such matters as traffic? I understand that, at present, clubs need not incur such expenses, but that they may well have to in the future, following the Government's reform of Scottish local government and the institution of new authorities. Those authorities may wish to impose charges of that kind, especially in view of the terrible information imparted yesterday to the Standing Committee considering the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton). He said that policing costs were likely to arise, especially in cities, because they would in future be fully responsible for meeting those costs: the costs would no longer be met by regional councils.

What, if anything, will the order imply for junior clubs, such as those in my own city—Downfield and St. Joseph's, which recently reached the semi-finals of the Scottish junior cup? Those two outstanding clubs attract reasonable support in the city, and have a bright future. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) Is a stalwart supporter of Pollok Juniors; will the Minister tell us what may happen to that club? Will the order apply only to football clubs, or will it apply to rugby clubs and other sporting groups as well?

Finally, may I ask about the implications for Hampden, the national ground? It will have a magnificent stadium, once the SFA has completed its phased refurbishment. I think that football in Scotland should be given every possible encouragement—especially in view of recent results. It would be unfortunate if, having made a tremendous effort to invest in Hampden, the SFA received no reward, and was left with liability for rates levied unfairly in comparison with those incurred by other football grounds.

6.14 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I apologise for having missed the early part of the debate owing to Select Committee business.

Like others, I welcome the order, as does the all-party parliamentary Scottish sports group of which I am convener; my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) is the secretary. As the Minister knows, we have been active on this issue for many years. There is a long-standing anomaly whereby many Scottish football clubs face rates bills four or five times the size of those

faced by their counterparts south of the border, and we have put pressure on the Government for some time to eradicate that unfair arrangement.

We have had meetings with Jim Farry, chief executive of the Scottish Football Association, and with representatives of the Scottish Football League. The point has been put to us cogently and articulately on those occasions, backed up with facts and figures. I am glad that, eventually, the Government have admitted the existence of an unfair anomaly—and, moreover, are taking action by means of the order. This is a belated but nevertheless welcome fulfilment of a commitment given some time ago.

I understand that a degree of retrospection, or retroaction, is involved in the order; I should be grateful if the Minister would confirm that the arrangements will be backdated, rather than simply coming into effect from the beginning of the next financial year.

The reason for the anomaly was the difference in the methods of valuation of football grounds used in Scotland and south of the border. In Scotland, valuation was based on the contractor's principle; in England, it tended to be based on the revenue principle. That led to a disincentive for many Scottish clubs to improve their grounds in line with the recommendations of the Taylor report.

Safety must, of course, be uppermost in our minds, in the light of incidents in both Scotland and England, when the safety and comfort of football supporters have not been up to the standard that they deserve. If the Government wish to encourage clubs to implement the recommendations of the Taylor report, they should bear it in mind that the deadline for the establishment of all-seater stadiums for Scottish premier division clubs is the beginning of next season—August 1994.

Under the existing valuation system, if clubs spent perhaps millions of pounds in improving stadiums, the rateable value of those stadiums increased, as did their rates bills. In a sense, those clubs were being penalised for improving their grounds. Such a grave disincentive to the implementation of the recommendations in the Taylor report is very unfair, and I am glad that the Government are at last responding.

A few months ago, we went to see the Minister to press the case for the measure. We were told that virtually all clubs in the Scottish football league would benefit from the Government's proposals. However, my recollection is that, when we pressed the Minister for further details, we were informed that a couple of clubs—not many more than that—might stand to lose under the new regulations. In other words, their rates bill would increase rather than decrease. I was somewhat astounded to find that one of the clubs—I speak from memory—was East Stirlingshire football club, which is based in my constituency. I suppose that I should declare an interest as I am a shareholder, albeit a very modest one, in that club. It is my only claim to dabbling in capitalism.

I can assure the Minister that attendances at Firs Park, the home of East Stirlingshire football club, are not huge although the club probably has more supporters than the Scottish Tory party, even if that is not saying very much. I should be grateful if the Minister could confirm whether East Stirlingshire football club and perhaps one or two others in the Scottish Football League will face an increase in their rates bill, rather than a decrease, as a result of the order. If so, will he quantify the increase and explain it, because it appears that the new valuation is to be based on the revenue principle—the number of people coming through the turnstiles at Firs Park—so I fail to understand how on earth the rates bill can be increased compared with the bill under the present system which is based on the contractor's principle.

In spite of the general welcome for the measure, there is also extreme disappointment that Hampden Park has apparently been excluded. The reason given by the Minister at his meeting with the all-party Scottish sports group was that it would be unfair to base Hampden Park's rateable value on the average attendances at Queen's Park football club's home matches. That is a fair point, and we accepted it, but I suggested at the meeting that, although the formula in the order might not be applicable in the case of the national stadium, it was surely not beyond the wit of the Minister and his advisers to devise a different formula not simply based on the home attendances at Queen's Park matches but taking into account attendances at international matches, cup finals, cup semi-finals and other big matches held at the national stadium. I am sorry that the Minister has apparently not seen fit to do so. That is one aspect of our campaign that we shall continue in order to get a fair deal for the national stadium and for Queen's Park as well as other Scottish football clubs.

I realise that this is an interim order in the sense that there will be a general revaluation next year. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity of the 1995 revaluation to introduce a more radical comprehensive change to implement a solution that will include Hampden Park and perhaps many of the smaller stadiums which are excluded by the order, which refers only to clubs in the Scottish Football League, not to those in the Highland league or the junior football leagues.

The Minister should seize on the 1995 revaluation as an opportunity to have a far more radical look at the system of valuation for football stadiums so that we can get a fairer deal not only for all clubs in the Scottish league, including East Stirlingshire, but for all junior clubs and Queen's Park, the Scottish Football Association and Hampden Park, the national stadium.

We appreciate the fact that the Government have given some assistance to improve the national stadium. The first phase of the improvements is to be opened officially next week—a week tonight—with an international match against the Netherlands, which will be a great occasion. I urge the Government to think not only of the first phase but to ensure that there is adequate Government support for future phases of the Hampden Park redevelopment so that the Scottish football team and its supporters are given the national stadium that they deserve.

6.25 pm

Mr. Stewart: I do not criticise the hon. Members who arrived late for the debate and raised proper issues with which I had dealt earlier. However, I do not want to repeat myself.

I must tell the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) that, in opening the debate, I paid tribute to him and the all-party Scottish sports group for their work. There is therefore nothing personal in the fact that East Stirlingshire is to lose as a result of the changes. The current assessment of East Stirlingshire, which, as far as I can see, is the lowest in the Scottish Football League, is to rise from £1,350 to £1,900 under the proposals.

[Mr. Stewart]

I am glad that I have rather better news for my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie). Ayr United—the honest men—is to benefit from a reduction of about a third in its rateable value.

The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) will be delighted to know that Partick Thistle's current assessment of £13,500 is to be reduced to £3,800, so that there will no doubt be celebration among the Jags supporters.

The hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) will be interested to know that the current assessment of £4,750 will be reduced to £2,500.

Mr. McMaster *rose—*

Mr. Stewart: I am coming to the hon. Gentleman's perfectly right and proper question about St. Mirren. He will be happy to know that St. Mirren will benefit by a reduction of £3,600 in its formula valuation. The money will no doubt be put to good use. I can reassure the hon. Gentleman absolutely on the issue of ground improvements, which was also raised by a number of other hon. Members. The fact that we are moving to a formula based on clubs' home league gate receipts from the 1987-88 season will benefit those clubs that will be making improvements for Taylor or other reasons because their rateable values will not increase as they would have done under the previous system. I shall take away and examine the hon. Gentleman's other question about the precise development at Love street, although, finally, it would be a matter for the assessor.

I am grateful for the general welcome given to the order. Hon. Members asked about the definition of gate receipts. I can confirm that it includes income from executive boxes, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden.

Mr. McAllion: I hope that the Minister does not mind my intervening, but I am feeling a little left out because he has told all the other hon. Members about their teams—what is to happen to the two Dundee teams?

Mr. Stewart: I have good news for the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion). Dundee United's current assessment of £47,000 will be reduced to £26,800. Dundee's assessment of £25,000 will be reduced to £24,100, but, of course, if it implements the improvements to which to hon. Gentleman refers, it will benefit from the present system compared to what would have occurred under the previous system. With that menu of good news to hon. Members on both sides of the House, I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Mines and Quarries (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th February, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Industrial and Freight Transport (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th February, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Football Grounds (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th February, be approved.—

Resolved,

That the draft Telecommunications Industry (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Stewart.]*

Nuclear Installations (Limits of Liability)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the draft Nuclear Installations (Increase of Operators' Limits of Liability) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 16th February, be approved—*[Mr. Eggar]*.

6.30 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): The Minister seems almost to have pulled off a three-card trick in that opponents of the nuclear industry will welcome recognition of an increase in liabilities and those in favour of the nuclear industry will recognise that it is an upgrading to take account of inflation. In that respect, everybody concerned with the nuclear industry will be satisfied. To that extent, we must congratulate the Minister.

Question put and agreed to.

Legal Aid and Advice (Scotland)

6.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move,

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 7th March, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motions:

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 7th March, be approved.

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 7th March, be approved.

That the draft Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) (Prescribed Proceedings) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 7th March, be approved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The first two sets of regulations provide for the uprating of the financial eligibility limits for civil legal aid and for advice and assistance. They adjust the financial limits to effect changes in the level of social security benefits, which will be operative from 11 April.

The third and fourth sets of regulations provide for the extension of assistance by way of representation, which is a form of advice and assistance under the legal aid arrangements to cover a number of straightforward cases and to exclude the same cases from eligibility for criminal legal aid. They are technical changes designed to streamline and improve the administration of the legal aid system.

We shall also shortly be laying before the House further regulations under the negative resolution procedure to enact a number of further minor and technical amendments and improvements to the legal aid system in Scotland.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Under-Secretary of State have any evidence easily available on the effect of the changes in the past year to those regulations? I suspect that the evidence that we have is anecdotal and I do not know whether there is any factual basis for it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can tell the hon. Gentleman what the effect has been on overall expenditure. In 1987-88, expenditure was £49 million for legal aid in general in Scotland and the estimated figure for 1993-94 is £118 million, which is, of course, a substantial increase, notwithstanding the changes that occurred and which the House debated at approximately the same time last year, if my memory serves me correctly.

It may be helpful if I briefly describe each of the sets of regulations in a little more detail. As hon. Members will know, eligibility for civil legal aid and advice and assistance depends on a person's disposable income. That is income after allowances have been made for central expenditure such as housing costs, local taxes, dependants' allowances and a number of others. People at or below the lower limit of disposable income are entitled to legal aid covering the whole costs of their case or of the advice that they receive without paying any contribution. The upper limit for civil legal aid and advice and assistance relates to the level of income above which no legal aid is payable. People whose income falls between those two limits are eligible for civil legal aid or advice and assistance subject to the payment of a contribution which is directly related to their level of disposable income.

The Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1994 raise the lower disposable income limit for civil legal aid from £2,293 to £2,382 a year. The regulations also increase the upper limit from £6,800 to £7,060 a year. The Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations of 1994 provide for a similar uprating in relation to advice and assistance. In those cases, the calculation is carried out on the basis of weekly income. The regulations—

Mr. Dalyell *rose—*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall give way in a moment. The regulations raise the lower limit from £61 to £63 and the upper limit from £147 to £153. The regulations also revise the scale of contributions for applicants with disposable income between the upper and lower income limits for advice and assistance.

Mr. Dalyell: I understand clearly that legal aid does not apply to the work of the Child Support Agency, at least in general terms, but that, of course, legal advice and assistance does. Due to the difficulties that all of us have had with child support-related cases, which we see at our surgeries, is there any easily available figure—there may not be and I would not complain too much about it—of how much advice and assistance has been allocated to the general heading of child support?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I do not have that figure readily available, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the mechanisms by which social security benefits are taken into account for the purposes of calculating legal aid vary according to the benefit and the provisions of the legal aid legislation. For example, income support and family credit recipients automatically receive free advice and assistance. Income support and various other non means-tested social security benefits, such as attendance allowance, mobility allowance and disability living allowance are disregarded in the calculation of disposable income for civil legal aid. I shall make inquiries on the point which the hon. Gentleman raises and I shall write to him in due course.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West) *rose—*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: May I develop my argument, then the hon. Gentleman can intervene?

Mr. Canavan: I wish to ask about the figures.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have said that I shall find out what information I can and I shall write to the—

Mr. Canavan: It is not on the same point.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Very well.

Mr. Canavan: The Minister referred to increasing the upper limit of weekly disposable income from £147 a week to £153 a week and to an increase in the lower limit from £61 to £63. How on earth did the Government arrive at those figures?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The uprating has taken place after consultation with the Law Society. The changes that we are making to eligibility limits for civil

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

legal aid and advice and assistance are essentially routine upratings of the current levels. I should make it clear that there is no need for formal consultation on those changes, either with the Law Society or with any other interests. However, over changes in other areas that we are proposing, we have had discussion and consultation with the Law Society as appropriate. For example, on the question of a revised fee structure for solicitors undertaking legal aid in cases in sheriff courts, we have benefited from detailed discussions with the Law Society on the background and the rationale for the categories of fees to be prescribed, while making it clear that, in accordance with Government policy, the overall effect of the restructuring should be cost-neutral. We have taken into account the views of the Law Society of Scotland, which it has developed in discussion with the Scottish Legal Aid Board on the revision that we proposed to the detailed provisions for the undertaking of work as a matter of special urgency in civil cases funded by legal aid.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray) *rose—*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall give way in a moment.

On the point raised by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West, the proposed changes represent an increase of 3.8 per cent., matching the uprating level of income-related social security benefits. They are entirely straightforward and do not introduce any new provisions into that area of the legal aid system. The regulations are proposed to come into force on 11 April, the day when the annual social security uprating comes into effect.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Minister list in the *Official Report* or place in the Library details of the discussions that have taken place with the Law Society of Scotland and with the Scottish Legal Aid Board indicating who was present and what criteria were used to define the figures have been enunciated in the statutory instruments?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If the hon. Lady reads the report of what I have said, she will see that I have explained clearly on what issues the discussions and consultations took place. We have benefited from the views of the Law Society on the revision of the rules governing the circumstances in which a solicitor may write off any contribution payable by a legally aided person towards the cost of advice and assistance. In addition, the Minister of State met representatives of the Law Society on 7 February to discuss, among other things, fees for solicitors in legally aided cases. We have therefore undertaken discussion and consultation wherever appropriate, but not in cases where clear Government policy would make consultation unnecessary and inappropriate.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked about advice and assistance in child support cases. In answer to his question, I have just been advised that information on the breakdown is not available in the form requested.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): The Minister said that he had consulted the Law Society and others. For the record, will he tell us whether the Law Society and others agreed with the financial levels on which eligibility will be based?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I was not present at the meeting with the Law Society, so I cannot give its views in detail. However, I can say that the changes represent an increase of 3.8 per cent., which I believe will be generally welcomed.

The Advice and Assistance—

Mr. Dalyell *rose—*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: May I finish developing my point? The hon. Gentleman can intervene in a moment.

The Advice and Assistance (Assistance By Way of Representation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1994 and the Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) (Prescribed Proceedings) Regulations 1994 make slight changes to the legal aid system. They extend the availability of assistance by way of representation, which is a form of advice and assistance extended to include representation in court in certain straightforward cases, thus avoiding the need for the applicants to go through the more complex procedures for obtaining either full criminal or full civil legal aid.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister courteously told me that the information that I asked for was not available in the form in which it was requested. In what form is it available?

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: The information is certainly not available in the form in which the hon. Gentleman requested it. A breakdown of figures is given, but not in that form. The fact that information is not available in the form in which it has been requested is a parliamentary answer given when statistics are not available in the form required by an hon. Member. All that I can say to the hon. Gentleman is that if he examines carefully all the statistics that have been issued he will see the form in which they have been expressed—

Mr. Dalyell That is part of the trouble, as we are finding in Committee on the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill. It is preposterous—I use that word in the presence of the Secretary of State—that increasingly, as time goes on, our questions are being totally unanswered in any sensible form.

Mr. Gallie: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not the habit of the House to refrain from discussing in the Chamber what is happening in Standing Committee?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There has been nothing out of order in the debate while I have been in the Chair. If there had been I would have put a stop to it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I can make it clear to the hon. Member for Linlithgow that the statistics available are the aggregate figures for advice and assistance. He is welcome to table as many questions as he likes, and we shall endeavour to give as helpful replies as we can within the framework of what is readily available.

I was asked earlier about the Law Society's agreement. The Law Society was not consulted on the levels, which were increased as a matter of Government policy. I should also make it clear that the two sets of regulations to which I have referred make assistance by way of representation available in respect of proceedings under part V of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984—that is, proceedings

before the sheriff in relation to detention or guardianship under that Act. I remember that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) had an interest in that subject.

The regulations also make assistance by way of representation available in respect of proceedings in cases of failure to comply with the requirements of a probation order or in relation to offences committed during probation, of proceedings in relation to failure to comply with the requirements of a community service order or supervised attendance order, and in relation to applications under section 42 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988 for the removal of a driving disqualification.

In all such cases, assistance by way of representation will be available directly from the applicant's solicitor, except that in the case of applications for the removal of a driving disqualification, where the issues involved may be slightly more complex, the provision of assistance by way of representation is subject to the approval of the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

The regulations make provision for the uprating—

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): If I understand what the Minister is telling the House, the two instruments will make available on an easier and much less formal basis existing representation which until now has required an application for a full legal aid certificate. That is a laudable effort by the Government to simplify proceedings in certain cases specified in the regulations.

Do I also understand the Minister to say that there is an addition, in the sense that proceedings under part V of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 are now eligible for support through assistance by way of representation? I believe that that is an addition to the existing scheme, and if I am right it will also be welcomed by people who have an interest in such matters.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes, I believe that the provisions will be welcomed as an extension. The hon. and learned Gentleman will recall that such matters were about to be included in the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990, but that, if I remember correctly, time prevented us from going into the matter thoroughly. Supervised attendance orders were included in the context of that Act, and we are now taking the matter a stage further, which I believe will be welcomed in Scotland.

The regulations make provision for the uprating of eligibility limits and for other useful, if minor, changes in the system of legal aid in Scotland. I am glad that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who has served on the Scottish Legal Aid Board, welcomes those changes, which are small but important in their own right. I strongly commend them to the House.

6.46 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I state immediately that the Opposition do not quibble with the upratings. Indeed, we welcome them. However, we must remember the genesis, which goes back to last year's autumn statement. To satisfy the Treasury, 18 months ago the Lord Chancellor said:

"The overall cost of legal aid must be made more affordable. It must be better targeted towards those areas of work where it provides the most cost-effective service."

When Opposition Members hear the word "targeting" we know that it means cuts, and I am sure that that is what happened with the legal aid provisions. I well remember a written answer to the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) on 16 November 1992, which said that the Minister intended to reduce the free income limit for eligibility from £3,060 per annum to the equivalent income support level of £2,213 per annum. It was admitted that that reduction was in line with the proposals for England and Wales previously announced by the Lord Chancellor.

Despite that written answer, a campaign was launched in Scotland to impress upon the Government the folly of their intended action. We are glad that the regulations were slightly changed and the lower level was changed from the equivalent of £2,213 per annum—the income support level —to £61 per week. But that still excluded many people in Scotland from applying for legal aid. Last year, the number was 250,000.

While we cannot quibble with the uprating—I am sure that the Law Society and others will be happy with the 3 per cent. uprating—we must take it back to the beginning. No one was happy with the way in which the Government introduced the scheme last year and their original intention to keep it at the income support level. We now find that the original intention was to eliminate the contributory scheme. However, after campaigning, that was reinstated, and the amount was increased from £61 to £147 on a sliding scale. The Minister mentioned £63 for the lower end of the scale. We must be grateful for small mercies.

I looked at the research in the Library of the House for the last time that £63 was available for advice and research, and I had to go back to 1989. It is the same in 1994. In 1991, it was £70; in 1990, it was £64; and in 1989, it was just over £61. What we have here is back to the future with a vengeance; it is a retrograde step for the justice system in Scotland.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give the corresponding totals for the money spent on legal aid by the Scottish Office during that period? Was not the amount spent in 1989 substantially less in real terms than the figure announced today?

Mr. McFall: I am the first to admit that perhaps the expenditure has increased.

I thought that justice was for all. A system that excludes 250,000 people is one which denies justice to many people. That is the point of our argument. I hope that the hon. Member for Ayr will agree that if there is a pressing case for an individual to take a matter to court, especially cases of domestic violence, it would not matter if the individual had £1 million per week or £60 per week. Labour Members have been arguing on the basis of equity and accessibility to the courts.

Mr. Gallie: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. But at the same time, it does not matter what level is set—people just above the banding will always suffer. It is almost impossible to find an equitable banding.

Mr. McFall: I do not want to go too much into that argument. When the Lord Chancellor made the point about cutting back, he talked about the recession. In any recession, there will be casualties and references to the courts and justice. Therefore, the wider policies of the Government are contributing partly to the problem. The hon. Member for Ayr should keep that in mind. It is important to underline that fact, because we must look at the whole picture.

[Mr. McFall]

A major stumbling block in the achievement of efficiency is the way in which the courts are run. We have a massively underfunded prosecution system and the courts are clogged. An individual can get bail in the Glasgow sheriff court or district court, and find that it is one or two years before his or her case is taken up. In other words, the system is wasting money daily and the Government have done very little to rectify the problem.

I welcome the criminal legal aid regulations. I also welcome the point made by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) about part V of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984. I shall make one or two points about those regulations in the short time that is available.

I understand that we will see changes in probation order breaches, conviction and prevention, breaches of community service orders and disqualification for driving licence petitions. All those things will be taken out of criminal legal aid and put into the advice by way of representation scheme. The problem—I should like the Minister's opinion on this point—is that in the civil legal aid system there is not the same time for solicitors to have an in-depth investigation as there is in the criminal legal aid system.

Given that all participants have been through the criminal courts, will there be a duplication of administrative costs when there is a transfer from criminal legal aid to advice by way of representation? If there is such a duplication, will not that increase the costs for the Scottish Legal Aid Board, which will have to process two applications—one from criminal legal aid and one from the advice by way of representation scheme? We question the wisdom of simultaneously cutting costs and increasing administration.

As I said earlier, the Government will still exclude a section of society from one of the basic rights of citizenship, which is access to justice. As we heard last year, the Government's attitude could blight and wreck people's lives. That is why we will continue to argue against the principle of the Government's measures, although we welcome the 3 per cent. uprating provided in the regulations. However, there I give notice to the Government that the battle will continue on behalf of the many people in Scotland who will be excluded.

6.55 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a time-limited debate and I know that other hon. Members want to catch your eye in the five minutes that remain. Therefore, I shall be brief and not talk about some of the points that I wish directly to raise with the Minister.

The Minister let the cat out of the bag when he admitted the importance of Government policy, which seems to take sway over any representations made by those who represent the legal fraternity in Scotland and, indeed, the people whom they in turn represent—our constituents. It is important to look at the historical aspect of the regulations and what has happened to legal aid in Scotland.

We welcome the uprating provided in the regulations. However, it seems that the very poor or the very rich will have access to justice while the vast majority of people —our constituents—will be denied assistance, be it in civil or criminal actions which they wish to raise in the courts of Scotland. It has always been my fundamental belief that we are all equal before the law, irrespective of income and circumstances, and that right should be given to us.

Clearly, the Government are introducing a cost-cutting exercise in all aspects of legal aid. My final comment is a comment that was made by no less a person than Anthony Scrivener QC, who is the chairman of the Bar. In *The Independent*, he said:

"The legal system is for the people and not for the lawyers or the judiciary. We are all servants of the community and if our legal system does not cater for those who need legal aid, then it does not deserve to be called a system of justice."

Clearly, in introducing these small improvements, the Minister has not addressed the issue of justice for the community.

6.57 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I suppose that I should declare an interest as someone in full membership of the Faculty of Advocates. However, looking at the regulations, I think that it is unlikely that I will benefit either personally or professionally from any of the changes that the Government propose to institute.

I shall reiterate the point that I made when I intervened on the Minister earlier. I welcome the simplification with regard to what one might call, for shorthand purposes, the criminal elements of the regulations which the Minister introduced. Clearly, that is something to be welcomed. If it reduces any additional burden on the administration of the Scottish Legal Aid Board, it will be not only more convenient but more efficient in terms of the use of resources.

As for the availability of civil legal advice and assistance, however, if one tracks back over the history of the provision of civil legal aid since the first, principal Act was introduced into the House, it is clear from answers given by Ministers that the percentage of the population in Scotland that is eligible for legal aid has fallen continuously and that the original purpose of civil legal aid, which was to allow every individual in Scotland the opportunity of litigating without any restriction because of his or her financial means, has been substantially prejudiced. The Government may be perfectly happy for that to be so, but it is important on an occasion like this, while welcoming the uprating, which no one would want to vote against or to oppose, to reflect the fact that the number of people in Scotland who are eligible for legal aid is falling. That must mean more and more cases of the sort mentioned by the hon. Gentleman the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie). It must mean that more and more people who should have the right to go to law—

It being Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [11 March].*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 7 March, be approved.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Questions on the other motions to be decided at that hour.*

Resolved,

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 7 March, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 7 March, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) (Prescribed Proceedings) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 7 March, be approved.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

Local Government (Wales) Bill [*Lords*]

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are about to discuss an extremely important point for Welsh Members—a motion to amend the Standing Orders of the House in relation to the membership of Committees. I should like you to consider the constitutional implications of the decision that the House will take tonight, because the Bill deals with aspects of government in Wales. We want to know whether it is right that the Bill should be committed to a Standing Committee or whether, in view of its constitutional implications, it should be considered by a Committee of the whole House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Such a motion was not moved last night. The matter could have been decided last night, but it was not.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Although I understand that last night a motion on this matter could have been tabled, do you accept that some parts of the Bill, particularly the schedules, have constitutional implications because of the way in which the legislation binds the way in which hon. Members are elected to the House? It was suggested yesterday that there was something not far removed from gerrymandering in those provisions. That must be a constitutional matter. Surely those parts must be taken on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the first point of order.

7.2 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): I beg to move,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees), any Standing Committee appointed for consideration of the Local Government (Wales) Bill [*Lords*] shall consist of twenty-eight Members, including not fewer than nineteen Members sitting for constituencies in Wales.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have to inform the House that Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This is a procedural motion. It is not about the merits of the Local Government (Wales) Bill, which the House debated fully yesterday and which will be debated further in Committee and, later, on the Floor of the House. The motion relates to the constitution of the Standing Committee to consider the Bill.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery) *rose—*

Sir Wyn Roberts: Let me get on a little, if I may.

As Standing Order No. 86 is referred to in the motion, it may be helpful to hon. Members if I remind them of its main requirements. With certain exceptions, it requires:

"the Committee of Selection shall nominate not fewer than sixteen nor more than fifty Members to serve on each standing committee for the consideration of each bill".

It also requires the Committee of Selection to have regard to

"the qualifications of those Members nominated and to the composition of the House".

There is then a third provision which states:

"for the consideration of any public bill relating exclusively to Wales, the committee shall be so constituted as to include all Members sitting for constituencies in Wales."

Mr. Alex Carlile: I wonder if the right hon. Gentleman will tell the House what he thinks was the reason for the introduction of Standing Order No. 86(2)(ii). In particular, does he recognise that he made a wholly inaccurate statement to the House when he said that there was a "third" provision? Is it not right that the proviso is an overriding proviso that governs Standing Order No. 86?

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is for the House to decide how the proposed Committee is set up. The House can certainly override the measure if it follows this motion.

It is not possible to constitute a Committee that satisfies all three requirements of the Standing Order—one with no more than 50 members that reflects the composition of the House and includes all hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies. Whichever way one tries to form such a Committee, at least one of those requirements will not be met.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central) *rose—*

Sir Wyn Roberts: I shall give way in a moment. We must provide a practical and precedented solution to a procedural difficulty.

Mr. Alex Carlile: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So that the Minister of State—as always, he is doing his best to explain the position fairly to the House—can do so, will you confirm from the Chair that the requirement of 50 members does not apply under the Standing Order to Standing Committees relating to legislation that applies exclusively to Wales, because of the way in which the proviso is expressed? The right hon. Gentleman is speaking as though there were a requirement for a maximum of 50 members on such a Standing Committee. I submit to you that it is simply not so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is all a matter for debate in the context of this motion.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If it is a matter for debate, would it not be appropriate and a courtesy to the House if the Secretary of State were here to listen to the excuses that are given? He is the moving hand behind this measure and the individual Cabinet member who is now going to take away from Welsh Members the right to sit on a Committee that influences their own local authorities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the Secretary of State to decide.

Sir Wyn Roberts: All that I have said so far is based on the contents of Standing Order No. 86, and it is a matter for the House to decide.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: The Minister has just explained that it is somehow impossible for all these parts to be made a part of the whole, for the Committee to reflect the balance on the Floor of the House yet also include all the hon. Members elected from Welsh constituencies. Why, then, was the Standing Order put down? At the time that it was put down, there was not a single unionist Member in Wales; and presumably, if it had been impossible to set the system up and keep all those things part of the whole, it would not have been set up in the first place.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is not for me to fathom what was in the minds of our forebears who put down this Standing Order. We seek to provide a practical and precedented solution to a procedural difficulty, and the Government's motion achieves precisely that.

Hon. Members will be interested to know that the Labour party's Welsh Language Act 1967, its Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 and the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 all had Standing Committee membership other than that specified in Standing Order No. 86.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Does the Minister of State agree that in those three examples the setting aside of the Standing Order was done for the convenience of the House, and not for the convenience of the Government? It was done in the interests of both the Government and the Opposition because of Ministers and Front-Bench spokesmen, all of whom wanted not to be on a Committee on those Bills. It was, therefore, perfectly in order at the time, for the convenience of the House and of both sides, not on an opposed basis, to do that. What the right hon. Gentleman proposes, purely for the convenience of the Government and not for the convenience of the House, is entirely different.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Committee stage of the Welsh Language Act 1967 was taken on the Floor of the House. The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that the Welsh Development Agency Bill and the Development of Rural Wales Bill were considered in Standing Committee. But there was a Labour Government at that time, and Labour Members were in the majority on the Committees. I cannot vouch for the circumstances at the time, but I guess that what was done was for the convenience of the Government of the day as well.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Does the Minister recognise another major difference between the three Acts to which reference has been made and the Bill that we are considering? The former applied to Wales generally or to large tranches of Wales, whereas this Bill applies specifically to every local authority area and every constituency. There is nobody else who can speak for our constituencies—in my case, Penarth and part of Cardiff. That is why it is so outrageous that the right hon. Gentleman is pressing ahead with this departure from the Standing Orders.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman, like me, knows only too well that hon. Members have opportunities in addition to those provided in Standing Committee to declare their views. There will be a Report stage and a Third Reading on the Floor of the House, and we have already had the Second Reading.

Mr. Michael: The Minister knows full well that it is in Committee that details relating to individual constituencies are considered. That is why his answer is entirely irrelevant to the point that I made.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have never known hon. Members, particularly on Report, to be held back when discussing details further to those that were dealt with in Standing Committee. The same applies to Third Reading.

Mr. Wigley: Has the right hon. Gentleman established with the Clerks of the House that it will be in order for every matter dealt with in Committee to be dealt with on

Report? Will the Government ensure that there is enough time for every such issue to be considered again on the Floor of the House so that we may all be involved?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that that is a matter not for me but for the Chair.

None of the motions to set up the membership of the Standing Committees to which I have referred, which were similar to the one that we are now considering, was opposed.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): In the case of the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975, my recollection is that the rules were changed at the request of, and for the convenience of, the Opposition of the day.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am sure that it was for the convenience of the then Government, as well. It may have been for the convenience of the then Opposition, as the current Opposition are only too happy to say time and again, but I cannot imagine that it would have been done had it not been for the convenience of the Labour Government.

The Opposition amendment proposes a Standing Committee of 63 members. That would be the largest Committee ever to deal with a Welsh Bill, and I guess that it would be somewhat unwieldy. It would certainly exceed the maximum of 50 specified in Standing Order No. 86.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): The Minister is talking about the Opposition amendment. I should like to take him back to the Government's proposal that the Committee consist of 28 members. Do the Government want a majority? If so, a membership of 28 would mean their having 15 places, leaving a mere 13 for 32 people. Would that be right? It would be far better and far more democratic if every Welsh Member were enabled to serve on the Committee. The Government's trumped-up scheme would deny at least 19 Opposition Members the right to membership of the Committee.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am coming to that point. By my calculation, the Opposition would have a majority on the Committee of 63 that they propose if they intend that it should include all Welsh Members. In that case, it would not reflect the composition of the House. It ought to be obvious that no Government would agree that their legislation should be dealt with by a Committee on which the Opposition had a majority. That is the answer to the point raised by the hon. Gentleman. This is a Government Bill, and the Government ought to have a majority on the Standing Committee. I am genuinely surprised that the Opposition should seek to establish, for the purposes of a Government Bill, a Committee on which they have a majority.

Mr. Morgan: The right hon. Gentleman is responsible for education, including mathematics, in Wales. He appears to have forgotten that one of the Committee members would be the Chairman and that, therefore, there would be only 31 Opposition members. Two times 31 is 62, so the Government would have a majority on a Committee of 63. Will the right hon. Gentleman withdraw the garbage that he has been talking for the past two minutes?

Sir Wyn Roberts: My mathematics tells me that the Government would not have a majority. I am sure that it is absolutely right to say that they would be dependent on the Chair. *[Interruption.]* I leave it to the hon. Gentleman to think about what I have just said—what the Opposition propose would leave the Government without a majority and dependent on the Chair.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Minister please check his mathematics again? If he sticks to the case that he has just made, he will be impugning the integrity of the Chairman, who, as a distinguished member of the Speaker's Panel, is prevented by the rules—as I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will confirm—from being counted as a Opposition member. I am sure that I am correct in respect of this matter, as in respect of the mathematics. The Minister ought to be honest enough to reconsider what he has just said.

Sir Wyn Roberts: On the basis of the figures that the hon. Gentleman has produced, I conclude that the two sides would be equal, the 63rd vote being held by the Chair. I much prefer the Government's proposed Committee of 28 members.

Mr. Michael: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems that the Minister is casting doubt on the normal proceedings of the House. Can you clarify the position—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for the Chair.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I much prefer a membership of 28, and I am sure that the House will conclude that the Government are right. A Committee of that size would be small enough to work effectively and large enough to reflect the composition of the House, thereby ensuring representation for the minority parties. I therefore commend the motion to the House.

7.18 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I beg to move, leave out from the second "of" to end and add "sixty-three Members".

Having listened to the speech of the Minister of State, I think that it would have been much better if he had stayed in Catalonia, where he might have learnt a bit more about democracy. His mathematics is absolutely absurd. The position of the Chairman of a Committee removes him from the configuration of the Opposition, although he or she counts towards a quorum. Thus, under our proposal, the Opposition would have only 31 members, and the Government would have a majority for all normal purposes of voting. The Minister should, therefore, check the rules of the House and how Committees are constituted. In his opening remarks, he attempted to stir up apathy, as he usually does wherever he goes in Wales, but he should produce some sort of argument for setting aside, for the third time in just under two years, the rules of the House.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman will help me with his Aberpergau mathematics. He said that the Committee would contain 31 Opposition Members and the chairman, which leaves 31 Conservative Members. How would that give a Government majority?

Mr. Morgan: The hon. Gentleman should remember that it would be possible for the Government—so I am instructed by the authorities of the House—not to count the Chairman as a member of the Committee, even though he would count towards a quorum. The hon. Gentleman is

[Mr. Morgan]

welcome to check that with the Clerks of the House, as I did yesterday. I think that he will find that my mathematics are correct and my understanding of the procedure is the same as that of the House authorities.

Mr. Wigley: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the Minister's argument has a serious bearing on the motion? The Minister includes the Chair of the Committee in the number that he regards as appropriate. He must, therefore, include the Chair among the 28 members mentioned in the motion. If the Chair were taken out, only 27 members would be left—a totally different understanding of the composition of the Committee from that given by the usual channels.

Mr. Morgan: The hon. Gentleman is right. It is only for the purpose of a quorum that the Chairman of a Committee counts towards its membership. Therefore, the Minister's mathematics are wrong.

The Minister of State's argument is fundamentally flawed now, as it was during discussions on 9 June 1992 on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill and 7 June 1993 on the Welsh Language Bill. We face a sort of triple crown of the democratic deficit in Wales. It is the equivalent of England trying to get 15 extra players on the field on Saturday to ensure the right result. The people of Wales would object to that on Saturday, as they object to the undermining of the principle of democracy in Wales tonight. The Government cannot move the goalposts all the time in respect of Welsh legislation.

The Standing Orders of the House make special provision for Welsh legislation. The best thing for the Government to do—the sooner they do it, the better—would be to leave the Standing Orders alone in relation to Welsh legislation and accept that they have been put there for a specific purpose. The Government should not try to alter the Standing Orders every time such matters come before the House.

The problem faced by the Opposition is to understand why the Government use the same explanation each time that the matter arises. Reference has already been made to it by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). Each time, the Government try to say that the Standing Orders are defective. That is an absurd proposition. One cannot say that the Standing Orders, which have been in existence since 1907, are defective or inherently self-contradictory. That is an absurd proposition, which was the Minister's argument. He repeated what the Secretary of State said almost a year ago when he broke his duck in his current job, although that speech was even more abbreviated than that of the Minister of State's.

The Government's argument is that, as the Committee should not have more than 50 members and must reflect the composition of the House in terms of Government and Opposition—with a built-in Government majority—the third provision cannot be met. That final provision is that all Welsh Members must be members of the Committee. That is not what Standing Order No. 86 says.

Standing Order No. 86 contains a third provision that plainly overrides the first two—it makes an exception for Welsh legislation. It provides that, for Welsh legislation, all Welsh Members shall sit on the Standing Committee. It does not say that three co-equal propositions—the Government majority, the maximum of 50 members and the fact that all Welsh Members should serve on the Standing Committee—should be juggled around. It does not state, "Something's got to give, so try to fit them in as best you can. Perm any two out of three and see if you can come up with Littlewoods' home banker." It is not like that.

The final provision of Standing Order No. 86 is plainly meant to override its other provisions in terms of Welsh legislation. The Government will not accept that, and we all know why. They want to steamroller all Welsh legislation through unwilling Welsh Members in the House of Commons, who reflect the views of a Welsh people who are extremely unwilling to accept Tory Government proposals for Wales. That is the problem which the Government must face. They cannot win the votes normally and democratically on Welsh matters, so they have to use the undemocratic steamroller to try to push their legislation through the House.

In 1907, democratic support for the Tory Government was even worse, if that is possible to imagine, than it is now. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) said that the Conservatives experienced a total wipe-out in the 1906 general election. Not one Tory Member of Parliament was returned. They were lucky to get the nil, as it is sometimes said after football matches after one side has had a thrashing. The Tories are slightly better off now—they have six Welsh Members out of 38—but they still have a problem.

The Standing Orders are not meant to serve the convenience of the Government. They are meant to protect democracy. The nature of the United Kingdom is at stake tonight. The UK is not one homogeneous nation state comprising 651 Members of Parliament who all represent the same sort of constituency. As its name shows, the United Kingdom is an amalgam of four different home countries. That is why Standing Order No. 86 contains specific provision for Scottish legislation and Welsh legislation in the constitution of the Grand Committees and the Standing Committees. The Government say, "Yes, we know that's there, but we are going to ignore it. Every time it comes up, we are going to set it aside." I know that there are set-aside schemes in agriculture, but we do not want such schemes for dealing with the fundamental democratic rights of the smaller countries that make up the UK. The UK works only because there is protection for the smaller parts of the United Kingdom—Scotland and Wales—to prevent them from being abused and pushed around by the much larger majority, England, when legislation goes through the House.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Will the hon. Gentleman clarify this point? When Labour formed the minority Government in the 1970s, it presumably had an overall minority in England. In matters affecting England, did it have a minority on the various Committees of the House?

Mr. Morgan: Provision for England, which comprises 82 per cent. of the total of the UK, is much less specific because it does not need the same measure of protection. But there is special provision for England. Earlier today, there was a debate on the redundant churches legislation that applies to England, but not to Wales—as far as I know, it does not apply in Scotland either. Hon. Members may have taken part—I certainly did not—in the debate on

women priests in England. There is an established Church in England, so we in Parliament will, from time to time, discuss specifically English matters, such as the established Church. As far as I know, no Welsh Members take part in such debates, vote on them or bother to come in because they are on English matters. England does not need the same degree of protection from abuse by the majority of the minority.

The Government make so much fuss about the same argument in terms of Europe. The Foreign Secretary returns from Europe and makes ringing declarations about subsidiarity and wanting to build in special protection for Britain. He says that we do not want other countries to tell us what to do. We do not want qualified majority voting extended so that we in Britain can be told what to do when we might want to defend our little patch from the abuse by the majority of the minority. That is what Standing Order No. 86 is about.

The two special provisions on Scotland and Wales are saying to the Government and the House that subsidiarity begins at home. It is written into the rules of the House that Wales and Scotland, because they form only 5.5 per cent. and 9.5 per cent. respectively of the UK population, need special protection from abuse by the majority. They cannot be the majority themselves—Wales could never push England around in the House because it is far too small, and that is built into the demography of the United Kingdom.

We in Wales have special protections which, in 1907, were very sensibly built in, and the Government are once again trying to set them aside. That is regardless of the hypocrisy that they manifest when they go to Europe and try to restrict the spread of qualified majority voting because they do not think that this country ought to be pushed around.

Other points have been made in a couple of interventions from hon. Members. The Bill is perhaps even more of a crunch point for our attempt to defend the rights that were built in under Standing Order No.86 than the two previous examples which were quoted. The Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill applied directly only to the Cardiff area and it must be said that not everybody in Wales was directly affected by the Welsh Language Bill.

However, the Local Government (Wales) Bill [*Lords*] —to give it its proper title—applies in every hole and corner in Wales. There is no part of Wales that will not be directly affected by its provisions. We are all affected by it, but English Members—by and large—are not affected by it.

Therefore, it is absurd that the Government should consider setting aside Standing Order No.86 so that they can throw Welsh Members off the Standing Committee and import English Members who are not affected. That is cheating under the rules of the House, and the Government are moving the goalposts. They are trying to get around the provisions of Standing Order No. 86, which have been there for 87 years.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The hon. Gentleman says that moving the suspension of Standing Order No. 86 is cheating the House. Has there ever been an occasion when a Labour Government moved the suspension of that Standing Order?

Mr. Morgan: It has not been done on an opposed basis, as the Minister is aware. It is not clear what would have happened if the Opposition at that time had objected, but it has never been done on an opposed basis.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Is the hon. Gentleman denying the right of the House to suspend the Standing Order?

Mr. Morgan: Absolutely not. However, the systematic removal of the Standing Order three times in 22 months implies that the Government do not accept its existence, or that they believe that it is only there for their own convenience. That is not the nature of Standing Orders of the House, which exist to protect minorities, the rights of Back Benchers and the ability of Welsh Members to represent Welsh constituents. Those rights have been built in. The Government want to build them back out again, and that is undermining democracy.

The Government are trying to turn the Standing Committee into another quango and pack it with Tory placemen in exactly the same way as they have done with all quangos. It is fair to say that Wales is fed up with quangos and with the three times that the Standing Order has been set aside. The Minister will be aware that quangos —although he is trying to get more people from all over to serve on them—are known as the great little gravy trains of Wales. The right hon. Gentleman wants more people to try to ride on them.

The Government are trying to change the Standing Committees so that they have the same political character as quangos. That simply means that they cannot accept the democratic verdict of the people of Wales in elections. They will be importing people who are not interested in the proceedings.

The top qualification for the English Tories who will be imported is that they will not be able to point out Wales on a map. They will not know the difference between Carmarthen and Caernarfon, and they will not be able to speak as they will be frightened stiff—as the Secretary of State mentioned last night—of Welsh pronunciations. Worst of all, they will think that the name of our national game is "rugger" rather than rugby, and we find that deeply offensive.

The Secretary of State last night kept referring to the "Rhonda valley". He has been Secretary of State for quite a while now, and we would have thought that he would mastered the fact that it is the Rhondda valley and not the "Rhonda valley". There may be some parts of Wokingham where people think that "Rhonda valley" is a product of some 30s slushy Hollywood romance where Rhonda Fleming married Rudy Vallee and had a daughter called "Rhonda valley".

We are talking about Welsh communities and the places that we represent, as distinct from the mythical Wales that the Secretary of State would like to present where, occasionally, the Tories win a seat. Tory Members will serve on the Committee even though they do not agree with unitary local government being introduced in England. They will be imported through the exemption from Standing Order No. 86 and will support hypocritically unitary local government in Wales which they would not support in England. That is another absurdity which will occur if we allow the motion to be passed.

The underlying purpose of the exemption from Standing Order No. 86 and the ability to import carpetbaggers from outside Wales is to defend the ability

[Mr. Morgan]

of the Government to get through Parliament a measure that, as of this morning, will be subject to follow-up action by the parliamentary boundary commissioner.

The most important thing for the Government in terms of the management of their business is that, once the Bill has had its Second Reading, they will immediately instruct the parliamentary boundary commissioner to review their interim recommendations. We heard last night the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) trying to deny that the intention of bringing the communities of Ewenny, Wick and St. Bride's Major into the Vale of Glamorgan local authority was to assist him in shoring up his majority of 19—which, we understand from the electoral returning officer, was itself artificially imported from Johannesburg.

I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) was unfair to the hon. Gentleman last night. Normally, it is fair to say that the forensic skills of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan would not extend to his being able to give away ice cream in the middle of the Sahara. My hon. Friend asked the hon. Gentleman to defend the indefensible, which is the bringing in of Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick for any sensible local government purpose. The clear underlying purpose is to try to shore up the hon. Gentleman's majority, and that is so open and obvious and so contrary to what the local community wants.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend) *rose—*

Mr. Morgan: I will give way to my hon. Friend, who I hope will be as unfair to the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan as he was last night.

Mr. Griffiths: I will try my best not to be unfair at this stage. I wish to point out that when the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan made that assertion to the gathered 200 at a meeting, there was a loud burst of laughter.

Mr. Morgan: Following my hon. Friend's inquisition of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan last night, I was thinking that we ought to call in the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. However, there is not a special branch of the NSPCC to defend Government Members when they are in difficulty, as the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan clearly was last night. The Bill will introduce a new word to Welsh political vocabulary—Ewenny-mandering. It is a blatant attempt to shore up the hon. Gentleman and to take votes away from my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend.

What are the alternatives? The Opposition tabled the amendment to give the Government some sort of way out. On the previous two occasions, we simply voted against the Standing Order No. 86 set-aside motion.

Mr. Sweeney: I went to some lengths yesterday to repudiate the allegations of gerrymandering which were made by the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) has just said and, with respect, he cannot have it both ways. He says that the Government are trying to give votes to the Vale of Glamorgan parliamentary constituency, and then says that the Government are trying to take away votes from the hon. Member for Bridgend. Which is it?

Mr. Morgan *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House should not be arguing too much about the Bill. Hon. Members should stick to the subject for tonight's debate, and not last night's debate.

Mr. Morgan: I entirely agree with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We must stick tightly to the remit of the Standing Order No. 86 set-aside motion. I will say that the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan is quoting me accurately. Of course my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend is happy to represent the constituents of Ewenny, Wick and St. Bride's Major. That is the simple fact of it. They do not want to leave and he does not want them to leave.

We are discussing the alternatives to setting aside Standing Order No. 86. We have offered the Government a way out. That way out is the subject of a simply solvable mathematical dispute. In the inconceivable circumstances that the Government were right and 63 members would not give them a majority, they could make it 64. We would not mind. That is one way out. Rather than taking Welsh Members of Parliament off the Standing Committee, on which they have a right, established over 87 years, to serve, the Government could add English Members. That would give the Government a majority. That is not provided for in the last proviso of Standing Order No. 86, but if that is what the Government want, it would be one way of doing it.

If the Government are absolutely insistent on keeping a majority on the Committee, it is still important that we are able to be present when the clause that refers to changes to the local government units in a Member's constituency is discussed. Each Opposition Member will fight like a tigress for her cubs for the right to be there when the matter is dealt with in Committee. We should like to have the right to serve on the Committee—even a large, unwieldy one—simply because each of us wants to be there when our local authority area is discussed.

Mr. Sweeney: If Opposition Members are so keen to fight like tigers, where are they this evening?

Mr. Morgan: I am not sure what sort of count the hon. Gentleman has made of the attendance during the debate last night and tonight. I am grateful for his solicitude for hon. Members. He will have noticed that the Secretary of State was not here for the beginning of the debate, but no doubt he exempts him because, in any case, he represents an English constituency.

The other alternative is simply to let the Committee be constituted as a form of Welsh Grand Committee; in other words, the Government would agree to give up their majority. The Minister of State says that the Government do not want to do that and that such action is almost unprecedented. But it is not unprecedented. The Government have said that they want to tune up the functions of the Scottish Grand Committee and allow it to take the Committee stages of relatively uncontroversial Bills. I accept that the Local Government (Wales) Bill is not uncontroversial, but, given the difficulties posed to the Government by the way in which Standing Order No. 86 is written, the Minister of State should at least have had the courtesy to the House of raising the hypothesis of constituting the Committee as a Welsh Grand Committee

and then knocking it down. He should have given the Government's reasons for not being willing to accept the loss of majority.

All that the Minister said was that such a move was unprecedented. We know that that is not true because in their "taking stock" exercise the Government want to apply the principle to the Scottish Grand Committee. It is clear that the Government would lose a few votes in the Committee stage on the Bill. They would lose perhaps three or four votes. They would certainly lose the votes on a Welsh assembly. One or two of the boundary votes, such as the vote on Montgomery, would be lost in Committee. The Government could reverse them on Report. If they are interested in democracy, that is always a possibility. It is not a problem. The problem is that they are not interested in democracy. They are interested only in steamrollering. The Government must face that problem in the higher court of the views of the Welsh people, as expressed in past elections and undoubtedly in the next elections.

The Government have to face the fact that ever since the secret ballot was introduced they have not won a majority of votes in Wales. Yet we do not want them to come up with ideas to set aside the secret ballot in Welsh elections because they do not like the results. We cannot accept any diminution of the democratic rights of people in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: How does the hon. Gentleman reconcile his proposals in the amendment for a Committee of 63 or 64 with the requirement of Standing Order No. 86 that the Committee of Selection shall nominate no fewer than 16 and no more than 50 Members to serve on each Standing Committee?

Mr. Morgan: That is clearly overridden by the third proviso with reference to Scottish and Welsh legislation. Scottish and Welsh legislation is exempt from that part of Standing Order No. 86. One can read it 20 times or once. It is plain as a pikestaff. Scottish and Welsh legislation is exempt from that provision. What else can the provision that all Welsh Members of Parliament shall be on the Committee mean? It is clearly an instruction to the authorities of the House which is superior to the instructions on the composition of Committees and the maximum of 50 and minimum of 16. That is the only possible construction that the English language can permit anyone with common sense to put on the words of Standing Order No. 86.

The problem with the Minister of State is not his understanding of Standing Order No. 86 and what the English language plainly means. The problem is that he does not like what it means and is therefore trying to wriggle out of the consequences for the Government. If they accepted the consequences, they would have to show a little give and take, a little chwarae teg and a little flexibility in coming to meet us half way, representing as we do more than five out of six of the constituencies of Wales.

Those are the three alternatives that the Government could have adopted instead of the one that they have adopted on three successive occasions and which has caused them to stand condemned before the bar of Welsh public opinion. The Government's action is application of the steamroller, the packing of the Standing Committee and the acid test of whether they are interested in democracy.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend has listed all the reasonable options. If the Government are not willing to budge on this issue, does he think that they would go for even the most modest option and take clause 1 and schedule 1 in a Committee of the whole House? That would at least allow every Welsh Member to take part in the debate. That is a practical proposition. I wonder whether my hon. Friend could tempt the Secretary of State to comment on that option?

Mr. Morgan: That is yet another example of the flexibility with which, I think that it is fair to say, Opposition Members are willing to approach the matter. We are trying to tempt the Government into using some legislative method other than the steamroller across Welsh public opinion. The only language that we have heard from the Government so far is packing the Standing Committee with Tory placemen who are ignorant of Wales and proud of that ignorance. The way we are going, Wales will soon be renamed as Quangostan.

The Government are attempting to take Wales back to the evil days before secret ballots and before elected local government was introduced in 1884. Before that, everything was arranged cosily between the squire, the justices of the peace, the poor law guardians and the school boards, all of whom were relatives of the squire in any case. We reject that vision of disappearing democracy and circumscribed accountability. We want to develop democracy in Wales and take government institutions closer to the people. That is why we shall ask all our colleagues to support us in the Lobby tonight in the vote on the amendment and, if the amendment is defeated, the vote on the main motion.

7.46 pm

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): We see now why the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) aggregated a massive sum of 40 votes out of 270 when he stood for the shadow Cabinet.

The thrust of the argument from Opposition Members is that they wish to represent and speak for their constituencies in the Standing Committee. I find that interesting. I propose to develop their argument for a few moments. I have just come out of the Standing Committee that is considering the Coal Industry Bill. I noticed that the sole representative on the Opposition Benches from the south Wales coalfield was the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain). That surprised me because, coming from south Wales, I am fully aware that in a bygone era the coalfield fuelled an empire. Its socialism was championed by the likes of Aneurin Bevan and Jim Griffiths. So I wondered why the hon. Member for Neath was the sole representative from the south Wales coalfield.

When I asked the hon. Member for Neath why he was the only south Wales Member on that Committee—I am coming to the key point, Mr. Deputy Speaker—the reason that I was given was that other hon. Members who represent the south Wales coalfield were Opposition spokesmen. They had other duties and could not be selected for that Standing Committee.

I should like to develop the argument by assessing how many Opposition Members would be eligible to serve on the Standing Committee. I shall start with the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) who is the Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely we must concentrate on the Standing Order and not have another repeat of a psychotic litany of hatred from the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair is quite aware of that.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I understand it, the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) is suggesting that some of my hon. Friends would not be eligible to sit on a Standing Committee. Surely the only question that arises about eligibility is whether hon. Members are elected. As we are all elected, by definition we all must be eligible. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman is out of order in suggesting that we are ineligible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair will decide who is out of order, and so far the hon. Gentleman is quite in order.

Mr. Richards: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for clarifying that matter for Opposition Members.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): The hon. Gentleman seeks to mislead the House in relation to the Coal Industry Bill. My reply is quite specific. Not only are other valley Members Front-Bench spokesmen for the Labour party but they are on Select Committees. That is why it was difficult, if not impossible, for them to be members of the Committee examining the Coal Industry Bill. The hon. Gentleman should at least repeat my remark in its full context and give the full explanation rather than mislead the House as he does on every occasion.

Mr. Richards: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for clarifying that. Now that he has drawn it to my attention I hope to add to the list of Opposition Members who are spokesmen for their party.

As I have said, the hon. Member for Rhondda is the Labour party spokesman on foreign affairs. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) is a spokesman on national heritage and the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) is a spokesman for education. The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) is the Opposition's legal adviser, and the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) is a spokesman, as is the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells).

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman points to the wealth of talent on the Labour Benches by mentioning those who speak on England and Wales issues. It is nice of him to advertise that fact to the House, but surely he accepts that that would not prevent any one of us whom he has just named—and he mentioned me—from being a member of the Committee within the rules of the House.

Mr. Richards: Perhaps I could continue, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) is the Opposition spokesman on office accommodation. I congratulate the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) on his recent appointment as Opposition spokesman on agriculture. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) for his intervention because it brings me to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), who is the Chairman of the Welsh Grand Committee. The hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) is Chairman of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, and the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) is a noted member of the Public Accounts Committee. We must not forget the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) who has now found his niche as a disc jockey.

I have listed some 12 Opposition Members who, according to the reason that I was given in the Committee examining the Coal Industry Bill, might not be eligible or might not wish to be eligible for the Standing Committee to champion the cause of their constituencies. I looked to see how much interest Opposition Members have shown in local government affairs since the last general election. There are interesting data. I obtained from the Library the aggregate number of questions on local government from the general election last year until 9 February this year.

Top of the list is the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. In joint second place are the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) and, surprise, surprise, myself. Other hon. Members have asked five to eight questions, but the thrust of the Opposition's argument is that they wish to champion the cause of their constituencies in the Standing Committee. Let us look at a question asked by the hon. Member for Bridgend in order to champion his constituency. On 29 April last year, the hon. Gentleman asked the following question *[Interruption.]* This is pertinent, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman's remarks have nothing to do with the debate on Standing Order No.86. He is engaging in his favourite pastime of launching personal, vindictive attacks on Opposition Members. I contend that his remarks are quite out of order and have nothing to do with the amendment or the motion.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I have already said in reply to other interventions that, so far, the hon. Gentleman is quite in order.

Mr. Richards: Let us get back to the question by the hon. Member for Bridgend. Bearing in mind that he wants to champion his constituency, he asked:

"what are the distances between (a) Wick, (b) St. Bride's Major, (c) Ewenny and (d) Coychurch and (e) Bridgend".—[*Official Report*, 29 April 1993; Vol.223, c.*517*.]

As the hon. Gentleman is the Member for Bridgend, I should have thought that he would know how far local villages are from his constituency.

Mr. Win Griffiths: If the hon. Gentleman were able to read *Hansard* properly he would know that my question was about distances from those communities to Bridgend and was in the context of the distance from Barry. The purpose was to show how much closer they are to Bridgend than to Barry. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would give us the full story and not a twisted half story.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman should be grateful to me for allowing him the opportunity to explain himself.

Bearing in mind that the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) wishes to champion the cause of his constituency in the Standing Committee, he asked the Secretary of State:

"what information he has received on the resolution passed at the European Assembly of the Regions bureau meeting in Hungary on 30 April regarding his White Paper, 'Local Government in Wales'"— [*Official Report*, 18 May 1993; Vol.225, c.*135* .]

Those are the sort of questions that Opposition Members have been asking. Sadly for them, most of them have not shown any interest whatever in local government in Wales

since April last year. Since then, six of them have asked only one question on local government in Wales. Five of my hon. Friends from England have also asked one question each, almost as many as the number asked by Opposition Members. Three Welsh Opposition Members have asked no questions at all about local government in Wales.

Those are the people who tell us that they want to be on the Standing Committee to champion the cause of their constituencies.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen) *rose—*

Mr. Richards: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) because he is one of those who have not asked a question on local government since April 1992.

Mr. Alan W. Williams How many questions in total on local government in Wales have the 10 Conservative Members who are to be brought in from England to sit on this Committee tabled since the last election?

Mr. Richards: I am not familiar with who will be on the Standing Committee, but by the time I come to the end of my speech I shall have shown that my hon. Friends from England will be just as welcome on that Committee as Opposition Members because they have taken as much interest in local government in Wales as Opposition Members.

I shall move on to see how many speeches Opposition Members have made on local government reform. I appreciate that Opposition Members will argue that they cannot all speak in the debates as they serve on the Welsh Grand Committee and so on. I shall aggregate them to see how many there are. The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) is near the top of the list as is the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes). To try to demonstrate interest in Welsh local government I said to myself, "What would be reasonable for Welsh Members to ask to show an interest in local government since the general election? Should it be one question or two, one debate or two?" I decided that the criteria would be maybe one question, maybe two; maybe one debate, maybe two. If they scored three—either two questions and one debate or vice versa —that would be reasonable.

I went through the list of 15 people that I had left after chucking out the first 12. I found that the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) scored one question but no debates, so he is out. The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) scored one question and one debate, so he is out. The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) scored one question and no debates, so he is out. The hon. Member for Neath scored one question and one debate; goodbye to him. The hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) scored one question and one debate. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West scored no questions and no debates; the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) scored no questions and no debates and the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) scored no questions and no debates.

By the time I had taken out those who failed to score on that simple table, the only ones left were the hon. Members for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), for Cardiff, West, for Caerphilly, for Alyn and Deeside, for Delyn and for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). In my view, only six Labour Members would be eligible to sit on the Standing Committee—they would be equal in number to the Conservative Members.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I am interested in what he has said and I am pleased to be one of the six that he has mentioned. I sat through the Committee considering the Welsh Language Bill with the hon. Gentleman and I cannot recall a single word uttered by a single Conservative Member representing an English seat. Does that affect his list? Do the same criteria apply to every other issue in which hon. Members take part? What are needed are their votes; not their contributions or ideas, but solely their votes.

Mr. Richards: My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Cranbourne (Mr. Coe) spoke very well on that Bill. I recall the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) complimenting my hon. Friend on his speech in the House.

We should take the six hon. Members who passed the test and allow the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central to join them for organisational reasons, along with obviously the four members of Plaid Cymru and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile).

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: I thank the hon. Gentleman for paying me the compliment of allowing me to sit on the Committee and for acknowledging me for my organisational skills, if nothing else. The hon. Gentleman is making the point that those who table insufficient questions to satisfy his idea of what is eligible should not be able to sit on Committee because they have not shown sufficient interest in local government in Wales. Does not my service for six years as a councillor in Cardiff entitle me to some acceptance for my knowledge of local government in Wales? Does not the fact that I was chairman of economic development in Cardiff four years entitle me to recognition of some knowledge of local government in Wales? How does that stand with the English Members to be parachuted in who know nothing about local government in Wales?

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman misses the point completely. Opposition Members are burning to get into the Standing Committee to represent their constituents, but they have been burning so much that they have not shown it since the general election.

Mr. Sweeney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Does he agree that the fact that 15 Opposition Members representing Wales are missing from the Chamber at this very moment demonstrates the fierce enthusiasm of Opposition Members to participate in the Committee?

Mr. Richards: I have now aggregated 12 Opposition Members who by certain criteria would be eligible, but even by the criteria that hon. Member for Cardiff, Central has set before me, at least seven of my hon. Friends have asked as many questions about Welsh local government as have Opposition Members. If we were to include those seven Conservative Members, we would have 13 on the Committee and the Opposition would have 12, but I reflect on what my right hon. Friend said in that we must have a minimum of 16.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Bearing in mind the criteria adopted by the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr.

[Mr. Jonathan Evans]

Jones) that six years service in local government in Wales is a demonstrable criterion for being a member of the Committee, in those circumstances, would not my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) qualify as a member of the Committee as he was a distinguished member of West Glamorgan county council?

Mr. Richards: My hon. Friend was a distinguished member of local authorities in Wales. However, he has other duties.

Mr. Flynn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Richards: The truth about the Opposition, the reason why Opposition Members are dying to get on to the Committee to champion the cause of their constituencies is that they do not have confidence in the hon. Member for Caerphilly to represent their interests on that Standing Committee. He could not even secure half their votes in the election for the shadow Cabinet. That is the truth, that is the sham, that is the agenda of the Opposition. They are exposed for the sham that they are.

8.6 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I support the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) calling for the Committee to have 63 members. Despite the arithmetic of the Minister, that number would still give the Government a majority.

I listened with some interest to the comments of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards).

Mr. Flynn: I apologise for interrupting my hon. Friend, but he will recall that many hon. Members were criticised for not asking enough questions. It is a rare treat for me or for my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) to be criticised for not asking enough parliamentary questions, when we have asked more parliamentary questions in several Sessions than not only any Welsh Member but any hon. Member. Does he not realise that we ask questions to seek information and the fact that some of us have asked very few questions demonstrates that we already have a wealth of information and knowledge?

Mr. Williams: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that comment.

There is an enormous amount of experience of local government among Opposition Members. I am quite embarrassed at just how many of my colleagues have been in local government.

As regards the membership of the Committee, earlier this evening I had a word with my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) to press my claim to be on the Committee. He pointed out his embarrassment about my part of the world. I defer to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger), who feels that, in view of his county council experience, he should have first claim to represent Dyfed. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) is also keen to be on the Committee, and so am I.

We all have legitimate territorial claims. Carmarthen has its own interest as capital of Dyfed and it is likely to lose many jobs in the reorganisation. Llanelli has a different industrial character and my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli wants to reflect that in the Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke, with his recent and detailed experience and responsibilities on Dyfed county council, also has a claim. The embarrassment of riches is among those on the Opposition Benches, and I may lose my place on the Committee when I really want to be there. I shall not go into detail, but there is a real problem in that we have dozens of people who are very keen to be on the Committee.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I am one of those who would like to be on the Committee. I have a specific problem in my constituency in that the town of Llangollen should be included in the unitary authority of Wrexham and I shall not be able to make that point in Committee. I should also like to make another point which my hon. Friend might like to convey to the Government statisticians. The Committee considering the Welsh Language Bill, which was set up in a similar way to this, had nine English Members who were eligible to speak. Only one of them spoke and his contribution consisted of only 41 words, which shows just how ridiculous it is to have English Members drafted in on Welsh legislation.

Mr. Williams: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those comments. We have very much in mind his distinguished background on Clwyd county council before he became a Member of Parliament. What he says about the participation of Conservative Members during the Committee stage of every Bill is true. They sit there simply for the votes, contributing nothing to the debate, and I fear that that will be the case again on this Bill.

I was present for the opening and closing speeches of yesterday's six-hour debate on the Bill and I was astounded that the first Back-Bench Member to be called was the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason). I could not put a name to the hon. Gentleman. I have never heard him speak in the House before and certainly not on Welsh affairs.

Later in the evening we had a contribution from the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan). What is his experience of local authorities? His main credential is that he knows well the right-to-buy policy—the right for someone else to buy so that he can buy back at a knock-down price. That is no recommendation to be on the Committee.

The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) excluded Welsh Members one by one, but the converse of what he said is true. Of the 15 Conservative Members that the Government intend to place on the Committee, 10 come from outside Wales and know nothing about local government in Wales and our problems.

Mr. Hain: While my hon. Friend is drawing attention to those facts, will he also remind the House that on Second Reading last night, of the Conservative Members who voted against the united position of the opposing parties in Wales 30 are Conservative Members who wish to defy the Government on English local government reform? They will try to overturn the Government because they want to protect the old counties. I should like to know whether any of those hon. Members are likely to find themselves on the Committee considering Welsh reorganisation. They are happy to go through the Lobby for the Government on the Floor of the House, but I bet that the Government will not dare to put them on the Committee. They will put on that Committee other toadies who will toe their line.

Mr. Williams: I do not have my hon. Friend's residual faith in the Government. Despite their hypocrisy, the Government may well put them on the Committee.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I want to return to the hon. Gentleman's uncharacteristically churlish remarks about my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) whom he suggested knows little about local government in Wales. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is not aware that in fact my hon. Friend is a former leader of the Association of District Councils. He has wide experience and is widely respected. He made a thoughtful, analytical speech which was well received, even by Opposition Members.

Mr. Williams: I listened intently to his speech. It was that of someone with a great deal of experience in local government but with no direct experience of Wales.

Mr. Morgan: He did not even mention Wales.

Mr. Williams: His experience could have been in the United States or in any part of any country. His speech was that of an academic. It was of interest, obviously, but only in the sense that a speech made by any professor of local government or any chair of any local authority association in Europe would be. In contrast, each of the 38 Members who represents Wales has, by definition, a direct territorial interest in being on the Committee.

In preparing my speech for this debate I was reminded of some of the comments made by the former Secretary of State for Wales, the right hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), in the Welsh Grand Committee in Cardiff a year ago. In his introductory remarks he talked about the role of that Welsh Grand Committee and envisaged a larger role for it in Welsh affairs. Implicit in his remarks was the fact that that Committee was the proper forum for legislation concerning only Wales, such as last year's Welsh Language Bill and now the Local Government (Wales) Bill.

Our main criticism of the Bill is that no assembly is proposed. There is to be no accountable, elected, democratic regional tier of government. Support for that assembly is growing all the time. It reached a ratio of 2:1 in an opinion poll a week ago. Had the Labour party won the last election we might already have introduced legislation for that assembly. In our programme we had in mind setting up the assembly first and giving it the job of reorganising Welsh local government so that only Welsh people would be in charge of our reorganisation. That makes the point that only people with experience of, and who live in, Wales should be involved in such legislation because they know what is best for Wales.

Under the Government's proposal, the Committee will have 15 Conservative Members and 13 from Opposition parties. I understand, unofficially, that the Committee will have 11 Labour Members. I have already referred to the fact that I want to be on the Committee, as do my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli and, very properly, my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke, but there is not room for all of us.

The Bill proposes to re-establish Carmarthenshire as a unitary authority. I am happy with that. It is the right unit in terms of size and history. It is an identifiable unit. It is viable and it is the fourth largest in Wales. Even though there are differences between Carmarthen and Llanelli—Llanelli has an industrial tradition while Carmarthen is more rural—there is a gradation across the Gwendraeth and Amman valleys between them. Llanelli borough council and the town in particular have grave reservations, misgivings—opposition even—to Carmarthenshire. There is a strong body of feeling in Llanelli that it should have its own unitary authority. I should like to be a member of the Committee with my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli so that he can present some of those points and I can respond to them, and perhaps reassure my right hon. Friend and his constituents that their doubts can be ameliorated.

Another point that I would wish to make as a member of the Committee concerns the number of councillors who will be serving on the unitary authorities throughout Wales. There is to be a cut from 2,000 councillors on the district and county councils to 1,250. We see a growth in quangos, but a cut in a number of elected councils. Specifically, in Carmarthenshire, we will have 82 where there are now 140. I am concerned because a recent Welsh Office document showed that, of those 82, 33 are allocated to Llanelli, 29 to Carmarthen and 20 to Dinefwr. They have not been allocated in accordance with the electorates. I cannot understand why the average electorate per councillor in Carmarthen will be 1,525, in Dinefwr will be 1,550 and in Llanelli will be 1,820. Members of Llanelli borough council have already made their feelings known about being denied three councillors. They have a legitimate grievance there. I should like to like to elaborate and develop that point in the Committee.

The Secretary of State said yesterday that he had an open mind about area committees for some parts of Wales, but that the unitary authority would devolve part of its powers in the Powys pudding model to local area committees. It is clear from questions to the Secretary of State from my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) that he does not have a clear mind about what he means by the area committees. It struck me from his phraseology and from the way that he presented his argument yesterday that there was a do-it-yourself devolution within each unitary authority, and that could lead to chaos.

This afternoon, I was reading some of the comments made last night by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli. He put it very well when he talked about the powers of community councils, town councils and now the odd idea of area committees. In a sense, in town councils such as Llanelli borough council, Carmarthen community council and all the other town councils throughout Wales, one has a ready-made structure of area committees. I should like to be on the Committee to hear some of the detailed arguments and what the Secretary of State has in mind or what he is hoping will turn up in the arguments on area committees.

My understanding is that there is a danger that the Bill could result in great erosion of the functions of local government. We know that the Government do not believe in local government and want to reduce it to enabling bodies. We in the Opposition parties believe passionately —I know that Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats do, as well as the Labour party—in local government. We believe that as many powers that can be devolved to local government should be.

Finally, I mention the constituency element in my disappointment that all Welsh Members cannot serve on the Standing Committee. Carmarthen is an old, historical

[Mr. Williams]

town. Because it is on the estuary of the largest river in Wales, it has its own unique geographical importance. It is no surprise then that it is the capital of Dyfed. Dyfed is too large. I support the idea of going back to Cardiganshire, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire, but it is a fact of life that many of the jobs associated with Dyfed county council —for example, the headquarters for all its main services —are in Carmarthen and there will be quite a substantial job loss for Carmarthen and neighbouring areas as a result of the Bill.

I am disappointed that, because all Welsh Members cannot be on the Standing Committee, I shall not be able properly to represent my constituents. It is sad for democracy, for the people of Wales and for our constituents that the Government have chosen, through the motion, to abandon Standing Order No. 86. It would have been much more proper if we had had a Committee of those 63 Members so that all my colleagues representing Welsh constituencies would have had a platform to put their views.

8.23 pm

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): It seems to me that the debate turns substantially on our interpretation of Standing Order No. 86. I heard the intervention made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Minister. He said that Standing Order No. 86 sets out the number of people who can serve on Standing Committees. But we also have the proviso in relation to Welsh Members. Thereafter, it is an argument of semantics. Clearly, we are involved in an issue of balance; the balance being that the Opposition think it appropriate and right that we should aim to take the Bill into a Standing Committee that will be composed of 63 or 64 members.

We shall put aside the "Aberpergau" arithmetic of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) for these purposes, but he did at least concede that perhaps he would have to move the numbers up from 63 to 64 to ensure a Government majority. Be that as it may, he is talking about having a Committee of that size. That is the fundamental aspect of the matter, because it surely must be recognised, even as the Standing Order itself recognises, that the Standing Committee must reflect the balance of the House. Therefore, there must clearly be a majority for the governing party.

Let me deal with some of the things that we have heard during the debate. Sadly, we have heard yet again the hostility towards hon. Members representing English constituencies that seems to pervade so many hon. Members on the Opposition Benches. As one who recognises the great worth to Wales of being an integral part of the United Kingdom, I am greatly saddened to hear that misplaced hostility so often from Welsh Members and, may I say remarkably, less often from the nationalist Members than from Labour Members. We have heard it not only in relation to the debate on local government reorganisation but, sadly, on many occasions. For example when any hon. Member representing an English constituency rises in his place in Welsh Question Time, we hear complaints to the Speaker about such Members making any contribution at all.

I make it clear that, as a Member representing a part of Wales, which is within the United Kingdom, I very much value the interest in Welsh issues that is shown by English Members. I recognise the fact that the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) welcomed such interest. I remember his remarks to my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), who spoke in the debate on the Welsh Language Bill. He spoke with an independence of spirit about the situation in Cornwall and how he equated that situation with Wales, and gave us some caveats about the situation in Cornwall reflected on the situation in Wales. Therefore, the thrust of what I say is that contributions can be made by English Members on issues that apply to Wales.

Mr. Wigley: What the hon. Gentleman has just said encapsulates the difficulty that we have with the Standing Committee, bearing in mind what happened with the Welsh Language Bill. The hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) made a valuable contribution to the Second Reading debate. But the reality in Committee was that, with the exception of one hon. Member who opened his mouth once, none of the Members from English constituencies made any contribution whatever. That is why we feel that whereas there are Members from Wales who can make a contribution and are being denied the opportunity to do so, hon. Members representing English constituencies are put on just for party political reasons and do not have any contribution to make.

Mr. Evans: That may well be a reflection on the quality of the amendments that were being proposed by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends. Certainly, an interest in those issues and a perception of them was clearly shown in the example that I gave and in the contributions made only yesterday by my hon. Friends the Members for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan).

Mr. Flynn: Oh, God!

Mr. Evans: One of the more disreputable contributions was made by the hon. Member for Newport, East—

Mr. Flynn: West.

Mr. Evans: If I may finish this point, I will happily give way to the hon. Gentleman. My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton made an important point, which those of us who represent rural constituencies in Wales recognised had a reflection in his constituency. The deliberate attempts that were made by the hon. Member for Newport, East—

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): West.

Mr. Evans: Newport, West. I apologise unreservedly to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes). The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) endeavoured to prevent my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton from making that important contribution, which we in rural Wales very much valued. That was a travesty of democracy. If the hon. Member for Newport, West wishes to intervene, I am happy to give way to him.

Mr. Flynn: The alleged attempt to stop that hon. Member from speaking was a brief, one-sentence intervention, which he allowed me, and in which I invited him to tell us about his personal experience of buying council houses.

Accusations have been made about the conduct of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan), which he has failed to answer before the House in spite of invitations to do so. I think that the matter concerns all hon. Members: when such accusations are made, hon. Members should be prepared to answer them in the House.

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman's disadvantage lies in the fact that I was present for yesterday's debate, and heard both his intervention and his subsequent sedentary remarks. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) had to plead for a hearing for my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton, which is a reflection on the conduct of the hon. Member for Newport, West.

All those examples show that English Members can make worthwhile and important contributions, drawn from their experience, which are relevant to us in Wales. It is nonsense to pretend that those contributions are in some way less valuable because they come from English Members.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Are not Opposition Members being disingenuous? I remember serving on Standing Committees when Labour was in office; I assure my hon. Friend that Labour Members were silent then. Silence is golden as far as Government Whips are concerned.

Mr. Evans: I do not know whether this is the right occasion for me to make a confession to my right hon. Friend, but my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) and I have just finished serving on the Standing Committee considering the Criminal Justice Bill, where we broke substantially with precedent by speaking for more than half the allotted time. No doubt a penance awaits us at the hands of the Whips.

The protestations that we have heard from Opposition Members sit ill with their own conduct during the debate. I note that at least 10 Labour Members have not been present; yet the thrust of the Opposition's case is that it is a constitutional outrage that they are not to be given seats on the Standing Committee.

That point also relates to the proposal of my right hon. Friend the Minister. It cannot be said that the suspension of the relevant aspect of Standing Order No 86 has only ever been suggested by Conservative Governments; it has previously been suggested by Labour.

Mr. Morgan: Well, at least it was not opposed.

Mr. Evans: I heard that excuse from a sedentary position. As far as I recall from my reading of the events involved, the Standing Order was revoked on that occasion because a number of Labour Members had Front-Bench responsibilities elsewhere. My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) drew strongly on that point, and the protestations that we heard from Labour Members during his speech need to be seen in the context of the submission of the Labour party, when in government, that the Standing Order should be set aside.

Let me say to my right hon. Friend the Minister that, for the reasons that I have given, this is always a question of balance. It would clearly be difficult, in the circumstances, to proceed with a Committee composed of more than 60 members. I urge my right hon. Friend to proceed with the course on which he is embarked: many of the protestations that we have heard from Opposition Members are plainly ill founded.

8.33 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I do not wish to speak of outrage or gerrymandering; I want to talk about the Standing Order, and to raise a number of what I hope will be seen as serious issues.

I do not even want to criticise English Members who may contribute to our deliberations on the Bill. I agree with the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) that two of them—the hon. Members for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) and for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason)—made valuable contributions last night, with which I agreed wholeheartedly. Both showed ample qualifications—I use the word advisedly—for service on the Standing Committee. I hope that the Government will recognise that both those qualifications and their interest in the matter should lead to their selection—subject, of course, to the views of the Committee of Selection—rather than the introduction of Members who would sit there silently, acting as lobby fodder. I am sure that it would be valuable for the Committee to hear more contributions from the hon. Members for Bromsgrove and for Rutland and Melton, especially on the subject of the potential for success of small rural local authorities.

Why do we have Standing Order No 86? Let me say, with great respect, that in opening the debate the Minister of State displayed a lack of understanding of the Standing Order. To be fair, and to issue a short plea in mitigation for the right hon. Gentleman, I suspect that he has not read the entire Standing Order for about 25 years—I think I see him nodding gently in assent—and certainly not in the past 25 hours, since his return from his pleasant trip to Catalonia.

In an intervention, I asked the Minister why he thought Standing Order No 86 had been introduced. I think that, in the context of this debate, the House is entitled to a head-on, direct answer to that question in the winding-up speech. Why was the Standing Order introduced, and why did it make special provision for Wales—special provision with which I shall deal in a moment?

It is my view, at least, that the Standing Order was introduced because it was thought desirable, in debates on Bills relating exclusively to Wales, for all Welsh Members to express their views in detailed consideration of such Bills—perhaps because of the fervour with which, for centuries, they have expressed such views.

Let me draw attention specifically to paragraph (2)(ii) of the Standing Order. May I ask whichever Minister winds up the debate to reconsider a statement made by the Minister of State in his opening speech? He seemed to be saying that he understood it to be a basic requirement that there should be not more than 50 and not fewer than 16 Members on a Standing Committee. Perhaps he should take advice. If he rereads the Standing Order, he will realise that the words "Provided that", just before paragraph (2)(i), are extremely important, and have an overriding effect.

Surely the basic requirement of the Standing Order, in regard to Wales, is that all Welsh Members should serve on a Standing Committee considering a public Bill—and this is a public Bill—relating exclusively to Wales. It is interesting to note that a specific distinction is drawn between Wales and Scotland. In relation to Wales, the requirement is for "all Members" to serve; in relation to Scotland, it is for

> "not fewer than sixteen Members representing Scottish constituencies."

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

Perhaps the Minister of State will explain why he thinks that distinction was drawn. There must be a rationale—and I can think of no better rationale than that it was thought right in 1907, when the Standing Order was introduced, for all Welsh Members to have their voices heard in Standing Committees. If the Government believe, or if any previous Government believed—although our memories of other Governments are now fading—that Standing Order No. 86 as it relates to Wales should be brushed aside and should cease to be one of the Standing Orders of the House, they should have said so. It now seems to have become the rule that Standing Order No. 86 is not to apply to exclusively Welsh legislation. If that is so, what the Government are doing smacks of serious intellectual dishonesty.

Let us hear what the Government have to say. Do they foresee an occasion in the future when the second proviso of Standing Order No. 86 will apply? If so, we may at least have an example of an issue in the distant future when all Welsh Members will sit on a Standing Committee discussing Welsh legislation. If not, let the Government bring to the House a proper motion setting out their real policy, which is to bring an end to the second proviso of Standing Order No. 86.

Mr. Wigley: Is not this the answer to the hon. and learned Gentleman's question: the Government will never allow the provisions of the Standing Order to be used while they are in office, but they will not do away with them because they will want to use them when they are in opposition?

Mr. Carlile: That may be right; but, if it is, the Government should tell us so to enable the people of Wales to judge whether this case has any merit.

The Minister should tell us what the Government regard as appropriate qualifications for the hon. Members nominated to the Committee. I draw special attention to Standing Order No. 86(2), which states that, in

"nominating such Members the Committee of Selection shall have regard to the qualifications of those Members nominated and to the composition of the House".

I take the Minister's point that the Government will want a majority on a legislative Committee, but there are various ways of ensuring that that happens: there may be a Committee of 63 Members, or it can be achieved by debating part of the Bill in a Committee of the whole House. That would present no problems and there are plenty of precedents for it. It could easily be done and would ensure that everyone who wished to have his say could do so.

If that is not to be the case, and so that we can judge whether to vote with or against the Government tonight, the Minister should tell us what he regards as appropriate qualifications to press on the Committee of Selection and which might lead to the selection of an English or Scottish Member to serve on the Committee—presuming, of course, that the Government can find a Scottish Conservative Member.

I hope that the Minister will confirm that an ability to remain silent in the heat of battle—to hold a gun but not to fire it—is not a qualification for someone wishing to be a member of the Standing Committee, although I suspect that the real intention is that there should be not only soldiers standing stock still but also a few unloaded guns sitting on the Government Back Benches in that Committee.

Sir Wyn Roberts *rose—*

Mr. Carlile: Perhaps the Minister is about to answer all my questions.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. and learned Gentleman was kind enough to give us his speculative views on the what the thinking was when Standing Order No. 86 was drawn up in 1907. His interpretation is as plausible as any. I note, however, that the one part of the Standing Order to which he has not referred as much as he referred to the other parts is the reference to the requirement of the Committee of Selection to have regard to

"the composition of the House".

He mentioned it, but he did not expand on it. Surely he knows what it means.

Mr. Carlile: With respect, while I was speaking the Minister must have been remembering the delicious paella that he was eating in Catalonia 36 hours ago. I dealt with that very point, but I shall remind him—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps there was some flamenco, too—who knows? I said that I recognised the fact that the Government would want their majority and that there were ways of ensuring that. One solution might be a Committee of 63 Members, as proposed in the amendment, and another might be to discuss part of the Bill on the Floor of the House. Nothing could better reflect the composition of the House than debating part of the Bill—for example, clause 1 and schedule 1—in a Committee of the whole House.

I was asking the Minister to be a little more specific and I am glad that I am able to repeat what I said in order to penetrate the paella—perhaps there was some flamenco while he was eating the paella and that made his attention wander.

What are the qualifications to be? Will one qualification be a familiarity with a rural area or rural counties? If so, that will be very welcome. Will another qualification be having spoken on Second Reading, which is the usual qualification for being selected to sit on a Standing Committee? If so, that, too, will be welcome. Or will someone be chosen who has been told that he has at least one hand on the greasy pole to ministerial office which might lead eventually to him as an English Member being appointed as Secretary of State for Wales? We should like answers to those questions, and I hope that we shall be given them.

8.46 pm

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): The House has the right to suspend Standing Orders, and it is right to do so on this occasion.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) cast a slur on people who play rugger. It was no doubt directed at those who live on this side of the border. As an Irishman who was brought up in Rugby and who was taught to play rugger, I defend the right to refer to the game of rugger. I believe that it enriches our experience as Members of Parliament for Welsh constituencies to hear speeches from colleagues across the border.

Between February and October 1974, hon. Members who are far more experienced than I will recall that Britain had the misfortune to be governed by a minority Labour

Government with the help of some Labour supporters who, in those days, described themselves as Liberals. They implemented legislation affecting England. The Government were a minority Government even in the United Kingdom as a whole and were certainly in a minority in England and yet, under the first-past-the-post system that we rightly retain, the Government doubtless ensured that they controlled the Committees of the House. It was not regarded as undemocratic by the House or, presumably, by the electorate of England who gave Labour a working majority in October 1974.

The Government have a mandate to introduce this legislation—*[Interruption.]* They have a mandate in Parliament to introduce it, but they could not do so effectively without having a majority on the Committee. Opposition Members are too quick to impugn the suitability of hon. Members from this side of the border to serve on the Committee. I do not know who will serve on it, but I have no doubt that many of them will have local government experience. In my previous incarnation as an Irishman living in England, as distinct from an Irishman living in Wales, I was privileged to serve as a councillor at district and county council level for 14 years.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I heard the hon. Gentleman today and yesterday speaking at length about Wick, St. Bride's Major and Ewenny. I am from north Wales—I am none the worse for that—but may I ask how many hon. Members who represent English constituencies know anything about Wick, St. Bride's Major and Ewenny?

Mr. Sweeney: That is a question for which I am unable to give a precise, definitive answer, not having canvassed all my colleagues on the subject. I suspect that few hon. Members on either side of the House, whether they be hon. Members representing constituencies in Wales, Northern ireland, Scotland or England, will have the same detailed knowledge of those areas as does the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) or myself. That is not to say that we are justified in having each and every Member of Parliament who happens to serve a Welsh constituency on the Committee. That would make the Committee unwieldy in the extreme.

To return to the point that I was making, many English hon. Members will have the experience similar to mine of serving in local government and, therefore, they will be well qualified to take part in deliberations on the form of local government, especially as the present form of local government in Wales is precisely the same—except that, of course, in Wales we have community councils instead of parish councils—as that which prevails in England.

Mr. Michael: As the hon. Gentleman is commenting on the experience of Conservative Members, why is that experience never reflected in any feeling of affection and respect for local government?

Mr. Sweeney: I strongly repudiate that and regard it as a slur on the many Conservatives in England and Wales who devote considerable time and energies to providing effective local government and to providing a level of service at a lower cost to council tax payers than is provided in Labour-controlled local authorities.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West said that the Labour Government suspended Standing Orders only when that was not opposed. With respect to Opposition Members, the answer on this occasion is that they should not oppose the motion. Opposition Members should realise when they are beaten. The reality is that all Governments, of whatever colour, need a majority to ensure the passage of proposed legislation which is included in their manifestos. I urge the House to support my right hon. Friend on his excellent motion.

8.52 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I strongly oppose the Government's motion. There are overwhelming reasons why it should be rejected and alternatives are available, including the amendment tabled by the Labour party, which would be much more acceptable for Wales.

I speak as one who served for a couple of years as a councillor on the old Merthyr Tydfil county borough council. May I say in passing that I was delighted to hear yesterday that Merthyr Tydfil is coming back into existence in its own right. That is one of the few aspects in the Bill which give great pleasure.

The Bill is a constitutional one and, as such, it should be debated entirely on the Floor of the House, or, at least, the many parts that have far-reaching implications should be considered in that manner. For example, in the other place, there was a debate on having an all-Wales elected tier of government as part of the Bill. If that is not a constitutional proposition, I do not know what is. As happened in the 1970s, when the then Conservative Opposition insisted that such matters be taken in Committee on the Floor of the House, surely today's provisions should also be dealt with on the Floor of the House. Not to do so is not only a disservice to Wales, but it does not follow patterns that have been established by precedent in the House. I am surprised that the Government have not recognised that.

As the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said, some of the detailed work could be considered in a Standing Committee and that we could have a split—the sort of motion that only a Minister bringing the Bill before the House has the right to put to the House. By not doing so, we are letting Wales down and letting the House of Commons down, too.

Questions of deep principle arise in the Bill, such as how may we, as Welsh Members of Parliament, serve our constituencies? I accept the point that some hon. Members from English constituencies may have a contribution to make to the general argument about local government, although I suspect that the couple who spoke yesterday spoke for a deliberate reason: to ensure that they would not be Committee members. They quite clearly indicated their support for the retention of a county such as Montgomeryshire—an aspiration with which I certainly concur. That suggests a new principle—those who do not want to be Committee members will speak on Second Reading to avoid it.

I make that point especially having followed the hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), who rightly said that he and the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) knew much more than anyone from any other part of Wales and certainly from England with regard to what was right for the good people of Wick. I accept that point. That is why hon. Members from Wales should have precedence over hon. Members from England. However good the general contribution of hon. Members from

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

England may be to the theory of local government, hon. Members from Wales know how that sort of legislation will affect their own square mile.

Mr. Sweeney: The point that I was trying to make was that hon. Members from the rest of Wales were unlikely to know very much more about Wick, Ewenny and St. Bride's Major than those from English constituencies.

Mr. Wigley: I even accept that. The point that I was making is that the people who know about Wick, Ewenny and St. Bride's Major should be on the Committee. The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Bridgend should be on the Committee to argue that case. Likewise, people who know what is needed in areas such as Dwyfor and Arfon should be on the Committee, or those who know about the needs of Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, or of the needs of Ynys Môn, or of the needs of the various constituencies in Cardiff, or of Delyn, or of the two sides of Newport, or of Pembroke. What is good enough for the hon. Gentleman—he will be able to serve on that Committee—should be good enough for every other hon. Member who represents a Welsh constituency in the House.

Mr. Sweeney: Surely the point is that only a small proportion of Opposition Members desire or need to be on the Committee. They have no particular axe to grind. As I said in an earlier intervention, many Opposition Members have not even deigned to attend the debate, which shows that they, at least, are not unduly concerned about it.

Mr. Wigley: All four Plaid Cymru Members have certainly been here at various times during the debate, as has the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), representing the Liberals, and a good proportion of Labour Members—

Mr. Michael *rose—*

Mr. Wigley: I shall give way in a moment.

Hon. Members from Wales need the right to be on the Committee, and the right to take part in proceedings on parts of the Bill with far-reaching effects on their constituents and on the local authorities that serve their areas. That is what the Standing Order is there to provide, so that every hon. Member from Wales can serve on a Committee that deals with legislation affecting Wales alone. The Bill falls into that category.

Mr. Michael: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that people in the Vale of Glamorgan, which includes part of my constituency as well as the Vale of Glamorgan constituency, would be rightly horrified if the only views put forward from that area were those of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney)?

Mr. Wigley: Indeed. Conservative Members from Wales can rest assured that they have a safe place on the Committee. They will be there whether they want to be or not, and they will have the opportunity to speak up for their constituents—an opportunity that the Standing Order provides for us, but which the Government, by what they are doing tonight, are denying us. That is unacceptable.

Of course the Bill will affect all hon. Members from Wales. It will affect what happens to the pattern of local government in their areas and to the employees of the district and county councils in their areas. It will affect me because in the town of Caernarfon the local government offices will presumably—

Mr. Richards *rose—*

Mr. Wigley: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Caernarfon will presumably have the offices of a smaller unit of local government than it has now with Gwynedd county council. The reorganisation will also affect towns such as Pwllheli, where many valuable local government jobs may be lost. I therefore believe that I have a right, as does every other hon. Member from Wales, to be on the Committee to argue the case. Our local authorities, our councillors and our electorate expect us to be there to speak for them.

There are mechanisms that could allow that to happen, one of which is the amendment. Yes, it would allow a slightly larger Committee, although the Minister of State's arithmetic was not quite right, and his sum was one out. Be that as it may, there would be a slightly larger Committee, and hon. Members would be able to join. Perhaps some would have an interest only in certain parts of the Bill. They need not be there for all the proceedings, but at least they would have the opportunity to be there.

The other possibility is a Committee of the whole House, which, as with certain other Bills, would enable hon. Members to take part in the debates on matters of direct importance to their constituents.

How can we reasonably expect Members who represent English constituencies, however well versed they may be in the general theory of local government, to know of the problems experienced by a council such as Dwyfor, which undertakes all its work through the medium of the Welsh language? Welsh is the lingua franca of the council. How would that council carry out its work through the Welsh language in the new structure?

If I were a member of the Standing Committee I should like to raise other questions—concerning, for example, the right of teachers to be elected council members, which has not yet been clarified. I am sure that hon. Members from all parts of Wales will have had the same sorts of questions raised by their constituents.

There is a need for a Standing Committee that would allow us as constituency Members to take an active part. What was said earlier by Ministers and others who have defended the Government line made it clear that the Government regard it as perfectly in order for every issue raised in the Standing Committee to be redebated on the Floor of the House on Report. The occupant of the Chair at the time did not dissent from that idea, which can be the only interpretation of some remarks made earlier.

I hope that the Government and those who organise the business of the House will be able to stand by that promise and ensure that each of us who is not a member of the Standing Committee—we are being excluded by the way in which the motion is being steam-rollered through the House—will have an opportunity to come back on Report and go through every decision taken in Committee, because we will have been denied the opportunity to take part in the debates.

Another argument that I believe the people of Wales—

Sir Wyn Roberts: We dealt with that idea earlier. I thought that I responded clearly to the hon. Gentleman by saying that the selection of amendments for discussion on

Report is a matter for the Chair, but that, of course, Report stage gives an opportunity for hon. Members not on the Committee to participate in the debates.

Mr. Wigley: Of course the selection of amendments is a matter for the Chair, but the amount of time allowed is so often a matter for the Government, as we have seen this year. Important legislation—

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Wigley: I shall give way in a moment.

Important social security legislation has been steam-rollered through the House, with guillotines applied. I hope that what the Minister has said now means that there will be no question of the Bill's being guillotined on Report, and that every amendment that is selectable and debatable will have the chance and the time to be debated on the Floor of the House, so that each of us, as Members from Wales, will be able to take part in those debates. If it goes on day after day and week after week, so be it, because the Government are making a rod for their own back.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Will my hon. Friend reflect on the answer given by the Minister earlier, and bear in mind the fact that the Bill will probably be in Committee twice a week every week for perhaps a month or six weeks? We will be lucky if we get one day, one and a half days or perhaps a maximum of two days on Report. Does my hon. Friend think that that is fair, in view of the Minister's answer?

Mr. Wigley: I am interpreting the Minister's comments to mean that we will get considerably more than one or one and a half days on Report; otherwise how on earth can we do what he said—debate all the amendments that are rightly selected by the Chair because they are in order? I trust that no amendments will be ruled out of order by virtue of the fact that they have been discussed in Committee. The fact that they are discussed in Committee will not allow constituency Members from Wales their right under Standing Order No. 86 to be involved in those debates. That right is being taken away from them tonight by a Government who do not represent Wales in any shape or form. Tonight, we are seeing the epitome of the breakdown of democratic government in Wales. In the amendment that was tabled on Second Reading, we saw the way in which constitutional legislation, which normally has consensus support, was rejected by 32 of the 38 Members of Parliament from Welsh constituencies; yet the motion is being railroaded through the House by a Government who have six out of 38 seats in Wales—they do not have a majority in Wales, and they can never aspire to one—to get a system of local government that suits their needs. To facilitate that, they are now rigging the Standing Orders to give them the majority that they need on the Committee.

The lesson for the people of Wales is clear: they cannot expect democracy for Wales from this Chamber. This Chamber is systemically incapable of defending the wishes, aspirations and values of the people of Wales, even in legislation to do with Wales—and Wales alone—because the Government insist on having their way, irrespective of the wishes of the people of Wales.

Until and unless we have our own elected Parliament in Wales with legislative power, we will have to suffer from the Government's behaviour year after year and decade after decade, giving us policies and structures of government that undermine the wishes of the people of Wales and do not respond to the needs of our communities. That is the stark evidence for the need for us to have an elected Parliament, and the sooner we get it, the better.

9.6 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Madam Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Win Griffiths: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know that when Ministers come to the House and make statements, hon. Members are not called to ask questions if they have not heard the statements. Is it in order for hon. Members to speak in a debate when they were not present for the opening speeches from the Front Benches?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): As the hon. Gentleman will know, there is no rule about that; it is at the discretion of the Chair.

Mr. Evans: I believe in "back to basics". I had a commitment to dine my wife this evening and I took the view that that was more important than listening to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). I came here after listening to the opening words of my right hon. Friend the Minister. I took the view—

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones *rose*—

Mr. Evans: No, I shall finish this point. I took the view that the debate would follow the usual tedious, predictable course which we knew full well it would. As a great parliamentary occasion, this is mock outrage and indignation, and simply a squalid party-political battle of exactly the sort that all hon. Members who are here expected. Let me make that clear.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: What course of his meal was the hon. Gentleman eating when the Minister was speaking?

Mr. Evans: Probably the first and second courses and then I came as quickly as I could. The Strangers' Dining Room is an excellent institution. I regard as very good those who afford all those facilities to us.

Let me take the matter a step further. At the end of the day, it is party which matters. Party politics introduce an element of principle and unity, not regionalism, factionalism and constituency interests. The Government, rightly or wrongly, as Opposition Members might say, won the last general election with a platform to put forward their policies. I know that Opposition Members say that the Government should not have done so, but they might take a different view now. It is clear that the Government have a mandate from the electorate to carry out their election platform.

The great difference between this place and the Italian Parliament is that under our system of one person, one vote, one constituency, at least what one votes more is more or less what one gets. There is none of the unpredictability which is a feature of other electoral systems. I have no doubt that the Conservative interest in Wales would be excellently served, as would be the Liberal interest in Wales, by some complicated system of proportional representation. There might be rather more of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on that sort of basis. But we are a United Kingdom Parliament and, on the basis of the accepted rules, that is

[Mr. Evans]

It is all very well indulging in mock indignation at what my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has done this evening—a perfectly conventional and ordinary parliamentary manoeuvre for a Government who have a majority—but, in the end, it is complete nonsense. I listened with interest to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery construe Standing Order No. 86(2) as if it were a statute. We had the precise meaning of the proviso explained with the clarity and accuracy that I would expect of learned counsel explaining a point of law. But the House is not governed in its rules and orders by normal rules governing a statute. The majority ultimately, within those rules, gets its way, and rightly. It is what the British public expects.

Mr. Carlile: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that this place is the High Court of Parliament and that, although we do not construe the Standing Orders like a statute, because we have rather more flexible rules and procedures, nevertheless we should at least strive to reach a just solution rather than a solution that serves the narrow interests of one political party?

Mr. Evans: Unhappily, the just solution is a matter of controversy. I suggest that the important thing is that the Conservative Government won the last general election and, on the basis of their majority, will have their way. That is how the rules are until the next general election.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that, although this may be the High Court of Parliament, Opposition Members would have something to say if we all turned up in our wigs and gowns?

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It might add, in the case of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, a certain dignity to the proceedings, but that is not the conventional way in which we proceed.

Ultimately, the Government have a majority. They have a mandate and they must do what is right and proper.

The second way of attacking what my right hon. Friend has done this evening is to say that, somehow or other, there is a lack of knowledge of what goes on in Ewenny, Magor or Wick, as my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) said. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] I hope that my hon. Friend is having the dinner which his excellent speech deserved.

If one debates a matter of English local government, one cannot seriously expect an hon. Member from Cornwall to be familiar with the details and intricacies of communities in Northumberland, or an hon. Member from Kent to understand what goes on in Carlisle or thereabouts.

Mr. Wigley: That is the problem.

Mr. Evans: The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) says, with conviction and passion, that that is the problem and, from his perspective, he is absolutely right. If the Welsh republican movement wants to declare independence I can see that its argument is coherent and logical within the premises that it puts forward. But for those of us who stood for election, as did most of the hon. Members on the Opposition Benches, on the basis that we are the United Kingdom, that is a minority viewpoint which, while eccentric, interesting and sometimes expressed with fascination and conviction, is simply, in the view of the great majority, wrong.

I could develop this argument by pointing out that I do not think that the hon. Member for Caernarfon really understands the details in Llanthony or Portskewett. I could go on a geographical tour of my constituency to argue that perhaps not all hon. Members understand these points, but that would not be helpful. This is a perfectly straightforward, ordinary exercise of the Government's powers, a Government who command a majority in the House. That was the verdict of the British nation at the last general election and my right hon. Friend is absolutely right in what he is doing.

9.14 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): As has been said many times, the whole purpose of this Standing Order is to enable Welsh matters to be debated by Welsh Members. Our amendment is very much a second-best arrangement in that, at least, the Committee would include all Welsh Members, even if the Government had to bring in English Members to secure their majority.

Why should Welsh Members, rather than English Members, be given precedence for the purposes of considering the Bill? Let us consider the process by which we arrived at this stage. A consultation paper was issued in 1991. During the consultation process, all Welsh Members were in close contact with people in local government. The White Paper that was issued subsequently generated further interest and debate. Then there were the Welsh Grand Committee debates on the Government's proposals. In addition, these matters have often been debated during Question Time. There was also the debate on the Queen's Speech, in which a number of important changes in the Government's proposals for Wales were announced. The debates in the House of Lords saw the involvement of Welsh Members in further consultation with those who have an interest in local government in Wales. Welsh Members have been constantly involved in the debate since the Government's consultation paper was issued about three years ago.

How can English Members, parachuted in at the last moment, be expected to be as well informed as Welsh Members? Let us take, for example, what happened during the debates in another place. The Government were represented by the Lord Advocate, who is a Scottish earl. Let us look at some of the things that the Government, in notes and guidance, asked him to say. I refer hon. Members to columns 1735-36 of Volume 551 of the House of Lords *Official Report*, which record the reference of my noble Friend Lord Prys-Davies to the Minister's notes on clauses. Those notes point out that the weight of representations from the communities of Cynwyd and Llandrillo in Denbighshire was considered in the decision to allow them to move. In Flintshire, the changes covering the whole of Delyn reflected the overwhelming weight of local opinion. The communities of Ystradgynlais and Tawe Uchaf had been added to Mid-Wales after the publication of the White Paper because of the strongly expressed wishes of local residents. But in respect of the Vale of Glamorgan and the Bridgend changes, the notes on clauses said that they were largely rural and agricultural communities and had more in common with the Vale of Glamorgan than with the town of Bridgend.

Nothing was said about the three tests of opinion. In one of those, there was a turnout of 75 per cent., and nearly 90 per cent. of voters in the communities of Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick voiced their desire to remain with Bridgend. That was excluded altogether from the Government's notes. How could the Scottish earl be expected to know about things that had been deliberately hidden from him? Lord Rodger of Earlsferry was led to explain one of the reasons for the case that these three communities should go with the Vale of Glamorgan in these words:

"Again, that is shown by the fact that in winter it is snow-ploughs from the Vale which clear the snow from the roads in the Wick area."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 10 February 1994; Vol. 551, c. 1738.]

I have to tell the House that that is not true. All these roads are cleared by snow-ploughs from the Vale of Glamorgan. A snow-plough from South Glamorgan comes into Mid-Glamorgan in the community of Wick only because, when it gets to the boundary, there is no turning circle. The snow-plough has to come into Mid-Glamorgan and the community of Wick to turn round and get back into the Vale of Glamorgan.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Will the hon. Gentleman explain to me how the activities of the snow-ploughs relate to the number of Members who will form the Standing Committee?

Mr. Win Griffiths: Quite simply, a Scottish earl in the House of Lords said something that was not correct about a community that I represent. Because of the Standing Order, I will not be able to represent those communities on the Committee. I would dearly love to serve on it, but the Government are stopping me representing my constituents, who do not want to be part of the Vale of Glamorgan, on the Committee.

There are other circumstances in which the House will not be able to hear the true voice of the people of Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick. The hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) has just returned to the Chamber. He will be able to testify that, at a meeting in my constituency last Friday evening, he told about 200 people, of whom only one wanted to go with him into the Vale of Glamorgan, that he would entirely ignore their views because he felt that what they wanted was not in their best interests. They had told him clearly they did not want to be there.

Mr. Sweeney: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that I also told the audience of some 175 people that I would represent what I perceived to be the best interests of my constituents? Does he agree that that is the duty of all hon. Members?

Mr. Griffiths: Those people are not his constituents and they have told him plainly that it is not in their best interest to be in the Vale of Glamorgan. Quite a number of my constituents in the community of Ewenny can walk into the town centre of Bridgend in 10 minutes. If the motion is passed, those people will not be able to use the library in Bridgend because they will not be part of that community. If they do not work in that community, they will not pay tax in that community and they will be disbarred from using the facilities.

What the Government propose for Ewenny, St. Bride's Major and Wick is a complete negation of democracy; they are putting democracy into disrepute. Their proposal negates the principles that they proposed for the reform —that it should be local and respect the wishes of local people. The Government are not doing that, and even at this stage I plead with Ministers to make a change that everyone in the three communities, apart from one person, would welcome.

9.22 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): We are approaching the end of the debate and we are about to see in the Chamber a spectacle that disgraces our democracy. From the four corners of the Palace, from rooms and dining rooms, streams of Members will enter the Chamber to vote and decide on an issue of which they have no knowledge and in which they have no interest. We do not blame them because they are English Members—they are Members who represent English constituencies.

Mine is not mock, but real indignation. The policy for Bills that affect Wales and only Wales is decided by people who are alien to Wales and have no knowledge about or interest in the subject.

Mr. Richards *rose—*

Mr. Flynn: The hon. Gentleman must sit down as I am not giving way.

A number of years ago, in the 1980s, I visited Estonia, which was then smaller than Wales. Estonians were saying that they were being run by a nomenklatura of people who could not win elections—by a particular party and its fellow travellers. Estonia is now free, but Wales is still run by an unelected nomenklatura of Conservatives and their fellow travellers. That is no way to run a democracy.

There was a debate in the Chamber on 31 January 1881 that continued for 41 hours. My speech will be briefer than that. That debate was significant for a number of reasons. It introduced part of the constitution of the Chamber. Mr. Speaker Brand closed that debate in a way which he had no power to do, but he did so with the collaboration of both Front Benches. The debate went on for those hours because of the collaboration of a group of people from another corner of the British Isles, led by Charles Stewart Parnell.

We saw something yesterday in the Chamber which I think was ignored by the press, although it had some historic value. Every non-Tory Member signed a single motion, and we must learn from that. We must stay together in the Chamber. In the first vote in 1979, the anti-Tory vote in Wales was divided and the Tories ruled. They continue to rule because of that vote, and we must not let it happen again. We must realise the value of a union that comes together and sticks together.

Another union of nations is being discussed at the moment. The Government are demanding that if 27 per cent. of the European Union decides to block a motion, it cannot go through. Here we have a nation where 85 per cent. of the representatives are against the Bill, and we are being denied. Where is the democracy in that? Is not it outrageous that that is the Government's view in the European Union, and that they deny us it here?

Mr. Win Griffiths: What about subsidiarity?

Mr. Flynn: My hon. Friend mentions subsidiarity. Our definition of that would be that decisions should be taken at the best level—the level at which people have the most knowledge and where representation is most sensitive to the decision-making processes. To the Government,

[Mr. Flynn]

subsidiarity means taking decisions at the level at which they have political control. That is not the case in Europe, because they have only one set of allies in Europe. They have broken away from the European Union and their only allies on the issue of the social chapter are Mr. Le Pen's fascists. Those people are the inheritors of—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman warms to his theme too much, may I inquire how this relates to the matter before the House tonight?

Mr. Flynn: Because this is a matter of democracy, Madam Deputy Speaker. You interrupted me before I did in fact warm up.

The whole process is about democracy. The point of Standing Order No. 86 is to allow every hon. Member elected by the people of Wales to determine Bills that affect Wales, and Wales only. We make no claims to sit on Bills that affect Scotland, Northern Ireland or England. [Interruption.] Most Welsh Members take no part in Bills that specifically affect England, and those are very rare. However, we demand that right for Wales in the name of democracy, justice and common sense.

The hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) is a great advocate of the name Monmouth itself, and he appeals to history in this matter. Yet the hon. Gentleman would like to see the name Gwent disappear from the map. Let us have some historical pedigree. The name of Gwent has existed for 2,000 years. One of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues on the Front Bench, who was born in my constituency and is a former Home Secretary, has described when Christianity came to this country. When St Augustine brought it here, the ancestors of the speakers of anglo-saxon English were howling, pagan barbarians. At the same time in Wales and Ireland, there was a sophisticated Christian religion.

I must sit down, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are being asked to accept that a wholly undemocratic system can be imposed upon us. What has happened in Wales is the reverse of what has happened in every country in eastern Europe. Those countries now have their own democracies, and they have people running them who were elected. The Government cannot be elected in Wales and, in imposing Bills that apply to Wales, they deny us the right to sit on Committees relating to them. We do not object to hon. Members representing English constituencies contributing to the debates—of course they can. However, I question whether the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant), who regularly contributes to Welsh questions, is worth denying Welsh Opposition Members the chance to speak.

I find myself limited to a few sentences tonight and I must sit down in a moment. The problem is the fatuous ramblings from Conservative Members. We have the psychotic, elephantine venom of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) and speeches that are intended to waste time. That means that we, the elected representatives of Wales, are denied the opportunity of making the full speeches that we would like to make to the House.

9.30 pm

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): It is a great honour to be able to speak at the Dispatch Box and represent the Welsh cause. After I have made my speech, I may never get the opportunity again, so I am grateful. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) for giving me such a wonderful warm-up speech.

Standing Order No. 86 has existed for 87 years. For 85 of those years, it has not been the subject of any controversy or debate. Yet this Government in this period of office have, in less than two years, whipped their English Members through the Lobby to overturn the constitutional safeguards for Wales in Standing Order No. 86, not just once or twice; they are about to do it for the third time in less than two years. They did so on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, on the Welsh Language Bill and now on local government reform. What greater testimony can there be to the centralising tendency of the Tory party?

As other hon. Members have mentioned, the Foreign Secretary is today in Europe. He is portrayed by his party as a champion of devolution. He is ranting against centralising Brussels, but here in London the least devolved of all Europe's democracies wishes to overturn the constitutional safeguards given to the people of Wales in the 1900s, would you please. What audacious hypocrisy that is.

Mr. Roger Evans: While I understand the hon. Gentleman warming to his theme, the comparison with France suggests that we are a very decentralised, locally democratic country compared with the Jacobin republic, which believes in centralised administration. Does not he recognise that a prefect in every commune might be the ultimate Tory threat?

Mr. Jones: From that intervention I can only gather that the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) has not been to France for more than 20 years.

Why do the Government, alone in Europe, feel so insecure that they deny the right of their constituent peoples to make any independent decision, even on when and where they can use their own language, while simultaneously jealously guarding their veto on collective action taken in Brussels? Even the Secretary of State must acknowledge that there is a certain degree of schizophrenia in that action.

Standing Order No.86 would give all 38 Welsh Members the right to scrutinise and debate the Local Government (Wales) Bill in Committee. The Bill will change historic boundaries and institutions of long standing. In yesterday's debate, the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason)—who made a useful speech—made much of the need to find the right balance between efficient delivery of service and the strength of local community and tradition. Hon. Members on both sides of the House agree about the importance of achieving and establishing that balance.

The assessment of how to deliver efficient services is a contentious matter on which the Secretary of State will have no shortage of professional advice. Local knowledge is useful, but not, I contend, essential. But how are we to assess the second part of the equation—the strength of local community and tradition to which the hon. Member for Bromsgrove referred—if not by debate with local representatives?

The Government will allow no more than 19 Welsh Members to serve on the Committee. Only 13 of the 32 Welsh Opposition Members who signed yesterday's amendment will have the opportunity to debate the Bill in

detail in Committee. Only Tory Welsh Members will have an automatic right to represent their constituents. We are all affected: there should be no first and second-class constituencies in Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who was supported by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), suggested that the Government could get out of their difficulties by agreeing to debate important parts of the Bill—clause 1 and schedule 1—on the Floor of the House. My hon. Friend offered the Government a way out of their problems.

The hon. Members for Clwyd North-West (Mr. Richards) and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) tried to explain that Opposition Members were somehow ineligible for the Standing Committee because of their Front-Bench responsibilities. I am grateful to the hon. Members for their concern. They clearly propose that the Government's decision to abandon Standing Order No. 86 is an attempt to aid the Opposition, to avoid causing us embarrassment. I can tell the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West that I have been inundated by pleas from my Front-Bench colleagues to serve on the Committee, and there is no rule to prevent them from doing so.

They are my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) who is our spokesman on education; our law and order spokesman, if I can call him that, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael); certainly my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and many others. I shall not mention them all. They are united in demanding their right to sit on the Committee, but I cannot provide all of them with the right to do that so I am afraid most of them will be disappointed.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) and the hon. Member for Caernarfon said, those who will sit on the Committee will be English Members whom we believe have no interest in local government in Wales. Time will tell, but we have had recent experience of the Welsh Language Bill. Nine English Members were parachuted into that Bill and an examination of the proceedings shows that between them they managed to contribute no more and no fewer than 41 words in the entire debate.

The Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household (Mr. David Lightbown): That was far too long.

Mr. Jones: That comment is to be expected. What proper debate or scrutiny can the people of Wales expect in the light of such a comment?

No fewer than 19 Opposition Members managed with considerable difficulty to take part in yesterday's debate, but many of them will not be allowed to represent the strength of their communities when the Bill is examined in detail. Of course the hon. Members for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) and for Brecon and Radnor will be able to represent their communities, as will the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West in his own inimitable style. They will represent their communities whether they want to or not, but most Opposition Members will be excluded and, as a result, their communities will be denied the advocacy of their elected Members.

My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney has reason to congratulate the Government on some of the decisions that they took yesterday, but what about my hon. Friends the Members for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and for Rhondda and for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells)? They have important issues that they want to raise in detail in Committee, but they will be excluded. I tell Conservative Members what my hon. Friends know: the strength of community feeling in Merthyr is no less than that in the Rhondda or in Cynon Valley or Taff Ely. As a Rhondda boy, I speak with some feeling about the strength of community feeling there. My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend wishes to represent the strength of community feeling that remains in Bridgend. He has done so today and he did so briefly yesterday, but he should have the opportunity to debate the matter when the Committee meets before the Easter recess.

Reading the debate on 15 April 1907, following which Standing Order No. 86 was instituted, I was struck by the similar arguments being used then, as now, and, by and large, by the same political parties, although my own political party was a rather minor part of that Parliament. Then, as now, the Conservatives—calling themselves the Unionist party—were not too well represented in Wales. Indeed, in the 1906 election they did not succeed in electing a single Welsh Tory. If today's Tories continue to treat Welsh sentiments with such disregard, they could soon find themselves repeating that 1906 result.

During that debate, the Conservative Member for Gravesend, Sir Gilbert Parker, remarked:

"Behind the proposals of the Prime Minister"—

then Sir Campbell-Bannerman—

"was a process of devolution . . . intended to lead up to the larger policy".

Some 87 years later, the people of Wales are still waiting for that. It has been a long time coming but we will get there, and quite soon now.

Sir Gilbert Parker went on to make another statement which has loud echoes today:

"Presently they would have from the Nationalist Benches"—

meaning the Irish—

"a proposal to establish an Irish Standing Committee."—[*Official Report*, 15 April 1907; Vol. 172, c. 674.]

What an irony.

Only last week, the Government set up an Irish Select Committee. Perhaps if devolution had been extended 87 years ago to the people of Ireland, the history of these British islands in the 20th century would have been somewhat different and less bloody.

While talking of Ireland, may I take the opportunity of thanking the Irish Unionist Members who walked through the Lobby with us last night? I certainly shall not forget their support.

The Government maintain that the Standing Committee must reflect the composition of the House, yet they are perfectly happy to set up Select Committees—such as the one dealing with Northern Ireland—which are clearly anything but representative of the House of Commons.

If the Government argue that Select Committees are an entirely different matter and that only Standing Committees need reflect that balance, why do we have the prospect of eight or nine English Tories being parachuted into the Committee but no Ulster Unionists? Given the way that they voted last night, most Opposition Members would have more confidence in the interest and sympathy of Unionist Members than some bored, disinterested whipped Staffordshire Member who is reading his mail.

Labour is prepared, though reluctantly, to concede to the Government a majority on the Committee if the Government will allow all Welsh Members the right to

[Mr. Jones]

take part. Our amendment would allow the Government to place 25 whipped and loyal foot soldiers on the Committee. That guarantees a Government majority, when the Minister has done his mathematics properly, yet enables the arguments to be made for all of Wales. How could we possibly be more accommodating than that?

Sir Wyn Roberts: There is nothing wrong with my mathematics. There are 32 Welsh Opposition Members; 32 taken out of 63 leaves 31.

Mr. Jones: I am surprised at the Minister's difficulty in learning from what has occurred already. One of those Welsh Opposition Members will, of course, be the Chairman. I was a Whip on the Welsh Language Bill Committee when a poor job was done by my opposite number and two Conservative Members went AWOL. Nevertheless, the Chairman voted with the Government, as all Chairmen have to do, and so succeeded in stopping an Opposition amendment.

Rejecting our offer is a calculated insult to the people of Wales; calculated because the Government have no realistic ambition of gaining seats in Wales and, with so few at present, they are not unduly concerned at sacrificing what remains. Local government reform in England, especially in the south-east of England, will be treated in an altogether different fashion, with far more concern about the strength of feeling, about the views of elected Members and, above all, about the number of seats that they may lose.

The six Welsh Tories today are in a difficult position. Let us have some sympathy for them. They know that they have their seats on a short lease. Their electors expect them to speak for Wales, but their party expects them to ignore Wales. What should they do? Welsh interests, they recite, are safeguarded here in a London Parliament. Yet they would tear up or set aside the rules of the House in order to secure advantage for their own party.

Welsh Conservative Members say that there is no need for devolution, no need for a parliament or assembly in Wales. Any other conclusion, as the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor was saying to me the other day, would set us on a slippery slope with full independence and the end of the Union at the bottom. Those so-called Unionists have so little faith in the Union and so little faith in the historic and economic ties that bind the United Kingdom for better or for worse. This fragile flower, they believe, cannot allow the independence of action in Wales to determine whether we dam our own rivers, would you please, or whether we can draw up local government boundaries, or when and whether we can speak our own tongue.

There comes a time when decisions like those and others will be taken not here in London but in Wales where they should be taken. If the Government succeed tonight in overturning the Standing Order, it will only bring forward the day when such decisions will no longer be taken here. I urge the House to accept the Opposition's amendment and to reject the Government's motion.

9.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): Last night, we had a symbolic wind-up of the Local Government (Wales) Bill when two former councillors concluded the debate. Tonight, two former members of Cardiff city council have concluded the debate on how we should handle the Bill's Committee stage. I should congratulate the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) on his appearance at the Dispatch Box this evening, although my congratulations must be full of sympathy for him. I feel sure that he will make a better fist of trying to handle the Welsh portfolio than the exhausted dinosaurs sitting alongside him who are now burnt out.

I must take the hon. Gentleman to task. He sought to accuse my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary of ranting today about Europe. What a monstrous charge. Clearly, it was the hon. Gentleman who was trying to rant, but he was completely out-ranted by that representative of the Welsh republican movement, the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn).

I fear that there is one other hon. Member whom I must take to task this evening for his contribution—my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans). I have to reject what he said in that he was unkind about Opposition Members when he accused them of mock outrage, mock protest and mock indignation. He should know that what we heard from the Opposition Benches this evening was a traditional debate on Welsh affairs. We had the full depth of intellect and sincerity that they always bring to these matters. I want to make up for that with my hon. Friend, because I am grateful. We heard a scholarly legal discourse matching, even surpassing, that of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), in considering exactly the Standing Order that we are supposed to be debating this evening but which many hon. Members did not choose to debate. That is what we must be concerned about.

My hon. Friend returned to the high point of debate that had been established by my right hon. Friend the Minister when he opened the debate. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his ringing endorsement of the motion.

The debate for the Opposition was opened by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). In his typically gentle and thoughtful way, he suggested that we should not alter the rules. He sought to concede that, naturally, the Government would want to maintain their majority on any Committee examining a Bill. He then trotted out the most dubious of figures, which even he had to admit he could not understand, and said that there would be 63 members on the Committee, or, if he had got it wrong, 64. We were almost into a bingo caller's evening—"Any advance on 64?"

Mr. Morgan: The Under-Secretary has changed his speaking style in this debate. He is trying to sound as though he is Wynford Vaughan Thomas describing the battle of Britain from the back seat of a Spitfire. We much preferred his old masonic lodge, retirement do, avuncular manner. What I actually said was that, in the almost inconceivable circumstance that I was wrong, the Government had a solution. I am not wrong. The Minister of State is not claiming that I am wrong, so why is the Under-Secretary taking so much trouble to accept that the figure of 63 gives the Minister the Government majority that he so urgently seeks? Am I wrong, or am I not wrong?

Mr. Jones: That question was answered most succinctly by my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), who nailed the hon. Gentleman's

point and said that he had come out once again with "Aberpergau" mathematics—his own peculiar breed of mathematics that only he could come out with. The hon. Gentleman tried to give us his personal interpretation of Standing Order No. 86(2)(ii).

Mr. Morgan: The Under-Secretary says that it is my personal interpretation. I assure him that it comes from the authorities of the House. Has he checked with the authorities of the House—as I did before I spoke—the mathematics that would mean that 63 would give the Government a majority if the Chairman were an Opposition Member?

Mr. Evans: Quite simply, if one takes 32 from 63—the number of non-Conservative Members of the House—that leaves 31. If one of those 31 is the Chairman of the Committee, that leaves 30 for the Government, does it not? That is quite simple mathematics that anyone can do. If the hon. Gentleman had stopped to think, he could have checked the mathematics before he had anything to do with the amendment.

I refer now to the personal interpretation that the hon. Gentleman offered about Standing Order No. 86(2)(ii). I suppose that I had better reassure the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery that I have read the Standing Order again this evening, and clearly my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has read it. Indeed, I am reading from his copy of it.

Most amazingly, the hon. Member for Cardiff, West sought to accuse the rationale behind what we propose as gerrymandering, dragging out the same old arguments again. I was almost expecting to hear him claim that we changed our minds and are now going in for separate unitary authorities for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and for Blaenau Gwent because we believe that that is the simple step towards winning those constituencies at a general election.

It was with a sense of nostalgia that I listened to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West—not that he made his usual speech. I looked back to *Hansard* of 9 June, which reports that I moved the suspension of Standing Orders to deal with the Bill that is now the Cardiff Bay Barrage Act 1993. I found, amazingly, that the hon. Gentleman had engaged in an old ploy, and waved the old school tie at me. "We boys from Whitchurch grammar must stick together!" That was his cause for intervening on my speech—a tactic which he has used more than once.

I do not know whether I have ever thanked the hon. Gentleman for using the old school tie in that way. In fact, he is not the only hon. Member with whom I share an old school tie; I also share one with the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field).

Once, when I was speaking from this Dispatch Box, I found that I was running out of material and that my speech was likely to finish early. My Whip told me that, whatever I did, I must carry on speaking until 7 pm. Suddenly, I saw a lifebelt in the Chamber—the hon. Member for Cardiff, West was trying to intervene. When the hon. Gentleman gets going, a Minister has minutes, even hours, to fill out his speech.

But I must not confine my remarks to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West. I want to sum up, properly, all the important questions that have been raised. My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) referred to the basic criteria on which Opposition Members might serve on the Committee, or might not think it appropriate to do so. He listed 12 Opposition Members who—because of Front-Bench responsibilities, or for other reasons—might be considered ineligible, or consider themselves ineligible. He went on to discourse very knowledgeably on hon. Members' contributions in regard to local government, and local government reorganisation.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister accept that his hon. Friend was entirely wrong? Opposition Members represent their constituencies first. That is why we want to sit on the Committee—even those of us with Front-Bench responsibilities.

Mr. Jones: No, I do not accept that my hon. Friend was entirely wrong. If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I mean to adduce from tonight's debate confirmation from his hon. Friends that my hon. Friend made an appropriate contribution!

The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) acknowledged the criteria advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West—I think because he recognised that he had been identified as being to the fore on the Opposition Benches in taking an interest in local government matters. The concept was expanded by the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central, who suggested in an intervention that membership of a local authority would be an appropriate criterion—another form of selection to contribute to a debate begun by my hon. Friend.

The question of eligibility was further enhanced by the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams). His view was that English Members would not say enough in Committee. I find it difficult to reply to anything else that the hon. Gentleman said, as the rest of his speech rehearsed arguments about the Bill. That is not the context of tonight's debate. I am afraid, however, that his suggestion that English Members should not sit on the Committee because they would not say enough suggested to me the truism about empty vessels.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor explored further the apparent hostility to English Members, citing last night's speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan). His view—which has been echoed by others—was that they had made valuable, worthwhile contributions; another instance is the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) to our debate on the Welsh Language Bill. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor made a meaningful point when he pondered the philosophical question whether the balance of contributions might not have much more to do with the absence of depth of the amendments tabled by Opposition Members in Committee.

The House would do well to reflect on the hostility frequently displayed by Opposition Members towards Members representing English constituencies. Such hostility can sink as low as calling "Taff" in order to heckle non-Welsh Members who wish to speak during Welsh Question Time. It certainly betrays an arrogance that is completely unentitled and most inappropriate to our debate.

I can at least contrast such hostility with the contribution of the hon. and learned Member for

[Mr. Jones]

Montgomery, who sought to debate the Standing Order. He asked whether we would be introducing new proposals to change it and in the same way that my hon. Friend—

It being Ten o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [11 March],* That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 271, Noes 318.

Division No. 168] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Randel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert

Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 317, Noes 271.

Division No. 169] **[10.18 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark

Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. John Cummings.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees), any Standing Committee appointed for consideration of the Local Government (Wales) Bill [*Lords*] shall consist of twenty-eight Members, including not fewer than nineteen Members sitting for

PETITION

Video Material

10.31 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): It is my privilege to present a petition containing 100,000 signatures in support of an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill that will soon be tabled by almost 150 Members of Parliament who are drawn from all political parties. It seeks to introduce a new classification of "not suitable for home entertainment" to prevent gratuitously violent material being retailed or sold in video shops.

The petition states:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of residents of the United Kingdom sheweth

The overwhelming evidence that exposure to images of a degrading or violent nature on film, television or video can desensitise the viewer and act as a trigger in the commission of acts of violence; that children are particularly at risk and that current systems of 'watersheds', parental oversight, and legislative regulation are inadequate.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will amend the Criminal Justice Bill before you at this time to ensure that such images are not available on video or broadcast on television, including cable and satellite networks.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The petition is signed by Dr. Robert Song, the tutor in moral ethics at St. John's college, Durham, who is the chairman of the Movement for Christian Democracy and whose name is at the head of the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

The Solent (Habitats)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10.33 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank Madam Speaker for allowing me this important debate. It has been prompted by a number of factors, the first of which is my election to the position of commodore of the House of Commons yacht club. It grieves me when I hear the suggestion that yachting and marine wildlife are not compatible. There is nothing that a yachtsman enjoys observing more than a shag or a cormorant busily fishing in the Solent. Yachtsmen and women are a more environmentally conscious group than practically any other sporting group. Indeed, I do not know whether the Minister has ever had the pleasure of observing dolphins playing around the bow of a sailing ship, or of watching the sun go down in the company of oyster catchers and curlews. If not, I tell him that they represent some of the most magical moments in our crowded lives.

My first reason for the debate is the desire to hand over to our grandchildren the wonderful inheritance of wildlife in the Solent, of which we are temporary custodians. My second reason is that there have been tremendous improvements in the quality of the Solent waters. Cetaceans are good indicators of pollution levels, and their return in recent years to the Solent is a better testimony to the Government's record than all of the *Hansards* and fine speeches in the world.

The suggestion that the Solent should be redesignated and no longer considered an estuary for the sake of the urban waste water treatment directive is worrying indeed. I am pleased that the National Rivers Authority is opposing that, and I hope very much that Ministers are too.

My third reason is that, as a paying member of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight wildlife trust, I promised that I would campaign for the Government to designate the Solent water under the habitats directive, and to get the Government to put right the problem that was created by the Law Lords in the now famous Alverstone marshes case. The marshes became a site of special scientific interest —or a SSSI as we more commonly know it. Despite that, considerable environmental damage was done on that site.

My fourth and final reason is the encouragement that the Select Committee had from the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins). The members of the Committee were extremely disappointed by the Government's response to the report on coastal zone protection and planning. In correspondence with the Committee Chairman, the Minister gave us hope that the recommendations would be more carefully considered in future.

Yesterday, I attended the Royal Yachting Association's annual general meeting, which was presided over by Her Royal Highness Princess Anne. Again and again, the fear of the licensing of yachtsmen and the registration of boats came up at the meeting. Surely to goodness the opportunity of managing and regulating the Solent and the nation's coastal zone is wholly preferable to a raft of busybody legislation, which is about as enforceable as television and dog licences, and is also very intrusive.

The Committee heard today the Minister's official Robin Sharp, who was positive in his evidence to us about the future and about the possibility of the regulations. I hope that we will hear from the Minister that he is positive also.

In an article on the subject on 21 February in *The Times*, the environment correspondent, Nick Nuttall, stated:

"The Government is this summer expected to announce two big marine nature reserves to improve protection for the wildlife around Britain . . . Conservationists claim that the Species and Habitats Directive offers tremendous opportunities for drafting tough laws to conserve the nation's marine heritage from over-fishing, shipping, pollution and dredging. But rather than bringing new laws in June, they say, there is growing evidence that the Environment Department will use old legislation that has proved to be inadequate."

Britannia rules the waves, but the Department of the Environment wavers on the rules.

I must pay tribute to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and to Adrian Penrose, the society's parliamentary officer, for help with the debate. The harbours and estuaries of the Solent support abundant plants, worms, molluscs and shellfish which, in turn, provide food for a large number of birds. In mid-winter, the Solent holds more than 110,000 wading birds and 45,000 wildfowl, making it the sixth most important site for water birds in the United Kingdom. It is internationally important as a bird migration route from the Arctic to Africa. Approximately 15 per cent.—25,000—of the world's population of dark-bellied Brent geese spend the winter on the Solent.

The wildlife value of the Solent's estuaries extends beyond its birds. The inter-tidal areas are important feeding and spawning grounds for commercially valuable fish. In addition, the Isle of Wight is home to the starlet sea anemone, a globally threatened species. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will yet consider that it may be a suitable candidate for the Prime Minister's Darwin initiative which he announced at the Rio conference.

The Government's statutory advisers, English Nature, describe the Solent and the Isle of Wight as being of national and international importance. It is an area of transition between the Lusitanean warm temperate and Boreal cold temperature provinces, with flora and fauna from both. In 1976, the United Kingdom ratified the Ramsar convention, named after the meeting venue of Ramsar in Iran. Those who are so used to juggling with the alphabet soup of Whitehall should note that the Ramsar convention takes its name after the town. That is another reason why I am having the debate this evening—I always refer to my wife as the ayatollah.

Contracting parties to the convention are required to promote the conservation of listed wetlands. More generally, contracting parties are exhorted to plan the wise use of wetlands in all areas of policy planning and formulation. Where listed sites are involved, damaging development can proceed only in the urgent national interest. Alternative sites are required to be listed in place of any so developed.

Almost all the Solent's inter-tidal areas have been notified as SSSIs and designated as special protection areas under the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds, to which the United Kingdom is bound under European law, and as Ramsar sites. So far, only Chichester, Langstone and Pagham harbours have been designated as both. Last year, additional guidance was issued for the implementation of the wise use concept and appended to resolution 5.6 of the Kushiro conference, which was the fifth conference of the contracting parties to the Ramsar convention.

In addition, the United Kingdom Government will shortly publish regulations to implement the EC habitats and species directive which requires, inter alia, protection of the wider marine environment. The Government's commitments under the biodiversity action plan and national sustainability strategy also require protection of the wildlife interest of the Solent.

The threats and problems facing the Solent are many. Despite its size, the Solent is under threat from permanent habitat destruction and from disturbance and pollution. Much of that stems from human population pressures. About 1.1 million people live within just 10 miles of the Solent and the whole area has seen substantial growth in recent years.

From 1930 to 1980, almost an eighth of the inter-tidal area of the Solent was lost to land claim and development. Although each individual threat may be small, together the threats add up alarmingly. Continued threats today include losses of habitat to roads and landfill and the many marinas and offshore facilities. With more than 32,000 yacht berths and moorings, the Solent is claimed to have the largest recreational sailing fleet in the world. The increasing numbers of sailboards, jet skis and other fun craft place ever greater pressure on the system. Shoreline activities and developments also have an important effect.

Disturbance to feeding or roosting birds prevents them from feeding and can be particularly harmful especially in the short winter days. Fast motor boats sailing close to and sometimes landing on the islands and spits holding nesting birds lead to increased nest predation and breeding failure.

Nature reserves such as those of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in Langstone and Chichester harbours and the reserves of the statutory bodies and county trusts make a positive contribution to reconciling different conflicts in the coastal zone. Several local authorities have also established local nature reserves. The Newtown river nature reserve, which has been established in conjunction with the National Trust, is just such an area and one I know well, as I grew up there as a boy.

The RSPB spends thousands of pounds annually helping to resolve the impacts of recreation on wildlife, for example, in Langstone harbour. With careful management —and I emphasise that—nature reserves can provide enjoyment for people without damaging the environment that they have come to visit, which is precisely the point that we made in the report on coastal zone management and why we hope yet to see a more positive result and response from the Government.

The Solent suffers when there is a pollution incident such as the illegal washing of ships' tanks either in the channel or even in the Solent itself. For some years, I have been calling for greater identification of tankers using the channel as a route so that the culprits can be more easily identified and a greater number of prosecutions brought. English Nature describes the Solent as a top 10 important area for marine wildlife round England. The conservation of the Solent depends on the involvement and support of the local community. The estuaries and harbours are important local assets and their wildlife is becoming increasingly significant as a resource for recreation and tourism.

The existence of all coastal users requires careful zoning of competing needs such as fishing, sailing and

[Mr. Barry Field]

water skiing to avoid potential conflicts and damage to wildlife. This, in, turn requires the active involvement of harbour and planning authorities. The working co-operation of Langstone and Chichester harbours is a good example of best practice.

The Solent and planning causes us particular difficulties. The artificial split of planning functions within the coastal zone into landward and seaward elements is a major barrier to the adoption of an holistic and more effective strategic planning and management approach. I believe, as does the RSPB, that local authority jurisdiction should be extended seawards to allow coverage of marine developments. That approach was endorsed by the Select Committee on the Environment inquiry, but, sadly, it was almost totally rejected, without reasons being given, in the Government's response. We understand from the officials who appeared before the Committee this morning that they have received more than 1,000 representations on the consultative documents, which I hope the Minister will take as strong reinforcement of the Committee's arguments.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds also fully supports other recommendations of the inquiry, such as the development of a national coastal unit with a national coastal strategy and regional coastal groups. In addition, the RSPB believes that local authorities should be able to make byelaws to manage recreation offshore, including zoning sensitive areas.

In its final recommendations on the future local government of the Isle of Wight, the Local Government Commission for England noted the concerns of the three councils involved, supported by Hampshire county council, that the seaward boundaries of the Isle of Wight should be extended further into the Solent because they felt that some control by a public body was needed to protect the public interest.

Will the Government consider extending local government jurisdiction seawards to provide greater protection of the public interest as the Select Committee on the Environment asked and as has been promised this very day in a special note from the Minister's advisers on this point? Will the Solent be made a marine special area for conservation under the new habitats and species directive, and how will the United Kingdom honour the requirements for environmental impact legislation that caters for the cumulative effects of separate projects? Finally, how will the United Kingdom monitor the effects of authorised actions and carry out unbiased environmental audits of those actions when they have been completed?

I can remember many things on the island from my youth. I can remember when there were no marinas and when boats were wooden, but the one thing that I cannot remember, although some of my constituents can, is puffins, those delightful little creatures with the orange beaks, nesting at the Needles. We have not seen them for many years in the Solent. As I grow older and more grey, I shall treat as the ultimate test of the success of our environmental policies the return of puffins to that most famous landmark of the Isle of Wight, the Needles.

10.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) has spoken with great authority about the important issue of wildlife and the Solent and, in particular, about the possible designation of the area under the Ramsar convention. As my hon. Friend made clear, in 1976 the United Kingdom became a signatory to the Ramsar convention, so called because of the meeting venue of Ramsar in Iran. That was an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for international co-operation for the conservation of wetland habitats.

The main objectives of the convention are to stem the loss of wetlands now and in the future and to promote the wise use of them. Under the convention, contracting parties such as the United Kingdom are also required to include wetland conservation considerations within their national land-use planning and to promote the conservation of wetlands through the establishment of nature reserves. In addition, we are obliged to designate at least one wetland for inclusion in the "List of Wetlands of International Importance".

There are now more than 600 wetlands of international importance worldwide. We have designated 73 Ramsar areas. Indeed, there are more Ramsar sites in the United Kingdom than anywhere else in the world.

The enormous range of wetland habitats throughout the United Kingdom—from rain-fed northern peatlands through valley bogs and fens to lakes, rivers and estuaries —makes them of particular importance. Clearly, areas of our natural heritage, such as the Solent, are of international importance. We certainly recognise our responsibility to maintain the Solent's diversity of natural heritage of wildlife for future generations.

English Nature, the Government's statutory adviser, is preparing a detailed case for the designation of Southampton water and the Solent as a Ramsar site and special protection area under the EC birds directive. English Nature intends to consult local people, local planning authorities and everyone with relevant concerns before April next year. When the consultations are complete, English Nature will submit its proposals to us. We shall be consulting other Government Departments about the proposed designations at the same time as English Nature consults local people, so that everything can proceed at all possible speed.

We wanted to designate Southampton water and the Solent as a Ramsar site and special protection area this year. Alas, there have been a number of delays which, with the best will in the world and a full commitment to the initiative, have been unavoidable. As I know my hon. Friend appreciates, the Solent is a complex natural habitat made up of a number of sites of special scientific interest and English Nature has identified further areas which it considers may well merit inclusion in the SPA/Ramsar area of designation. Some of those areas are around the Isle of Wight.

Obviously, the latest ornithological information available will be reviewed and, where appropriate, the SSSI boundaries will be amended accordingly. It is important work, but it is also time consuming. I am sure that my hon. Friend will appreciate our wish to reflect the

fullest possible extent of the wetland habitats and the areas of ornithological interest when the international SPA/ Ramsar designations are made.

In the meantime, following the precautionary principle, we protect special protection areas in the same manner as designated sites. Potential Ramsar sites are given similar protection. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will normally call in all planning applications, both within SSSI boundaries and outside, which are likely significantly to affect sites of international importance and recognised national importance. Potential Ramsar sites and SPAs are rigorously protected. We are determined to protect their nature conservation. Only reasons of overriding national public interest can interfere with the protection afforded by such designation.

I fully support everything that my hon. Friend said about the importance of nature conservation in the Southampton water and Solent potential SPA/Ramsar areas. The proposed areas consist of a series of estuaries with extensive mudflats and associated salt marshes. The mudflats support large numbers of wintering waterfowl and breeding gulls and terns. In particular, they support internationally important numbers of wintering dark-bellied Brent geese and nationally important numbers of six or seven different types of waders and different types of breeding Sandwich tern, common tern and little tern.

I understand that there have been some concerns at English Nature's proposals to notify new SSSIs in the area and expand water and the Solent. Clearly, a balance has to be struck between those who gain their living from the land or sea and who are concerned that statutory designation might impede their ability to husband their livelihoods and the wildlife and conservation interests inherent in an important habitat. I hope that, by carrying out extensive discussions and consultation with local people, English Nature can come forward with proposals that command local support.

The measures that we have taken provide the most comprehensive legislative framework for nature conservation ever seen in this country and stand comparison with the measures taken by any of our European partners or anywhere in the developed world. The new EC habitats directive comes into force this June. That directive lists a number of habitat types, such as coastal areas like the Solent, for which special areas of conservation must be designated under the directive. Those, together with the special protection areas classified under the birds directive, will make up the Natura 2000 network of designated areas. The habitats directive lists criteria that must be applied in the process of selection of the sites.

At present, to ensure that we comply with the directive, the statutory nature conservation advisers, co-ordinated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, are working on an assessment of the United Kingdom nature conservation resource. That work is well under way, but it will still be a little time before we are able to announce which sites we consider may, subject to consultation, qualify for inclusion on our national list. So, understandably, it is difficult to say now whether the Solent will be recommended as qualifying as an SAC in its own right under the habitats directive. Of course it will definitely in any event be part of the Natura 2000 network by virtue of its impending SPA designation under the birds directive.

We are fully committed to the implementation of the habitats directive. Last year, we set out our proposals. We made it clear that regulations would be laid before the House to transpose the directive into national law and, because the habitats directive amends the birds directive, such regulations will also cover SPAs.

There have been many responses to the consultation paper. We have been carefully considering them, and will shortly introduce the regulations. They will place a clear duty on the relevant Secretaries of State, the nature conservation agencies and other bodies to comply with the directives by using their existing powers, amended and augmented as necessary. The regulations will also make provision to amend the town and country planning legislation.

Mr. Barry Field: Do I take that to mean that my hon. Friend is promising us legislation that will put back the clock to before the Alverstone marsh case, which meant that the SSSI designation was not everything that everyone thought that it was in terms of protecting a site?

Mr. Baldry: I hope that I had made it clear that we are fully committed to ensuring that the birds directive and the habitats directive are implemented in full and that full protection is accorded to SSSIs. I also hope that I have made it clear that in so far as there has been any delay in implementing an SPA/Ramsar designation in the Solent and Southampton water, it has simply been because we want to ensure that the full extent of those SSSIs are included within that designation.

For marine sites, our proposals are to create a framework for the various bodies with jurisdiction in the areas concerned to work together to prepare a scheme of management to ensure the necessary conservation objectives. Such bodies must include the sea estuaries committees and harbour authorities as well as English Nature and will also include recreational interests. I am sure that such an approach will ensure that all concerned can pursue their interests in ways are compatible with the sustainable management of the areas involved. My hon. Friend, as commodore of the House of Commons yacht squadron and a naturalist, and as someone concerned with the livelihood of the Isle of Wight, has made it clear that it is perfectly possible to reconcile all those interests and still ensure good nature conservation.

My hon. Friend has asked whether the Government will consider extending local authority jurisdiction seawards. Among other things, the Select Committee on the Environment, of which my hon. Friend is a member, issued a report on coastal zone protection and planning which called for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to coastal zone management. The Government welcomed the report as a valuable contribution to the debate and drew attention to a number of initiatives such as new planning and policy guidance and the publication of a strategy for coastal defence in England and Wales.

The coastal planning guidance, published in September 1992, is the most important statement on planning our coast for 20 years. It is the first time that we have set out comprehensive planning guidance covering both the open coast and the estuaries of England and Wales. Development should now be limited to that which genuinely needs to be located there and guided towards areas that are already largely developed. Making provision for development in appropriate locations is essential if we are to safeguard what is best about our natural coastline for future generations. The advice also encourages a high level

[Mr. Baldry]

of co-ordination between local authorities and interest groups to develop plans for stretches of coast, particularly estuaries.

As my hon. Friend has said, officials from my Department gave evidence today to the Environment Select Committee. I am sure that he is right when he says that their evidence was positive and constructive. I am sure that they clearly set out established policy on our approach to enhancing coastal protection.

My hon. Friend also asked what specific actions we will take to implement the new guidance on the wise use of wetlands. As he said, resolution 5.6 of the conference of the contracting parties to the Ramsar convention called on contracting parties to implement the applicable provisions of the guidance. The guidance urges, among other things, contracting parties to promote policy, including the use of legislation to implement wise use. The guidance on wise use is designated for contracting parties around the world, including developing countries. Our existing policies and legislation, as set out in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance" and our biodiversity action plan, embody the principles that the guidance seeks to promote.

Important wetlands, particularly Ramsar sites, are protected by, among other things, the SSSI network, which we have already discussed. The Government and the statutory nature conservation bodies that have responsibility for protecting SSSIs are fully conversant with, and committed to, the "wise use" concept, and forthcoming guidance and the new planning and policy guidance note on nature conservation will have regard to the use of wetlands, and our land use planning system should, and will, ensure that all relevant considerations are taken into account in determining development proposals.

Government policies ensure, and we shall ensure, that the nature conservation of Southampton water and the Solent marshes will receive strict protection. Ramsar and SPA designation will give the clearest possible recognition to the international importance of the Solent. English Nature knows of the importance that we attach to the protection and designation of internationally important wildlife habitats. I am glad to say that English Nature has been provided with additional funding to accelerate the designation of Southampton water and the Solent, as well as other sites, because we are determined to implement both the EC birds directive and the Ramsar convention as speedily as possible.

We are in no doubt about the importance of wetlands to wildlife and to our national heritage. For that reason, the United Kingdom has designated more Ramsar sites than any other country. Further areas such as Southampton water and the Solent marshes will follow. We believe firmly in the wise use of wetlands, a concept central to the Ramsar convention. Sustainability can perhaps best be defined as

"the human use of a wetland so that it may yield the greatest continuous benefit to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations."

The arrangements that are in place in the UK for both the designation and protection of internationally important wildlife sites protect the legitimate interests of local people and the need to conserve our natural heritage for the sake of our children.

I am sure that we can achieve all that. I hope that, in all our life times, we will see the puffins return to the Needles.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 17 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

FEDERATION OF STREET TRADERS UNION (LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACT 1990) (AMENDMENT) BILL (*By Order*)

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON BILL (*By Order*)

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 24 March.

BRITISH RAILWAYS ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Inter-party Talks

1. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the resumption of the inter-party talks process and on talks he has had with the Irish Government.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I recently met the leaders of the three Northern Ireland parties involved in the bilateral discussions. The Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), is discussing our ideas at further meetings with the parties. At the intergovernmental conference on 10 March, both Governments reaffirmed their commitment to the search for a comprehensive political settlement covering the main relationships.

Mr. McAvoy: Is the Secretary of State aware that this is St. Patrick's day, when we celebrate a great man of peace? Bearing in mind the right hon. and learned Gentleman's responsibility to follow in the footsteps of that man of peace, what proposals does he have to bring the Ulster Unionist party back into the three-stranded talks process?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I acknowledge the first part of what the hon. Gentleman said—indeed, I have personal reasons to be pleased that it is St. Patrick's day.

There is no question of bringing the Unionist parties back into the talks at the moment. The Democratic Unionist party is not prepared to engage in bilateral discussions, but I am pleased that bilateral discussions are continuing on their former basis between my hon. Friend the Minister of State and the Ulster Unionist party, the Alliance party and the Social Democratic and Labour party.

Mr. Peter Robinson: In his discussions with the Dublin Government, has the Secretary of State agreed—as Mr. Reynolds said that he had in a recent *Irish News* article—on a definition of the word "consent" in the Downing street declaration? Under that definition, which the British and Irish Governments have agreed, there can be constitutional mutation which leads to a united Ireland without the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland, and only the final legal act of severance requires consent.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: There has been no such agreement.

Mr. Molyneaux: Does the Secretary of State recall that, in the original scheme some four years ago, it was decided, and accepted by all concerned, that the first phase should concentrate on designing a workable, practical system of devolved government in Northern Ireland and that we would move, in due course, to discuss a possible relationship between that body and the Irish Government? Does the Secretary of State still feel that that was a natural order of progress?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to say that the statement of 26 March 1991 set out the three strands. It was arranged that there should be discussions on the first strand until the stage was reached when, in the judgment of the Secretary of State, it was appropriate to invite the Irish Government to join the discussions, to discuss matters connected with strands 2 and 3.

I think that it has come to be recognised among the parties that the three-stranded approach is essential and it has been borne in on me from all sides that people cannot be expected to reach final conclusions on any particular strand until they know the position of other parties on other strands. That is a sensible way of proceeding.

Mr. Couchman: Will my right hon. and learned Friend reassure the House—the callous brutality of the mortar attacks on Heathrow in the past week and of other terrorist atrocities notwithstanding—that the thrust for peace remains, that the Downing street declaration of December remains a vehicle for peace and that he will not let Sinn Fein and the IRA derail the thrust for peace through either the three-stranded talks or the declaration?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It was not only callous; it was extremely wicked to launch the attacks of which my hon. Friend speaks. The declaration stands as a freestanding declaration of principle, of consent and of rejection of violence. If Sinn Fein or the Provisional IRA considers that, by violence, it can secure a departure from the declaration or any concession from the British Government, it would be better employed taking a running jump. There is to be no concession and no departure.

Mr. McGrady: May I bring greetings to you, Madam Speaker, and all Members of the House on this St. Patrick's day from the Hill of Patrick in my constituency? Does the Secretary of State agree that the best prospect for the peace process now is the continuation of the inter-party three-stranded talks, based on the carefully negotiated agreement of 26 March 1991, which is still extant? Does he agree that, based on the principles enunciated in the

Downing street agreement of 15 December 1993, the hope for peace, for which we all pray, would be best served by that?

Will the Secretary of State recommence the first phase of the talks because, as he said, the strands are interwoven? We had passed from strand 1 into strands 2 and 3. We should not go back to the starting post, but carry on from where we left off. Those parties that, for reasons of violence or politics, cannot join in that process should be allowed to join the table when they feel that they can do so.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The best hope for peace is if the Provisional IRA and anybody else who uses violence for political means recognise that it will get them nowhere. They will end up in prison; in the past four weeks, 40 people have been charged with serious terrorist offences. That is the best hope for peace. I absolutely agree that it is necessary to proceed with the political talks with which I have already dealt this afternoon in answer to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux).

Lady Olga Maitland: Will my right hon. and learned Friend, when he next meets the Irish Government, raise the issue of cross-border security? I acknowledge that relations are good between the RUC and the Garda, but it would be helpful if the Irish Government showed more commitment in terms of providing resources and manpower, sharing intelligence and permitting Army helicopters to go in hot pursuit of terrorists when they flee to the south. After all, terrorists are no respecters of any sovereign nation.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Cross-border co-operation is always on the agenda at meetings of the intergovernmental conference. Progress has certainly been made. Improved communications, technical co-operation, liaison structures and joint threat assessments are all items of improved co-operation. I draw the attention of my hon. Friend and the House to the statement issued yesterday by the Chief Constable of the RUC in which he said that co-operation was at an all-time high. He said:

"The success rate of the Garda in finding arms and explosives, and making arrests, has been first rate and is plain for all to see."

We shall continue to pursue those matters with the Irish Government.

Mr. Alton: Will the Secretary of State take the opportunity of underlining what the Irish Prime Minister said—that the struggle is not now against the British Government but against the Irish people? Will he consider the possibility of appointing someone like Ninian Stephen or perhaps the President as an interlocutor or mediator to take the peace process forward?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman accurately quotes what Mr. Reynolds said in America yesterday. I add to that another quotation. He said:

"If they"—

the Provisionals—

"are trying to get new or additional terms for people who use violence to try and achieve a political end, then they will not succeed."

I do not think, however, that there is any need for a mediator; the joint declaration makes the position abundantly clear and it will stand. As the Taoiseach said, the Provisionals have to recognise that, if they wish to join the democratic process, they must give up violence for good.

Mrs. Angela Knight: My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the outrage felt by my constituents in Erewash and throughout Derbyshire at the failure of the Irish courts to extradite the two people wanted for questioning by the Derbyshire police force about the murder of a soldier in Derby two years ago. In his talks with the Irish Government, will my right hon. and learned Friend undertake to do everything he can to ensure that they change their law in such a way that the Irish courts would extradite in circumstances in the future? Murder is murder; it is not a political crime.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I warmly agree, as of course does the whole House, with my hon. Friend's last sentence. She never fails—and very properly—to remind me of the concern of her constituents in that recent case. It is to be understood that the Irish Government are now taking through their parliamentary process—it has been through the Dail—a Bill that would have removed two of the three grounds on which the High Court judge relied in refusing the extradition request in the two most recent cases. I must recognise that the Irish High Court judges are as independent of their Government as ours are of the British Government. We referred to the first case at the previous intergovernmental conference and mentioned the disappointment that was widely felt at the outcome.

Mr. McNamara: The Secretary of State will, of course, remember that, in that particular case, the judges in the Republic made a comment on a third ground about the prejudging of cases by the British press and how dangerous that was. We have had examples of that both in the Republic and in this country.

May we go back to the original question that was raised? I noted that the right hon. and learned Gentleman dodged the point that was put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy). Can he say that no attempt whatever will be allowed to decouple the first strand from the other two strands, that he still stands by "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" and that he does not regard that as a fatuous formula?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: There is no question of dodging anything at all. I will not make any comment on the case; I never make comments on judicial observations either in our own jurisdiction or in anybody else's. It is perfectly legitimate to express disappointment at the outcome. That is as far as I go.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, it has been made clear time and again that the Government stand behind a three-stranded approach. I suppose that I could go on saying that, but it would take a lot of time if I did. There is no question of decoupling. Whether the parties in the resumed talks wish to maintain that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed is a matter for them. That is not a matter on which I can lay down a rule.

Harbours and Ferry Service

2. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who advises him on the safety of the harbours and the ferry service linking the inhabited island with County Antrim.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tim Smith): Advice on these matters is provided by the marine directorate of the

Department of Transport, which, from 1 April, will be known as the Marine Safety Agency, and by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Bottomley: Northern Ireland has one inhabited offshore island—Rathlin. If Rathlin were in the south of Ireland or in Scotland, the harbour facilities would be improved. Will my hon. Friend engage all the efforts of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, who has more right to call himself Irish than St. Patrick, to ensure that, whether from European funds or from Northern Ireland funds, the harbours at Castle Bay and Ballycastle are improved? That cannot be done by Moyle council itself. There must be some other form of funding.

Mr. Smith: I am aware of my hon. Friend's interest in Rathlin island and am sorry that it was not possible to include improvements to the harbour facilities in this year's public spending round, but I will do as he suggests for the future.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Minister agree that the ferry services operating from Belfast and Larne, County Antrim, and my constituency operate within the highest possible safety standards? Does he further agree that the safety of ships' passengers and crews would be enhanced by the provision of a lifeboat at Larne and by the improvement of roads to the ports of Northern Ireland and to the ports on the western coast of the most inhabited island—Great Britain?

Mr. Smith: I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's interest in the port of Larne and will look carefully at what he said about the provision of a lifeboat. I am looking with great care at road links.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I, too, should like to greet the House on St. Patrick's day and also to say that the Secretary of State could do a good service to Northern Ireland for once by declaring St. Patrick's day a public holiday. That would please the nationalists, because they think that St. Patrick was a Roman Catholic, and the Protestants, because they know that he was a Protestant and a Brit.

Having said that, I remind the Minister that the real problem for Rathlin island is not its harbour but the deplorable harbour at Ballycastle. Is he aware that, last Friday, many school children could have been drowned by the terrible swell in the harbour at Ballycastle? Will he see to it that some of the structural funds that will now be available from the EEC will be put to an urgent reconstruction of the harbour at Ballycastle so that the people from Rathlin have a proper entrance to the mainland?

Mr. Smith: I am afraid that I am not in a position to render St. Patrick's day a public holiday, much as I should like to do so. I will refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

I was very concerned to hear what the hon. Gentleman said about Rathlin island, and I will visit the island as soon as I can to see what can be done.

Privatisation

3. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the Government's plans for privatisation in Northern Ireland.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): The Government will privatise Belfast international airport by way of a trade sale during 1994. The Ports (Northern Ireland) Order will permit any trust port to bring forward a scheme for privatisation. The previously announced intention to privatise water and sewerage services will not take place within the lifetime of this Parliament.

Mr. Mackinlay: Why do the Government ignore the views of the Belfast harbour commissioners, the work force at the port and the overwhelming majority of the people of Northern Ireland, as reflected by the elected representatives? Those people consider the privatisation programme completely irrelevant to the real needs of people in Northern Ireland and the rest of the country.

Why is the Minister going to privatise the professional police force at Northern Ireland airport, and why is he ignoring the views of the Belfast harbour commissioners, who reject the privatisation proposal? Will he review these crackpot proposals?

Sir John Wheeler: I certainly do not accept the hon. Gentleman's description of the initiatives as "crackpot" —far from it. The proposals are designed to improve the quality and standard of services. I understand that the House considered the question of Aldergrove airport and its police service a short time ago and that the House was assured that the police service would continue to function as heretofore.

Rev. William McCrea: During discussions in the ministerial team about the continuation of the plans for privatisation in the Province, did the Minister and his colleagues consider the possibility of privatising the Northern Ireland Office? Surely, if privatisation is regarded as a policy in the interests of the community, the privatisation of the Northern Ireland Office would be very popular. It would clean out the nest of those who flirt with our political enemies and negotiate privately with people who are our murdering foes.

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the originality of his proposal. I am confident, however, that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my ministerial colleagues are satisfied with the high quality and standard of service given by the civil servants who serve the Northern Ireland Office.

Mr. Stott: The Minister of State may not recall—if he does not, the Under-Secretary of State certainly will—that, during the debate on the privatisation of Belfast international airport, I pointed out that Commissioner Bruce Millan had informed me that the European Commission might seek a clawback of the proportion of money that the Commission had put into the refurbishment of the airport following its privatisation. My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) has received a similar letter from Commissioner Millan, saying that the Commission may seek to claw back—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have not heard the hon. Gentleman ask a question yet.

Mr. Stott: Is the Minister aware that we have had a further letter from Bruce Millan, saying that a similar clawback principle would apply if the Government privatised any of the trust ports in Northern Ireland?

Sir John Wheeler: I understand that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State dealt with the matter in the debate in the House a short time ago. If there is any further information that the Government should take into account, they will certainly do so.

Downing Street Declaration

4. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest situation regarding the Downing street declaration.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The declaration by the two Heads of Government is a statement of the fundamental principles of democracy, consent and the rejection of violence. It is, accordingly, not time limited, and will stand.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the clearest signals that the Irish Government could send the men of violence would be a statement that they intend to scrap articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, which lay claim to Northern Ireland, if the men of violence—the IRA and Sinn Fein—do not renounce violence, as foreseen in the Downing street declaration? In any event, is not such a claim an anachronism in this day and age?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The answer to the second question is, honestly, yes, it is an anachronism. I believe that to be essentially understood. One of the most interesting features of the joint declaration is a clear statement by the Taoiseach in one of its paragraphs of his understanding of the resentment that the two articles cause to Unionists. On the other hand, he says that they represent an aspiration of many nationalists. A clear steer is given by the Taoiseach in that declaration—that if an overall package is agreed, then as part of a balanced constitutional settlement, amendments to the constitution will be put to the Irish people and will be supported by the Irish Government. I do not believe that there is anything between the two Governments on this issue, and my hon. Friend is right to raise the matter in that context.

Mr. Mallon: May I also bring greetings from the Hill of St. Patrick in Armagh, where St. Patrick wisely chose to live and work? That he decided to die and be buried in Downpatrick was a matter of fine judgment on his part.

Will the Secretary of State agree with me, and remind the House and others, that the joint declaration of 15 December was signed not for Sinn Fein and the IRA, but for all the Irish people? The most recent opinion poll in Ireland shows that 92 per cent. of the Irish people overwhelmingly rejected violence and supported absolutely the principles in the joint declaration. Does the Secretary of State agree that the two Governments should now proceed to apply those principles to a set of arrangements for the whole island, which, in the words of the joint declaration, could bring agreement among all the people of the island, and do that in such a way that it is not prevented by the Unionists who have opted out or the republicans who will not opt in?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I agree very much with the first part of the hon. Gentleman's statement—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps I mean the second part, after the obeisance to St. Patrick, which was entirely appropriate.

On the remainder of the statement, the joint declaration is based on the principle of consent. That is what got up the noses of the Provisionals. They recognise that they cannot obtain consent for their version of a united Ireland by democratic means. Accordingly, they resort to violence. The declaration said that nobody who resorts to violence for political ends will join the democratic process. It is because of that stance that the Provisionals are rejected all around the world, not least in the United States of America. The two Governments stand side by side on the declaration and on their determination to advance with the main constitutional parties down the talks process with the same objective there has always been.

Mr. Hunter: As it was the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic who said that there would be a crackdown against the IRA if it rejected the terms and the spirit of the joint declaration, will my right hon. and learned Friend "seek clarification", as the expression goes, from the Prime Minister as to what he meant by that crackdown and inquire when there will be clear evidence of that response?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Those matters are always under discussion at the meetings that take place on a regular basis. It is important to recognise that no security measure has been held in abeyance. My hon. Friend would be rather critical had any practical measure been held in abeyance pending the response of the IRA to the joint declaration. The full range of security measures has been, and will continue to be, brought to bear on all terrorists. Those measures are reviewed the whole time, not least in conjunction with the Irish Government. I am glad to read what the Chief Constable of the RUC said yesterday about the high level of co-operation between his forces and the Garda.

Mr. Trimble: Does the Secretary of State agree that the declaration addressed two questions—first, the circumstances in which a united Ireland could be achieved, which is a purely hypothetical question as there is clearly no consent for such an outcome, and, secondly, how the IRA could enter democratic politics if it so wished, although it is perfectly clear that it does not so wish? Given the response to those hypothetical questions, does the right hon. and learned Gentleman further agree that the declaration is an irrelevance and cannot be used as the basis for future institutions and should not be used by him as an excuse for not implementing arrangements for stability in Northern Ireland that he knows have the most widespread acceptance?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I have never used the joint declaration as an excuse for anything. As I have said more than once this afternoon, the declaration is a declaration of fundamental principle; it does not cease to be one on 15 March, having been one on 15 December. Nor does it preclude the taking of any security or political measures that are deemed prudent and sensible for the achievement of a less antagonistic and more tranquil and prosperous way of life in Northern Ireland—the purpose which all the constitutional parties joined up to serve and to seek. The hon. Gentleman played a notable part in that process a year ago.

Mr. McNamara: The Secretary of State will be aware that he has the full support of the Labour party for his interpretation of the declaration. We regard it as a set of principles that will outlast any possible lapse in talks. That must be the way forward. Does he accept that Labour

believes that, if the parties cannot reach agreement, implicit in the declaration is a responsibility on both Governments to attempt to develop their own institutional framework for peace and to put it to the parties?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's comments in the first part of his question, but he will not entice me into a clarification of what has always been extremely clear in the text of the joint declaration. I shall not follow him into any discussion of what is implicit. I am perfectly prepared to recite what is explicit and what it does not contain. That is all that I want to say about that.

We must recognise, as both Governments did in the joint declaration, that there is no prospect of anything workable or durable being achieved in Northern Ireland, save that which is based on consent. That is the fundamental principle. We must continue, patiently and steadily, to probe what may be possible, what the areas of common agreement are and what, if possible, may require adjustment in people's positions. That is what we are doing and I should like to see a slightly more positive and slightly less carping attitude from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Brandreth: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that prospects for inward investment will be particularly enhanced by the success of the initiative launched at the time of the declaration? Does he have any progress to report on inward investment in Northern Ireland?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. One of the most hypocritical and disgusting features of the Provisional IRA is that it claims to speak for the people of Ireland, but does nothing but diminish their prospects for employment and prosperity. Fortunately, such are the attractions of Ireland—north and south, but I am talking about Northern Ireland—for inward investment from overseas that, in the past year, the Industrial Development Board has been able to secure £200 million worth of inward investment and about 2,000 jobs. Prospects for this year are no less bright.

Party Leaders (Meetings)

5. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next hopes to meet the leaders of the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Ancram): My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has recently held meetings with the leaders of the three Northern Ireland parties who have been engaged in private bilateral discussions and I have subsequently begun a series of further bilateral meetings with representatives from those parties to discuss our ideas for giving sharper focus and direction to the talks process.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister continue to do everything possible to drive forward the peace process, in spite of the antics of fanatics on both the loyalist and republican sides? Will he take this opportunity to say a little about the Secretary of State's ideas for the establishment of cross-border executive boards, with delegated powers from the Irish and British Governments? What functions does he intend such boards to cover?

Mr. Ancram: We have made it clear all along—I agree with the hon. Gentleman—that no one can be allowed to exercise a veto over the talks process by the exercise of violence. I repeat that assurance. It is for that reason that the talks process is proceeding. As to the second part of his question, the hon. Gentleman is talking about matters that are essentially part of the discussions that are required to take place over the three strands. It will be of no constructive use for us to try to define the parts of any strand in public in this House before negotiations have taken place with the participants in the talks. That is something to be considered in due course as part of the talks process.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend realise that some of us are often baffled by the language that is used when describing matters political in Northern Ireland? How can there be consensus if one is saying that there can be no veto? I do not see how the two can be bedfellows. Does it mean that we will never reach any agreements at any time?

Mr. Ancram: No. The phrase that has been used many times in relation to finding a settlement in Northern Ireland —indeed, across the three relationships within the islands of the British Isles—has been that any solution has to be broadly or widely acceptable to the peoples involved. Therefore, any settlements in relation to institutions in Northern Ireland would have to have the broad agreement of the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: Does the Minister agree that the constitutional leaders hold the key to peaceful political progress in Northern Ireland? Does he accept that the consensus of opinion is that all efforts should be directed, with those leaders, towards a devolutionary process rather than towards pursuing the three-stranded approach with the Irish Government?

Mr. Ancram: I appreciate the importance of the leaders of the three constitutional parties who are presently taking part in bilateral talks with me. I certainly intend to continue those bilaterals. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has already said, it is matter of practical reality that we cannot look at one strand within the three-stranded concept in isolation from the other strands. A solution in one strand cannot be achieved without solutions within the other strands. For that reason, we have made it clear that the talks that are taking place at the moment involve all the participants across all three strands.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my hon. Friend for the hard work that he has done already in trying to keep the political dialogue going. Does he agree—particularly on this of all days—that the remarkable phenomenon of bringing fully into account the Irish dimension is that the two Governments stand shoulder to shoulder on the declaration and that there is no movement away from that? That is the disconcerting reality for the extremists, and we expect the moderates on the Ulster Unionist side also to acknowledge that reality.

Mr. Ancram: I agree absolutely with my hon. Friend that it is immensely important that the two Governments continue to stand shoulder to shoulder on the basis of the joint declaration. At the same time, I think that it is important that the Irish Government have restated their commitment to the talks involving the constitutional parties. I believe that we are not yet ready to get around a

table. There is groundwork to be done and that groundwork will be undertaken, I hope, by the constitutional parties and the two Governments.

Peace Process

6. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further plans he has to bring about peace in the north of Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I propose to continue to enlist and engage to the full every means whereby it is appropriate for a democratic society to defend itself against those who assault its principles and its people.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Will the Secretary of State confirm that it is the Government's view that, apart from the unification of Ireland by coercion or the expulsion of Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom, no constitutional political party has any veto on political progress, including the establishment of institutions agreed by the two Governments?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Of course it is a matter of constitutional reality that no one has a veto. It is something that has passed into the current language at the instance of people who object to the fact that the numerical majority of people living in Northern Ireland do not wish to end the Union. That is what is objected to and it is then described as a veto at the suit of some political parties. It is quite untrue.

Sir James Kilfedder: I bring greetings from North Down, where St. Patrick landed 15 centuries ago. He was a distinguished Briton who returned to northern Ireland. Is not it appropriate that, on St. Patrick's day, we should remember St. Patrick's utter and unqualified condemnation of the murderers in Ireland in his day? He described those people as wishing to "gorge themselves on blood". He condemned to eternal damnation not only them but those who acquiesced in such slaughter. Does not the Secretary of State agree that St. Patrick's words are as applicable today as they were 15 centuries ago?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Of course that is right. I cannot claim to represent the place where St. Patrick landed or the various places where he is buried. I can claim only to be named after him and I am very glad about that, among the other things to which the hon. Gentleman has drawn our attention.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Secretary of State aware that this is indeed an historic occasion? It is the first time that a Secretary of State called Patrick has answered Northern Ireland questions on St. Patrick's day. Bearing in mind that St. Patrick is the patron saint of the entire island of Ireland, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman try to live up to his name by ensuring that any constitutional settlement contains a meaningful all-Ireland dimension that will help to reconcile and unite all the people of Ireland? Will he remind his good friend the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) that if Ireland were united, St. Patrick's day would almost certainly be observed as a public holiday throughout the 32 counties, instead of in just 26 of them?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: St. Patrick's day is a public holiday for the Northern Ireland civil service, and probably rather more generally. If there is to be an all-Ireland connotation in anything that is agreed, at any time, it will be only because, for a start, that is the wish of a numerical majority of the people living in Northern Ireland. That is recognised by the Irish Government in the joint declaration. Everything must be based on consent. However, anything that serves, by way of tradition or example, to concentrate upon those things that unite, rather than those that divide, people in the island of Ireland is to be welcomed. I regard as felicitous my good fortune to be answering Northern Ireland questions on St. Patrick's day. It seems to have got me along all right so far.

Mr. Spring: Will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in welcoming the remarks of Speaker Tom Foley of the United States House of Representatives? Does the Secretary of State agree that, in retrospect, Gerry Adams's visit to the United States, far from being a spectacular propaganda victory for the IRA, drew attention to the isolation that that organisation's espousal of violence is causing not only in the Republic of Ireland and in the United Kingdom but in the world at large?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I entirely agree. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I, too, express my greetings to the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on her arrival in the Chamber on this felicitous day. From the other side of the Atlantic there has come a chorus of condemnation of the Provisionals for the continuance of their wicked and inexcusable violence. That is down to the two Governments' standing side by side with the constitutional parties in rejecting violence for political ends. I very much agree with what my hon. Friend said.

European Community Funding

7. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received concerning the disbursement of European Community structural funds; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: As part of the continuing process of consultation with local organisations, Ministers and officials have received numerous representations on the use of structural funds money in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Godman: Given the immensely important role played by the voluntary sector in bringing and keeping people together, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the voluntary and community groups are brought into the deliberations concerning the European programmes and that they have adequate representation on the monitoring programmes that will determine how such funds are spent in Northern Ireland?

Sir John Wheeler: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I are grateful to the voluntary groups for their contribution to the life of Northern Ireland. When the Commission has made known its agreement to our proposals we shall consider establishing a monitoring committee. I am sure that it will be possible to bring into that committee appropriate representation from the voluntary sector to assist in the disbursement of the funds that will be available to us over the next six years.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mrs. Prentice: In the light of today's newspaper reports, does the Attorney-General still have the full confidence of the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: The Attorney-General has my full and complete confidence. He has made it perfectly clear today, in the light of the reports in this morning's newspapers, that he has no knowledge of any approach by MI6 to him or to his office asking that the Matrix Churchill prosecution should be stopped. He has received no notification from the Scott inquiry that any such evidence has been given to it, and the inquiry has made it clear that it cannot recall that any such evidence has been given.

Q2. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bellingham: Will the Prime Minister find time today to plan a visit to Birmingham and Manchester city councils, where he will find debt at the same level as the national debts of Paraguay and El Salvador? Is it not a disgrace that those Labour-controlled councils, encouraged by Opposition Members, have betrayed not only their electorates but future generations? Is not it time that they were flung out of office?

The Prime Minister: Those councils certainly have a very poor record, as my hon. Friend says, and although the people of Birmingham and Manchester have a great deal of which they can be proud, in Birmingham, certainly, the people cannot be proud of the record of their Labour council. Of every £10 that Birmingham receives in council tax it now has to spend £7 on servicing its debt, but when one considers many other Labour authorities one realises that it is by no means alone in that appalling record.

Mrs. Beckett: Does not the Prime Minister realise that he need look no further than Westminster, which has a debt higher than that of Mongolia? Will he join me in welcoming the fact that the average council tax to be charged in Labour local authority areas this year will be £40 lower than the average council tax to be charged in Tory areas?

The Prime Minister: On the right hon. Lady's first point about debt, she might bear in mind the fact that Islington owes more than Togo, Camden more than Chad, Bradford more than Botswana and Leeds more than Lesotho. As for council tax, the right hon. Lady knows very well that she is not comparing band for band or like with like. When she compares band for band she will see that Conservative councils are many tens of pounds—in some cases more than £100—cheaper.

Mrs. Beckett: Does not the Prime Minister realise that the measure that we have consistently used not only gives the best overall picture but is the measure with which the Government started out? It is the measure that was used by both the Department of the Environment and Conservative central office in their documents. Is not the truth that the Government changed the measure only when they realised that it showed that people pay less in Labour local council areas? Is not that the reason why?

The Prime Minister: I must say that the right hon. Lady is being extremely silly and is talking rubbish. What the figures show across the country is that Conservative-controlled local authorities set far lower council taxes than do Labour. So far this year the figures—

Mrs. Beckett *indicated dissent.*

The Prime Minister: It is no good the right hon. Lady shaking her head: it is quite true. The figures show that where Labour controls both tiers of English local government the average council tax is £560 for a band C property, over £130 more than the Conservative average of £429. However the right hon. Lady wriggles, she will find that pattern across the country.

Mrs. Beckett: It is the Prime Minister who is wriggling. He started off with average measures of council tax, he went on to quote band D and now he is quoting band C. Is not this just further evidence that we are fast reaching the stage where the Government are incapable of telling the truth about taxation? In local government or national government, with the Conservatives one pays more and one gets less.

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Lady wants to see some high taxes in local government she should look in the mirror, for it is her party which is providing them. Of the 10 highest council taxes announced, seven are from Labour local authorities and none has been set by a Conservative authority. Of the 10 lowest council taxes announced, none comes from a Labour authority. Five of the 10 districts announcing the lowest bills are under Conservative control. Whatever the hon. Lady has to say, she cannot hide the fact that one gets a better deal under Conservative councils, that the services are better and that the council tax is lower. Though she wriggles from here to next Tuesday, she cannot hide that fact.

Mr. Knapman: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his robust stance to date on qualified majority voting. Does he agree that it will be in the best interests of both the country and the party if that robust stance is maintained?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is in the middle of negotiations that are important for the future of the European Community and for us, and I have no intention of being moved by synthetic efforts at pressure from any source. We shall defend the country's best interests in those negotiations and I am entirely confident that that can be done in an acceptable way without any question of delaying enlargement.

Mr. Ashdown: Why does the Prime Minister not realise that investing the £900 million necessary to provide fully funded, high-quality nursery education, available to every three and four-year-old in the country, is the best

investment that the country can make? Instead of raising taxes to prepare for tax bribes at the next election, why will he not invest to prepare our children for the next century?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has said that he would raise taxes and he has made that clear. I hope that everyone understands that. We have made it perfectly clear that, as and when resources are available, we shall move towards further nursery education, towards universal nursery education. The reports that may have excited the right hon. Gentleman's interest earlier this week in one national newspaper were wrong.

Mr. Marland: As my right hon. Friend is aware, the report of the forestry review group is now in the hands of Ministers. As my right hon. Friend recognises, the Forestry Commission is included in the review. Not only by my constituents in the forest of Dean but throughout the nation, the Forestry Commission is held in high esteem. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, before any decisions are made in the light of the report, interested parties will have the opportunity to comment?

The Prime Minister: Of course we are examining the report carefully and will seek a good deal of consultation. We have the report, we are examining it and it will be some while before we reach a decision.

Q3. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Has the Prime Minister seen the report today which shows that the response times of the London ambulance service have worsened since the Secretary of State intervened to sort out the chaos? In view of the inability of the London ambulance service to come anywhere near patients charter standards, does it make sense to close up to 10 of London's accident and emergency units—or is it nothing to do with him?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that, in terms of London health, we are seeking first to make sure that we have the resources for the improvement of primary health care, which needs substantial improvement in London. In order to do that, it is necessary to rationalise a proper hospital system. We have taken action—

Mr. Foulkes: Answer.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will stop shouting and wait for the answer, I shall give it to him. As for the ambulance service, the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) will know of the measures that have been taken to ensure that a proper service is readily available.

Mr. Thomason: Has my right hon. Friend seen today's car production figures? Will he join in welcoming them? Does he agree that the Labour party, many of the members of which have car plants in their constituencies, has consistently talked down our motor industry, and Britain generally?

The Prime Minister: It is certainly the case that the motor car industry was in a very desperate state a few years ago. That has changed dramatically. The production figures this morning show that car production is up 6 per cent. on a year ago. The British car industry is now a success story to an extent that was inconceivable in the strike-ridden days so beloved in the memory of Opposition Members.

Q4. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Darling: Is the Prime Minister concerned about the sale by Scottish Homes—a Government quango—of 1,200 houses, some for as little as £1 each, to a housing association chaired by a former Scottish Office Minister, an hon. Member who is now a Northern Ireland Minister? Does he agree that it is no surprise that many people believe that the Government are drowning in a sea of sleaze and secrecy entirely of their own making?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman has any firm charges to make, perhaps he should make them other than by innuendo and under privilege of the House. The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) was an unpaid, voluntary, non-executive chairman of the Waverley housing trust. He had no financial interest whatever in the trust. His involvement was solely to pursue an interest in providing new forms of social housing management involving participation by tenant representatives. The hon. Gentleman should reflect on his question and he should then offer a public apology to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Coe: In the wake of the recent tragic murder investigations in Gloucester, is my right hon. Friend aware of the welcome news this week that four missing people have been reunited with their families? Will he welcome with me and salute the superb work of the Missing Persons Bureau and the national helpline?

The Prime Minister: I had heard that welcome news. Out of the dreadful saga of recent weeks, it is at least one positive outcome that everyone can welcome. I certainly think that it shows how important is the work of organisations such as the Missing Persons Bureau. I willingly pay tribute to it and to the National Missing Persons Helpline, as requested by my hon. Friend.

Q5. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Livingstone: As a Home Office Minister said on Friday that the Government would not support the Racial Hatred and Violence Bill that has been prepared by the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth), and setting that against the background of the eight racial murders that have been committed in the past few years, how can the Prime Minister justify to the relatives of those who have been murdered in that way the fact that the Government can find time in their legislative programme to outlaw hunt saboteurs, but cannot find the time to tackle the escalating tide of racial violence to which my party drew attention this morning?

The Prime Minister: Every sensible person will share a concern about crimes motivated by racial hatred. That is certainly the position of the Government. As for the Bill,

we believe that the scope of the existing law is adequate, although we shall continue to consider how that law is working in practice. As the hon. Gentleman will know, it is already a specific offence punishable by imprisonment for up to two years to stir up racial hatred. In addition, the full range of criminal law is available to deal with other crimes motivated by racial hatred. Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986, for example, deals with low-level harassment. A range of measures is available. Of course we will keep them under review because there should be no place in this country for racial hatred of any sort from any group directed at any other group.

Mr. Duncan Smith: I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on standing firm in his negotiations on the blocking minority. Does not my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agree that if the Foreign Secretary chooses to stand firm next week, he will have the wholesale support of Conservative Members and of the country?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend will certainly take the position in the negotiations next week —at the moment, those negotiations are at an extremely serious stage—that he believes to be in the interests of this country, both in the short and in the long term. There are important interests, both short term and long term, to be safeguarded, and it is on that basis that my right hon. Friend will negotiate.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the Leader of the House state the forthcoming business of the House?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam Speaker. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 21 MARCH—Proceedings on the Insolvency (No. 2) Bill and the Transport Police (Jurisdiction) Bill.

TUESDAY 22 MARCH—Progress on remaining stages of the Coal Industry Bill.

WEDNESDAY 23 MARCH—Conclusion of remaining stages of the Coal Industry Bill.

THURSDAY 24 MARCH—Debate on a motion to take note of European Community document No. 4616/94 relating to the common agricultural policy prices for 1994/95 and related matters.

FRIDAY 25 MARCH—Debate on "inner cities" on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 28 MARCH—Progress on remaining stages of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet at 10.30 am on Wednesday 23 March to consider European Community documents No. 10401/93 relating to the Green Paper on European social policy—options for the Union.

[Wednesday 23 March:

European Standing Committee B—European Community Document 10401/93 European Social Policy. Relevant European Legislation Committee Report: HC48-iii (1993-94).

Floor of the House—European Community Documents 4616/94, Agricultural Price Proposals 1994-95. Relevant European Legislation Committee Report—HC48-xii (1993-94).]

Mr. Brown: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement and the Government for agreeing to the requests from my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) for emergency legislation to enable the British Transport police to continue their essential work—something the Government forgot about when they first decided to introduce rail privatisation.

Will the Leader of the House find time next week, or at least in the very near future, to discuss the Government's spending plans, by Department? Each Department has now produced a statement of its spending plans. The total cost of the departmental reports is £267.75, and it would be a shame if we did not debate them. We have not had a debate on those matters since 15 May 1991. I hope, therefore, that even the Leader of the House will accept that such a debate is overdue.

May we have a debate before we rise for the recess on the imposition of value added tax on domestic fuel? As well as a desire for the debate, there is an important constitutional point involved. It is right that we should scrutinise supply for the Executive annually and not set rates of supply well in advance.

Will the Leader of the House arrange for debates on two other pressing matters: the regulation of privatised public utilities and the abuse of directors' share option schemes? May we also have a Government statement on investment in London Underground's Northern line?

Mr. Newton: On the last point, the hon. Gentleman will no doubt have noted that one of my hon. Friends has a debate relevant to that matter in the Consolidated Fund debates tonight.

I cannot respond immediately to any of the hon. Gentleman's requests for additional debates at the moment, although I make the point that the Budget debate was extended to provide for debate on public expenditure. I know that that does not answer exactly the hon. Gentleman's argument, but it is relevant to his use of 1991 as the last date that such a debate has occurred. I am tempted to observe that there would have been more debates on VAT on fuel had the Opposition got their act together at various times. There will be further opportunities to do so when the remaining stages of the Finance Bill are taken.

Finally, although there was an ungenerous barb in the hon. Gentleman's otherwise kind words, I am grateful for his comments on the Transport Police (Jurisdiction) Bill. I am also grateful for what I hope is an implied undertaking that the Opposition will be co-operative in allowing it to pass quickly through the House.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the business for next Thursday—as currently scheduled, it does not seem to be all that important? Instead, could we have a debate on Bosnia and the progress towards peace there?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that those involved in the affairs of the British coal industry would take the point that my hon. Friend made. I certainly acknowledge the importance that everyone attaches to Bosnia and the pleasure that everyone has taken in the progress that seems to have been made there in recent weeks. As always, I shall bear my hon. Friend's request in mind, but I cannot undertake to provide time next week.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The eighth round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade is due to be signed formally in Marrakesh next month, so will the Leader of the House make Government time available soon for a debate on the importance of the agreement to British industry? The agreement is important, not least because the complex bilateral agreements need to be fully understood and a free trade agreement represents great opportunities for Britain; there is a great deal to be fought for in a competitive environment.

When will the Insolvency (No. 2) Bill, which is to be debated on Monday, be published and available to hon. Members?

Mr. Newton: I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) as I understand that I misheard him, and he said "Thursday". I think, however, that what I said about the coal industry might apply to those who are interested in agriculture, who will regard it as having some importance. That view was implicit in the question of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), to whom I can answer that I shall bear in mind the need for a debate on GATT at an appropriate moment as matters develop.

I hope and expect that the Insolvency (No. 2) Bill and the Transport Police (Jurisdiction) Bill will be published tomorrow.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): In view of the clearly expressed wishes of hon. Members on

both sides of the House, has my right hon. Friend had the slightest sign from the Opposition Front-Bench team that they will co-operate in the implementation of the Jopling report?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will know of the difficulties that have existed for some months in carrying forward discussions. There were debates on the matter at an earlier stage and I hope that it will not be too long before we can resume them.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is the Leader of the House aware that, because of changes in the criminal injuries compensation scheme, if the acts of attempted terrorism at Heathrow airport had succeeded, and people had been killed and injured, their compensation and that of their relatives would have been less than that for similar acts of violence and terrorism conducted in Northern Ireland? Should not we have a full discussion about the scheme, and the injustice that exists between different parts of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Newton: Without accepting the implications of the hon. Gentleman's question, may I say that I announced today our intention to make progress on the remaining stages of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. I have heard on the grapevine that there may be some on the Opposition Benches with ambitions to raise such subjects then.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will the Leader of the House try to rearrange business for next week so that we can have a debate on the position in Albania, which, after 40 years of communism, has managed to achieve a level of debt equal to about one third of that achieved in the city of Birmingham after 10 years of socialism?

Mr. Newton: I may be able to do even better than that and, by turning the question round, say that those issues might be relevant to the debate on local government scheduled for later tonight.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we please have an early debate on the decision just announced by British Gas to close its headquarters in the city of Leicester, with a likely loss of up to 2,000 jobs? Should not the House consider how disgraceful it is that a once great public industry is no longer concerned with public service or its employees' jobs, but only with profits for its shareholders?

Mr. Newton: I clearly cannot promise an immediate debate on the matter. It is clear that British Gas has been performing a good job on behalf of the customer, which is ultimately what it is all about. There could perhaps be an opportunity to refer to such issues if the Opposition resumed using their Supply days to debate unemployment, which they have not done since unemployment started to fall.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): Will the Leader of the House urgently review the business for Monday to enable the House to debate the blocking minority and all the matters that will be negotiated in Brussels on Tuesday, to enable hon. Members to ascertain how that will affect not only this country but the future of Europe?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can sweep away the two very urgent Bills that are scheduled for Monday, but I can make the point that you, Madam Speaker, have scheduled an extensive debate touching on various European matters for this evening.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Leader of the House will be aware that his office fixes the agenda for the EC Scrutiny Committee of the House, and he will also know that it was one of his predecessors who gave us the job of scrutinising directives and regulations. Will he therefore tell the House why it was 16 months before an auditor's report that contained very important information about fraud in the Community, in relation to the environment, came before the Committee? It was debated on Wednesday morning. Will he also tell us what he will do about the fact that the members of that Committee were united in their objection to what happened?

Mr. Newton: I am aware, and have been almost since that happened, of the concern that is expressed. I do not in any way dismiss it. I am still inquiring into what happened. Part of the problem was that it was originally proposed that the report be debated on the Floor of the House and it was later decided that it would be more appropriate and efficient to debate it in the Committee.

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week to have a debate on terrorism, bearing in mind the fact that today is St. Patrick's day and that the Labour party voted against the prevention of terrorism Act on the very day that mortars fell at Heathrow?

Mr. Newton: I think that the decision to vote in that way at that time was inexplicable and I still have not heard any satisfactory explanation. I cannot promise a specific debate, but such matters may well come up during the debates on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Following the response of the Prime Minister to a question about nursery education, is the Leader of the House aware that the Secretary of State for Education took time out this morning at 8.15 to rubbish, in most uncomplimentary terms, a constructive report that was published today? Is not it about time that the Leader of the House provided Government time for the Secretary of State to come here and tell us about those matters? If he cannot find Government time on the Floor of the House, would it not be good to have a debate on the Government's objectives elsewhere, at any time?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has not made it entirely clear to what report he is referring, but it might be the one that was published today of an inquiry led by Sir Christopher Ball. I understand that, among other things, that report appears to have suggested a delayed start to primary education alongside an expansion in nursery education—not, I should have thought, an idea which would immediately appeal to everyone.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): My right hon. Friend will have heard the questions to the Prime Minister from my hon. Friends the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) and for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) and the question to himself just now from my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton). Does he not accept that the ability of this country to stand up for its own interests in the European Community is more important

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

than some of the petty legislation that is currently being introduced by the Government? Will he therefore adjust the business for next week to allow the House to have a debate on the minority blocking mechanism, which, when all is said and done, is about the ability of this country to stand up for its own interests? If "back to basics" is to mean anything, it is back to backing Britain. When will we have that opportunity?

Mr. Newton: I did indeed hear the earlier questions, and I have just heard my hon. Friend's question, which he delivered with great clarity and vigour. I also heard my right hon. Friend's answers and I recall that I made it clear to my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) last week that our negotiating objectives would be pursued with vigour. I think that that has been clearly demonstrated by what has happened since then.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May we have a debate next week on the enterprise culture, so that we can discuss a distinguished and rather enterprising old-age pensioner who had a very nice little earner going until it was spoilt by the carping behaviour of the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), because of the absurd notion that the advertising campaign was based on a pack of lies? When did Ministers suddenly get sensitive about telling lies?

Mr. Newton: With his characteristic ingenuity, the hon. Gentleman turned a question about one thing into an entirely different point. The advertisement was obviously a matter for my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Can my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on education to allow the Liberal Democrats to explain to the House how they will pay for their extra education spending pledges, which amount to £4.4 billion, by putting 1p on income tax, which would raise £1.6 billion? Is there an inconsistency here that I am not getting? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Newton: I have much sympathy with my hon. Friend's request. I think that the Liberal Democrats said that they had explained all that last week. The fact is that they still have not made their sums add up, so perhaps I had better look for another opportunity.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Leader of the House recollect that, on 17 February, he wrote a very civilised letter to me about bringing to the attention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer my business questions on the costs of local government? Ought there not to be a statement next week from the Treasury about the costs that we are discovering in the Standing Committee considering the Scottish local government reform Bill, about the unanswered questions about Welsh local government reform and, I suspect, about the costs of Somerset and, indeed, Norfolk local government reform?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the terms in which he referred to my letter. However, he seems to me to be pursuing matters that he is well able to pursue in the Scottish Standing Committee of which he is a member. I am sure that that is what he will continue to do.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will my right hon. Friend arrange time next week for us to discuss the number of properties in council ownership that are empty, and particularly the close correlation between the number empty, socialist-controlled councils, the amount of debt that those councils have and the amount of homelessness that they have?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend makes some very good points. He, too, may wish to have his attention drawn to the debate on local government that is scheduled for later tonight.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement next week about the agreement reached on Norway's proposed accession to the European Union and its implications for the common fisheries policy? Does he realise that there appear to be about 15 different interpretations of what was agreed on the fisheries policy with Norway, not least of which seems to involve strange species called the accelerated cohesion cod and the paper haddock? Does he not understand that, in fishing communities such as mine, people have a right to know exactly what has been agreed on accession to the North sea?

Mr. Newton: I, too, had some difficulty with the concept of cohesion cod when it first crossed my path. I am sure that, at the appropriate time, everything will be made clear. I cannot promise a specific statement next week.

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on an urgent matter raised with me by Chesham chamber of trade—the erosion by out-of-town retailers of the businesses of our small shopkeepers in our town high streets? In the light of planning policy guidance note 13, issued on 15 March by the Secretary of State for the Environment, which seemed to recognise some of the difficulties and problems, I should be most grateful if time could be put aside for such a debate before my small shopkeepers in Chesham suffer further.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend keeps me closely in touch with the concerns of the shopkeepers in Chesham town centre and their chamber of commerce. I note carefully what she says about PPG 13. Although I cannot undertake to provide time for a debate, I will ensure that the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is drawn to her remarks.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Has the Leader of the House had time to read early-day motion 852?

[That this House is deeply concerned at the parliamentary answer given to the honourable Member for Islington North on 14th March that 61 detainees at detention centres have refused food for at least three days in the past year; is alarmed at reports of hunger strikes amongst detainees at Campsfield Detention Centre; and calls for an urgent statement on this by Home Secretary and an understanding that the grievances of hunger striking asylum seekers will be examined and that there will be no force-feeding.]

It concerns the hunger strikes among asylum seekers at the Campsfield detention centre and the reports that have been received that a number of those who took hunger strike action to draw attention to their plight have since been moved to prisons. Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Home Secretary to make a detailed statement in the House about the number of people seeking

asylum in this country who are held in custody, why they are held in custody and what desperation they have been driven to, causing them to go on hunger strike to try to get their cases resolved? Those people fled from oppression in the first place and sought freedom and liberty in this country.

Mr. Newton: I will, of course, bring that request to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that only a tiny minority of asylum seekers are detained, on the basis of there being good grounds for thinking that they might abscond if they were released while their immigration position was being resolved.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate next week so that the plight of water charge payers in the south-west can be brought to the House and so that my constituents can hear at first hand of the excellent steps that the Government have taken to bring them relief? Would not such a debate also have the advantage of explaining to people that those charges were imposed by European directive, that the further we go into Europe the more those things are likely to happen, and that the two Opposition parties want to take this country further into Europe?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend makes some important points on behalf of his constituents. I am grateful for his recognition of the Government's strenuous efforts in that matter.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have some time allocated next week to a debate on the English regions? I have no objection to the significant amount of time allocated to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but time is not allocated to the English regions. We could then incorporate local problems, such as that indicated in early-day-motion 887.

[That this House recognises that with the electrification of the Leeds-Bradford, Forster Square, services, and adjacent lines, that new electrical multiple units should be provided; regards provision of refurbished third-hand stock as a kick in the teeth for frequently overcrowded commuters; recalls that the Government can allocate as much as £7 billion for new war-planes but puts the comfort and convenience of travelling taxpayers in West Yorkshire in an inferior category; and calls on the Government to ensure that new rolling stock is provided, built in Yorkshire, as a matter or urgency and at a tiny fraction of the cost of one European fighter aircraft.]

New rolling stock is urgently needed for the electrified Leeds-Bradford railway and associated lines. The Government can spend £7 billion on new war planes, but cannot find the money for new rolling stock for the sorely tried and tested commuters in West Yorkshire.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will have noted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will answer questions here on Monday. He might like to try to get that one in then.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Will the Leader of the House consider finding time for a debate to discuss Leicester city council's decision to take one of my constituents to the High Court to enforce a market franchise right which it owns but which extends beyond its electoral boundaries into another borough council? Given that that will be abolished by the enactment of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, will my right hon. Friend consider investigating whether that is a great breach of Leicester city council's responsibility and ultra vires in the sense of the Government's responsibilities?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will appreciate that I am not familiar with the details of that action and therefore cannot sensibly comment on it off the cuff. I will ensure that his question is brought to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House find Government time to discuss the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, which was carried by more than 200 votes to nil on Friday? It has gone into Committee, but is behind another Bill, which went through unopposed, but is now subject to scores of amendments tabled by Tory Members with a view to blocking this very important Bill for disabled people. If the Bill is to achieve its passage through Parliament, the Government must provide additional time. If the Leader of the House says that he cannot provide time, let us return one day early after Easter to get this important Bill through.

Mr. Newton: The Bill has gone into Committee. My right hon. Friend said that the Government wished it to go into Committee and to have it carefully examined there. That now seems to be the sensible course to undertake.

Mr. Matthew Banks (Southport): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate to discuss Opposition Members' decision to vote against the recent uprating of income support and other social security benefits?

Mr. Newton: It was astonishing, and I hope that my hon. Friend will play his part in ensuring that all pensioners are made aware of it.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Will the Lord President refer to the Secretary of State for Education the crazy position whereby a child minder can smack a child, whereas a school teacher in, for example, County Durham, would be dismissed for doing so? The latter case is totally right and the other is absolutely wrong.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education, like everyone else, will have noted the judgment yesterday. I cannot say what conclusions he will draw from it, but I will certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's conclusions to his attention.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week for a debate on youth unemployment? The European Community is considering ways of tackling the problem, so we should have an opportunity to cite the fact that labour market flexibility and deregulation are the ways to lower youth unemployment. We should also be able to cite the example of Spain, which has 33 per cent. youth unemployment with the social chapter, whereas our youth unemployment is below the EC average and less than half Spain's without it.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is right to think that the comparison between Spain and the United Kingdom in that respect is striking. It is further evidence of the effectiveness of this Government's flexible labour market policies.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): May we have a debate soon on Government standards? A poll in *The*

[Mr. Dennis Canavan]

Guardian today shows that only 3 per cent. of the people believe the Prime Minister's claim that the Government operate under high standards, and nearly 30 per cent. believe that the Government are corrupt or are abusing their power. Is the right hon. Gentleman proud to be a member of a Government whom so many people consider corrupt?

Mr. Newton: I am indeed proud to be a member of the Government, because they are in no way corrupt. I am a good deal prouder to be a member of it than I would be to be a member of one of the Labour local authorities about whose exploits we have recently heard.

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): Will my right hon. Friend consider an early debate on the role of the district auditor? A report published last week by the district auditor on the connection between a company that supplied goods to Derbyshire county council and a Labour councillor who was a committee chairman clearly stated that two files had gone missing since the investigation started. Further evidence published yesterday in the local newspaper showed that the connection between the councillor and the company was much closer than he had previously admitted. In such circumstances, should not the district auditor reopen his inquiries?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that, if additional and important evidence has come to light, the district auditor will consider what further action he should take.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I appeal to the Leader of the House not to be so dismissive of the concerns raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) about the United Kingdom's treatment of those seeking asylum here. Will he urge the Home Secretary to come to the House to explain why so many of them are routinely placed in detention or prison without any effective means of appeal?

Mr. Newton: I have already commented on that. I certainly did not intend to be dismissive of the hon. Member for Islington, North—although he does tend to phrase his questions in a way that invites dismissive replies.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): May I draw to my right hon. Friend's attention the fact that there were six or seven questions in Prime Minister's Question Time today and in business questions relating to European matters that require debate? I urge him to have a debate on how the House and its Committees scrutinise the legislation and activities of the European Community. For instance, had we had a debate on the presidency conclusions after the Belgian summit in December, we might have noticed that a declaration in the original proposals tabled for enlargement of the Community stated that qualified majority voting was an issue which should be left to the intergovernmental conference in 1996.

Mr. Newton: I have indeed heard a number of questions on that and related matters, both today and last week, and I have replied to them all as best I can. At this moment, I cannot add to my previous answers.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): When may we have a debate devoted to the steel industry? May I draw to the right hon. Gentleman's attention the predicament of British Steel plc? Does he know that its difficulties are created not by British Steel itself, but by the activities of our colleagues in Europe who are not playing fair? Steel workers at Shotton and throughout Wales are apprehensive about the possibility of redundancies. We should like a debate to learn what the Government intend to do to help the British steel industry.

Mr. Newton: Bearing in mind the fact that ours is one of the most successful steel industries—perhaps the most successful—in Europe, compared with 15 years ago, when it was one of the least successful, I think that the Government have already done a good deal for it. I cannot promise a debate, but I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's requests to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): May I back the call from the Opposition for a debate on corruption in local government? In particular, we would have the opportunity to raise the case of the quango contracted by the Labour-controlled Tameside metropolitan borough council, which has lost millions of pounds to the taxpayer and has employed many relations of Labour councillors and the like in Tameside on a scale that makes Monklands look normal.

Mr. Newton: As I have now said several times, there is a debate on local government late tonight—possibly very late tonight—and my hon. Friend may care to take part in it. It had occurred to me that my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), whose debate it is, may have some somewhat similar points in mind.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): May we have a statement next week by the Attorney-General, in view of the astonishing situation where it now appears that both a Cabinet Minister—the President of the Board of Trade—and the intelligence services advised him against continuing the prosecution of three innocent men? As the Attorney-General has given strange advice on previous occasions, is it not time he gave a statement in the House so that hon. Members can ask questions directly?

Mr. Newton: I did not specifically notice whether the hon. Gentleman was here at Prime Minister's Question Time.

Mr. Foulkes: I was.

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Gentleman heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in respect of a large part of the what he has just said, in my view, he should not have repeated it.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Has my hon. Friend received any requests from the leaders of the Labour or Liberal Democratic parties to use an Opposition Supply day to explain their policies on Europe, which involve surrendering the national veto altogether, with the consequence that we would be forced to abandon zero-rating of VAT on children's clothes and food?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I should have observed to my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) that one thing at least is absolutely clear: there will be only one party—the Conservative party—fighting the European elections on the basis of a British interest manifesto.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): May I thank the Leader of the House for his prompt action in answer to my business question last week? May I say how pleased I am that it is being turned into legislation next Monday, and how surprised I am that the hon. Members for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) do not consider it important to have constructive receivership?

Will the Leader of the House also turn his attention to the shortage of donated organs? Many people are waiting an incredibly long time for kidney and other transplants. Will he speak to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health to see whether legislation can be introduced —I am confident that it would have a good measure of support across the House—for changing the system to an opt-out system instead of an opt-in system? There would be far more organs available for transplant and that would bring great savings to the health service and would considerably ease the lot of many sufferers throughout the country.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows that his second and main point has been a matter of long-running debate against a background of strenuous efforts to increase the amount of organ donation. I am not sure whether I shall need to communicate with my right hon. Friend; with a bit of luck the hon. Gentleman may be able to do it himself when she is here to answer questions next Tuesday.

The first part of the hon. Member's question was characteristically generous and I am glad that we have been able to move fast. I hope that his further remarks this afternoon, alongside those of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), mean we shall get universal speedy co-operation on Monday.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Will the Leader of the House ask his hon. Friends at the Department of Health to make a statement next week on the failure of the regional health authorities to provide basic information in response to questions from right hon. and hon. Members? The Mersey regional health authority pumps out dozens of press releases each week, but I cannot get a response to basic letter inquiring about cuts in physiotherapy in the Countess of Chester hospital which serves my constituency.

Mr. Newton: As I have already said, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will be here on Tuesday and I shall give her warning of the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I acknowledge the urgent need for the British Transport police legislation, but does the Leader of the House agree that the fact that we have to have it is indicative of the fact that proper scrutiny is not given to Bills that pass through the House?

Secondly and most urgently, will the right hon. Gentleman make available today the contents of the Bill, or at least the long title, so that those of us who take an interest in the matter and would like to ensure that the Bill is improved and watertight this time will have an opportunity to study its contents and, if need be, table amendments? I see a problem here. If it is available before tomorrow, hon. Members will not have an opportunity to read it, understand it, take advice from people such as the Police Federation and table amendments in time. Can it be made available today?

Mr. Newton: I will do anything that I can to help the hon. Gentleman, but I cannot make the Bill available today, not least because notice of it was not given. Although I understand the hon. Gentleman's points, he is among many to have pressed for urgent action to deal with a problem that needs to be dealt with by 1 April. That involves my moving speedily; that can cause difficulties. We will do everything to overcome them, and I hope that he will co-operate in helping us to do so.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): The Leader of the House will have heard the response of the Prime Minister in answer to my question on the failings of the London ambulance service. In that response, the Prime Minister alluded to actions that are being taken to remedy the situation. As the situation has worsened since the Secretary of State took some action, will the Leader of the House find time next week for the Secretary of State to come to the House to explain why her measures have failed, and what further action she will take to ensure that the London ambulance service meets the patients charter standards?

Mr. Newton: My understanding of the current performance is that an ambulance responds within 14 minutes 65 per cent. of the time, which compares with only 48 per cent. in September 1992. We have every intention of making further progress towards the patients charter standard of 95 per cent.

Points of Order

4.6 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your help and protection. Earlier we had questions about the British Transport police Bill. There is no guarantee that the Bill will be available in time for hon. Members to table written amendments. Can you give us some help, and assure us that it will be possible for manuscript amendments to be dealt with on Monday so that the Bill can be made watertight and improved if necessary?

Madam Speaker: The Chair takes appropriate action and is often sympathetic on these occasions. I will consider seriously the hon. Gentleman's request.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I want to put the record straight following something that I said yesterday, when I accused the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) of never having served on Standing Committees. He shouted across to me that I was a liar. I did not bring that to your attention at the time, because he is feeling rather sensitive about things at the moment and I did not want to cause him problems.

As a result of the hon. Member's comment, I went to the Library and made one or two inquiries. I understand that, last year, the hon. Gentleman did serve on a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments which had one sitting, which he attended. Therefore, I should like to withdraw what I said yesterday. What I should have said was that he practically never attends Standing Committees.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It is true that I do not serve on Select Committees, because I believe that they are all part of the sloppy consensus in this palace of varieties. As for Standing Committees, you, Madam Speaker, and others, will know that I served on the Committee of a housing finance Bill, which lasted the longest number of hours in Parliament, and on many other Committees. The hon. Gentleman's research is still wrong, because just before the election in 1992, I sat on the Committee considering the coal Bill as well.

Madam Speaker: After those totally bogus points of order, we can move on to the Easter Adjournment debate.

Adjournment (Easter and Monday 2 May)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising on Thursday 31st March, do adjourn until Tuesday 12th April and, at its rising on Friday 29th April, do adjourn until Tuesday 3rd May.—*[*Mr. Patnick.*]

4.8 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): The exchanges earlier this afternoon emphasised the interest of the House in Community affairs, and doubtless that interest is shown particularly in the context of the negotiations in Brussels involving my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary concerning voting within the enlarged Community. My right hon. Friend has my warmest and most full-hearted support for his stand and for the objectives that he seeks to secure. I believe that he takes the support and aspirations of all Conservative Members, not least because his successful vindication of his negotiation tactics has a real impact on our electoral fortunes in the European elections.

I wish to use this occasion to reinforce my support for my right hon. Friend, and to consider the form that that support should take. I believe that the case has not been argued in this country, partly because the Opposition have opted out of this debate.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): That is not true.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend—if I may use that fraternal term in these narrow circumstances—is quite right: he and our friend the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) show a continuing and spirited interest in the subject. Nevertheless, in a party that purports to provide the next Government, we have seen total abdication in regard to this issue.

That is extraordinary. We know that the House's relationship with the European Community derives through the Council of Ministers: all the structures are related in that fashion. Indeed, the terms of the treaty could not make any other arrangement possible. We as parliamentarians therefore have a real interest in the future pattern, size and voting conventions of the Council of Ministers.

Some—my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) is a good, robust example—have seen the issue in terms of national interest: they feel that possessing and exercising that vote in certain restrained circumstances enabled us to pursue a national interest that would not otherwise have been available. I accept that that is a fact. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield regards me as being decidedly at the "wimp" end of the Tory party; let me, however, suggest another reason why we should be so wholehearted in our support for the Foreign Secretary, and so anxious that he should maintain the position that he has adopted hitherto.

Our experience of the Community shows us that it is now generating an enormous amount of legislation. I cannot believe that that serves the purpose of the Community's supporters; all too often, it resembles a parody, generating endless aspirations to bring about uniformity across Europe, when it should be content with partnership. Within that structure there is a possibility of check and balance, in the sense that qualified voting of a certain character provides at least some check on the volume of legislation.

I very much agree with the Prime Minister that the issues now at stake are long-term issues. If enlargement is confirmed, I believe that it will generate more legislation rather than less; the check on the legislative cascade must therefore be kept as tight as possible. That is what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary seeks by means of the voting formula for which he has asked.

I consider this a matter of the utmost seriousness, which should engage the measured judgment of the Labour party no less than ours. I do not believe that the quality of the Community is improved by its becoming a bureaucrats' paradise, with the conversion of the powerful initiatives in the Commission's hands into an application of Community law on an unbelievably detailed scale, and an attempt to pursue uniformity to a degree that is wholly unnecessary for the ambitions of a wider Europe—the wider Europe represented by the current negotiations, which will be further fulfilled with the membership of Poland, the Czech and Slovak republics and Hungary.

I suspect that, as we move towards that position and have to reconsider the institutions of the Community, we shall begin to wonder whether it would not be much better in the long run to move items from the present Community structure to that of the intergovernmental conference. That is the structure that will enable a sensible repossession of national law-making and national sensitivities, and that is the true devolution that is inherent and, I believe, will eventually become inevitable if the Community can adjust to its wider membership ambitions.

I am delighted to see the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) in his place. He has been a welcome and innovative advocate of seeking to what extent we can repatriate the common agricultural policy. The hon. Gentleman is setting out on a long pilgrim's path, on which I will happily join him, so long as that is not too embarrassing for him in his constituency. We have been trying to reform the common agricultural policy from day one. It is only within the context of moving towards a more radical proposition that we begin to see at once why my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is trying to hold a line—a line which has great potential for the future beneficial development of the Community.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I am comforted by the right hon. Gentleman's encouragement, as I have great respect for his views. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the repatriation of the CAP—subsidiarity—could be extremely dangerous for this country in some areas? For example, if subsidiarity meant a raising of standards and the equivalent raising of costs in areas such as animal welfare, Britain and its farmers would be penalised, while subsidiarity would reduce standards in other member states.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman is already showing welcome recognition of the stony path that he is treading. He will face precisely that sort of difficulty. Any aspect of the European Community which has been conducted on the basis of idealism will also have been conducted on the basis of hard bargaining, often in powerfully contested situations. The hon. Gentleman is therefore right to say that we shall not achieve repatriation on the cheap. That is why it is far better for my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to hold the line now, rather than thinking that we can haul it back during renegotiations in 1996 or thereafter.

We send our good wishes to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary in his effort to hold the line, as he has been doing nobly and valiantly during the past week. However, let us be under no misapprehension about the dangers of a bureaucratic Europe. Why do some countries fear a bureaucratic Europe more than others? The answer is in the issue of law enforcement.

Law enforcement reflects the traditions and character of individual countries. There is a different standard of law enforcement in Nordic countries and in Mediterranean countries. It is not just a battle for narrow British interests that is at stake, although, in deference to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), I accept that British interests are never narrow. What is at stake is not just a purely national argument.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is arguing on a European plane, not merely for a British position within a European dimension, and I hope that he will be encouraged by remarks such as mine because he is fighting a battle which is worth—

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): He is selling out.

Mr. Biffen: It is worth having a battle if we can debate with the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). We could detach him for the purpose of the European elections and take him around as an example of the ghost of Labour yesterday. He is now the sole relic within the Labour party prepared to question any Community institution, and he is found sitting with his hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Biffen: No, thank you—I have paid all my compliments to my hon. Friend.

We are appealing to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to speak for Europe.

4.18 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I have an interest to declare, but not a financial one, in the two issues that I want to raise in this debate. Together with the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox), I am joint honorary parliamentary adviser to the Royal British Legion. Both issues are of deep concern to the Legion and should be debated in the House before the Easter recess. At the very least, there should be an oral ministerial statement about each of them before 31 March.

The first issue affects war pensions and war widows' pensions and is thus a highly sensitive one for the ex-service community. I refer to the Government's proposals to legislate to amend the Service Pensions Order to exclude from entitlement many people now qualified for war pensions and war widows' pensions. Widows of ex-service men now eligible for war widows' pensions would no longer be entitled to their pensions under the amendments that the Government propose.

Let me give the House an example of the kind of case that will be affected by the Government's proposals to change the law. A service man who suffered extreme cruelty—indeed, who was tortured—as a prisoner of the Japanese in the second world war emerged with a smoking-related lung disease from which he died. He became a heavy smoker, having previously been a non-smoker, to alleviate the chronic stress caused by what

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

are described as his "horrifying experiences" as a prisoner of war; medical evidence was available to show that, in his case, smoking was directly attributable to the inhuman treatment meted out to him by the Japanese.

Like everyone else at that time, he was unaware that smoking could prove harmful. In fact, it was then very widely considered to have a beneficial effect as a tranquilliser and morale booster for service personnel on stressful active service.

No matter how conclusive the evidence of a direct link between an ex-service man's death and his resort to heavy smoking to deal with chronic stress on active service, his wife will have no entitlement to a war widow's pension if the Service Pensions Order is amended as now proposed by the Government.

Yet there are already some 60 cases in which war pension appeal tribunals have awarded widows' pensions where smoking, related to chronic stress during war service, was accepted as the cause of an ex-service man's death. This must be a very serious issue, more especially since many other cases are pending, and it is clearly one deserving of at least an oral ministerial statement before we rise for the Easter recess.

What is resented by the ex-service community almost as much as the intention of the change in the law the Government propose is the hole-in-the-corner way in which it is being attempted. No statement has yet been volunteered to this House. The only information we have so far received came in a written parliamentary reply to two questions that I tabled to the Secretary of State for Social Security. The reply said that the decision to smoke or drink was a personal one. It went on to say that the proposed change in the law follows a recent decision in the High Court and

"would ensure that the legislation reflects the policy intention."
—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1994; Vol. 236, c. *840-41*.]

What that means, of course, is that the High Court had found that the existing law does not mean what the Government thought it meant and that Ministers now intend to reverse the court's decision to avoid paying war pensions and war widows' pensions to some very needful people. If that is allowed to happen, the independent status of war pensions appeal tribunals will be seriously undermined, and that, too, is worthy of an urgent debate in this House.

Smoking dependency in consequence of active service has long been accepted in other countries as a cause of severe respiratory conditions, notably by the Australian Government after a High Court ruling there some years ago. They did not appeal against the decision of the High Court; they honoured its decision. Of that, Ministers here say not a word, just as they ignore the fact that it was only comparatively recently that smoking became recognised as a health hazard. But as recently as the mid-1970s, smoking was considered both safe and socially acceptable.

Billions of cigarettes were issued free of charge to service personnel on active service, and they were also available to them at heavily subsidised prices in the NAAFI. I myself was actively encouraged to smoke as the recipient of 200 free issue cigarettes a week while on active service in the middle east in the post-war years. As late as 1975, there were instances of consignments of cigarettes from HM Customs being distributed to RAF personnel serving overseas and of cut-price cigarettes being sold in NAAFI establishments.

Another very disturbing feature of the Government's proposals to change the law is that the amended legislation will be applied retrospectively. I ask the Leader of the House to take special note of that point. In the case of any improvement in existing legislation, as he knows, the Government always refuse to make it retrospective; but when, as in this case, the Government's intention is to cease helping war pensioners and war widows, they do so retrospectively and without time limits.

As the reply to my parliamentary questions made clear, the Government's proposals stem from a recent High Court judgment in which their attempts to stop the award of a war widow's pension to the widow of a former far eastern prisoner of war were unsuccessful. The High Court upheld the war widow's entitlement which a tribunal had allowed because her husband's death from cancer was due to smoking related to service factors. The Government are understood now to be planning to seek leave to appeal to the High Court against other recent successful appeals by the widows of ex-service men where smoking was accepted as a factor of service. I know there are those on both sides of the House who will regard that as not only wrong but disgraceful.

The only circumstances in which the Government are prepared now to recognise smoking as a factor of service is when an individual became so mentally disturbed as a result of service that he was incapable of making a rational decision whether to smoke or not. But any war pensioner who is 80 per cent. mentally disabled and incapable of looking after himself is entitled to constant attendance allowance, thus ensuring that, in the event of his death from whatever cause, his widow will automatically receive a war widow's pension. Such cases are, in my experience as a former Minister with responsibility for war pensions, very rare indeed.

I hope very much that the Leader of the House will recognise the widespread concern to which the Government's proposals to change the Service Pensions Order give rise; that they will not repeat the now notorious mistake made in relation to noise-induced deafness for war pension purposes; and that we will now be given the opportunity of an early debate to persuade them to relent before it is too late. Not to do so would demean the House and cause deep distress to those who have one of the most compelling claims on our attention.

The second issue I want to raise can be dealt with much more briefly, since its importance is already being actively discussed by right hon. and hon. Members. There is an all-party early-day motion on the Order Paper about it in my name, which says:

"That this House, mindful of the increasing needs of the United Kingdom's ageing ex-Service population and the many problems of younger members of the ex-Service community, in direct consequence of Options for Change, considers that there is now a pressing need for a Sub-Department of Ex-Service Affairs within an existing Ministry and with a designated Minister to be responsible, as the only fundamental and long-term solution for the care and welfare of ex-Service people and their dependants; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government now to respond positively to The Royal British Legion's urgent call for a sub-department to be established."

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I am very interested in the right hon. Gentleman's remarks. The views that he is expressing are entirely cross-party, and he will receive

considerable support from both sides of the House. Will he please state the number of his early-day motion and the level of support that he has received for it? I am sure that, like myself as the Member for Macclesfield, most other hon. Members have had many representations from British Legion organisations. Naturally, those have been passed on, with endorsement, to the appropriate Minister in the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Morris: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who has worked long and hard to help the ex-service community, more particularly war widows. My early-day motion is No. 60, and it now has 172 signatories. It has been subscribed to not just by right hon. and hon. Members in both major parties but by members of all parties.

As of now, bits and pieces of responsibility for helping ex-service men and women and their dependants are scattered all over Whitehall. The Government act on the assumption that the Minister at the Department of Social Security who is responsible for war pensions is the right point of contact for the ex-service organisations; but the problems of their members go much wider than the Department of Social Security and, as we all know, in many circumstances the right hand of government rarely seems to know what the left hand is doing. In fact, there are times when the right hand seems not to know that there is a left hand.

In simple terms, what the Royal British Legion and other organisations that speak for the ex-service community want the Government to institute is a "single-door" policy that will provide ease of access to all Departments of State with which they now have to deal. They want not a new Secretary of State, but a co-ordinating Minister who, in my view, would not only make life easier for ex-service men and women and their dependants but save their organisations and the Government both time and money.

As war-disabled men and women and their dependants grow older—as the hon. Member for Macclesfied (Mr. Winterton) knows so well, the majority are now over retirement age—their needs multiply and their problems are compounded by avoidable delay. It must now be obvious to the Government that my early-day motion has not only comprehensive all-party support but, prospectively, majority support in this House. It deserves to be debated, and soon. I look forward to a positive response to both of the important issues that I have raised in this debate.

4.33 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) has raised important issues that affect pensioners. I should like to go a little further.

With a new financial and tax year about to begin, and with a coming summer of wartime memories for so many of our older citizens who lived through that period, we have perhaps even more reason in this debate to remember the debt of gratitude that we owe to retired constituents. The oft-quoted saying that the health of our society can be judged by the way we treat our elderly is still very apt. Whatever hon. Members think about how elderly people are treated, we can all agree that some common fears of the elderly need to be addressed.

Clearly, many of them fear the prospect of not having enough money. Those who are just above income support level, those who perhaps had no opportunity to build up extra pensions or were prevented by war service from getting into personal pension schemes and those who have saved a little feel particularly vulnerable. Pensioner bonds, granny bonds, special rates for the elderly, and the fact that the home energy efficiency scheme and assistance with VAT on fuel have now been extended to all pensioners are all a great help, but for many the perception remains that they will or may run out of money.

Many people are told that pensioners do much better in Ireland, France or Germany. We can point out how difficult it is to make straight comparisons between pensioners in different countries, and we must ask questions about those countries compared with our own. Is the state pension normally a pensioner's only form of income? What health care entitlements and local social services do pensioners enjoy? What other social security benefits do they receive? What is the spending power of their income? Is the pension earnings-related or flat-rate? Is there provision for adult dependants? What is the qualifying age for receipt of an old age pension? On all those comparisons, British pensioners come out fairly well. At a time of rising life expectancy and health expectation, when the number of retired people is growing throughout Europe, we should take some pride in that fact, yet many still believe, or choose to believe, that they are the paupers of Europe.

The Government approach, rightly, has three strands —to increase the basic state pension in line with prices, to encourage private provision on top of it, and to focus extra help on the pensioners who need it most. Yet there is still often resentment on the part of many pensioners, and some go so far as to feel betrayed by today's society. To some extent that is a generational feeling, but it is fuelled by an understandable anger when they see people getting away with actions such as defrauding the social security system, attacking and robbing pensioners, and expecting and demanding everything, as so many people do.

We spend ever more on health care to satisfy the demands and expectations that we all have. We all want to live longer and better. We spend more on help with housing, with taxes and with residential care. That is all part of the system that we have built up over 40 years. People spend more, young and old alike, and they have ever more material possessions. Yet no matter how much we put into the system, it will never be enough. Medical inflation, advances in technology and public demand will always outstrip the taxpayer's ability to pay, so we are right to bite the bullet of some difficult dilemmas.

Questioning a common retirement age and fighting social security fraud are just two of the modest steps that we have taken so far. Even the Labour party is now saying, although not yet very loudly, that it may not necessarily be committed to raising pensions in line with prices or earnings every year. We have all come to realise that, if our gigantic health and social security budget is to be financed entirely out of taxes from business and from individuals in work, we are in effect taxing employment, and before long something will break under the increasing strain.

Any thinking about how to help the poorest pensioners in a more sustainable way is to be welcomed, and should be given proper public debate. If we all devote a little time to thinking that through in our constituencies in the short Easter recess, our time will have been well spent.

Pensioners have other fears, too. Both in our cities and in the rural areas, many fear loneliness and isolation. Scoff though many do at "back to basics" and basic family

[Mr. David Porter]

values, the fact remains that when grandparents were acknowledged as an integral part of families and communities in a less mobile, more rooted society, older people's fears were not so great as they are now.

Pensioners also fear immobility caused by lack of physical health, which is why hip replacements are now so popular. Today's hip replacements are often second or third replacements, because the previous replacement has been worn out.

Pensioners also have fears about transport. To be fair, most local authorities, and local organisations and voluntary groups such as DIAL, Help the Aged, Age Concern and so on, do incredibly effective work in combating that fear. There is also new bus technology, and attention is being focused on accessibility. All that needs encouraging. I suggest to my right hon. Friends in government that tax-friendly encouragement is the most effective method.

There is also a fear of lawlessness and of disrespect for law and order generally. The fear of walking the streets and the feeling that one is not safe in one's own home are real enough, even if they are not always borne out by the crime figures. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill will help, but for many people I fear that the decision of the House against capital punishment will not help.

Focusing the Government's policy attention on families, on the difficulties of older people in getting work, and on any age discrimination will also help, if it translates into positive action. We have a tremendous natural resource in our older people. Why do we not use it more for the benefit of everyone?

Older people share our fear of being strangled in red tape and bureaucracy. The deregulation initiative will help there, even if it is only like a finger in the dyke trying to hold back the North sea. People will welcome any reduction in health service bureaucracy and waste, including the abolition of some of the health authorities. However, they do not welcome that if it is done badly, as in my area, where Waveney is being split off from Great Yarmouth and we are being lumped in with Suffolk. Older people fear that they will not be able to use the local hospital, the James Paget hospital, because it is just over the border in Norfolk. Again, it was a well-intentioned move by the Government but it has backfired because they ignored local fears.

Many older people are fearful of what we seem to be doing—Front Benchers of all parties stand accused of this—in giving away our sovereignty for an unproved, often unwanted, European ideal which sees us as the losers almost every time while the Germans and others, whom many, of these older people gave the best years of their youth to fight, seem to be the winners almost every time. For many, that is galling beyond belief.

In case my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench are inclined to dismiss the power of the elderly as well as their fears, I would point out that they need to be carried with us. I quote from a Help the Aged document, "Speaking Up For Our Age", published last November for the European year of older people and solidarity between generations:

"For the record, the vote of the over 65s in the 1992 General Election split 49 per cent. Conservative, 31 per cent. Labour and 13 per cent. Liberal Democrat. On the evidence of specific manifesto pledges to older people, this is not the way one would have expected self-interested older people to vote. One must conclude that older voters are not self-interested."

That is fair enough, but they are a powerful group. Let us recognise their fears and carry more of them with us as we move forward.

4.40 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I was tempted to rip up my speech, follow the line of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) and look at some of the problems facing the European Community, but that can wait for another day. There are more urgent questions. Similarly, I was tempted to discuss the issues affecting many of the residents of the south-west now, this week. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, no doubt have had your postbag filled with letters from those whose water bills have gone up yet again by 12 per cent. and look to double by the end of the century, having already doubled.

However, I decided that at this juncture there is an issue which does not often receive a hearing in the House but which deserves our attention. As it happens, it links with the concern that a number of hon. Members have already expressed about the fears and anxieties of the elderly, but not exclusively so.

It may surprise hon. Members to hear that it is 30 years since I became a member of a police authority. Hon. Members may think that I was precocious or enjoyed a misspent youth, but I was particularly concerned with rural policing and having then become a member of the Devon and Cornwall police authority for some years and done other things, I have continued to take a considerable interest in policing in rural areas. It would be helpful if hon. Members had an opportunity to discuss these issues rather more often, but at least I can take the opportunity today to touch on some of those with which many of us are concerned.

There has been a rising tide of crime throughout the country, but it has been particularly evident in some areas which previously we thought were immune from it—notably the rural areas. Many rural communities feel that the Government have abandoned them in recent years. They feel that their problems have been ignored and that, instead, Ministers have come up with headline-grabbing stunts, hoping for short-term political advantage. From my youth in a small village in the west country, I am reminded that the most effective form of deterrence is the presence of a constable living in such a village.

We had in the village a policeman by the name of PC MacPherson who moved round at a fairly steady pace because, although he had a bicycle, he did not often ride it because his spaniel could not keep up. The key point to us of the generation who might be concerned about such matters was that one never knew where he was not. The effective presence of the police constable and of his wife, a member of the Women's Institute, his children at the local school—he was also a member of the cricket club—meant that every part of the community had an immediate relationship with the guardian of law and order. That has long since gone, and initiatives by some far-sighted chief constables—notably John Alderson whom you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I remember as a most effective chief constable in Devon and Cornwall—have, sadly, turned the clock back only a little way.

In the past few weeks I have not only talked to our present chief constable and to many other police officers about this; I have spoken to magistrates, probation officers, neighbourhood watch organisers and even a prison

governor. These people, who know what they are talking about when it comes to preserving the peace and ensuring law and order, are the people who feel that "solutions" are being imposed on them. They feel that they are not being given an effective opportunity to contribute to the analysis of the problems. They are not being told what is happening, and they have only a minimal chance to influence the course of events.

Analysis of the figures shows that there are more crimes per head in rural police force areas than in urban ones, while rural police forces are undermanned and underfunded. To take just one example, in my own police division of North Cornwall we have experienced in the past 15 years—roughly the lifetime of the Government—a doubling of recorded crime, with a drop in the proportion cleared up. Yet during that period the Home Secretary has permitted only a 9 per cent. increase in the establishment of officers.

Police areas which are more than 50 per cent. rural have averaged a rise in establishment of only 92 officers between 1982 and 1992, while in the most urban—with 25 per cent. or less of rural parishes—the rise in the number of officers has averaged some 300. That is not as a result of the crime figures, which point in the opposite direction: the threat of crime in rural communities is higher. With fewer police per head and those police spreading their work over much wider areas, people living in rural areas are evidently more at risk.

I have some more figures. In your area and mine, Madam Deputy Speaker—Devon and Cornwall—we have one policeman for every 516 people. In Hampshire, the proportion is even worse, with one per 522 people. Compare that with Merseyside, where it is one per 306 people, and with metropolitan London, where it is one per 258 people.

Moreover, the logistics is more difficult in a scattered rural area and it is harder for the police to get around at speed. The present restrictions on petrol and on the use of cars must be lifted. The effects of the budgetary constraints are patently absurd. Avon and Somerset police authority has had to limit its squad cars to 35 miles travel in one shift. What they do in a sudden emergency, I hate to think. There is thus a vicious circle: scattered population, less easy to police effectively, fewer officers, reduced mobility, less effective policing. It is a major cause of the increase in crime in the more rural areas of Great Britain.

I give two other examples, Gloucestershire and Cambridgeshire, both required to protect important people. In the case of Gloucestershire it is the royal family; in Cambridgeshire it is the Prime Minister. Yet Gloucestershire receives no compensation for the resources which have to be diverted to that task, and Cambridgeshire actually loses 2 per cent. of its manpower permanently for the protection of the Prime Minister, without any compensation. The Prime Minister's police area, Cambridgeshire, is a good example of the problems that rural areas face. It has one officer for every 540 people, fewer officers per head than any other force, while having the third highest rise in recorded offences—almost 80 per cent.—since 1989.

People in Nottinghamshire are more likely to be victims of crime than in any other part of the country. Rural areas such as Avon and Somerset have seen crime increase by 75 per cent. in the lifetime of the Government. People in Humberside are among the most likely in Britain to be the victims of violent crime; yet when their chief constable asked for 13 more police officers—a modest request—to tackle the crime rate, he was given none.

The Home Secretary continues to fudge the true test of his commitment to more effective policing of rural areas by refusing time and again to increase the number of officers to that which the chief constables accept as operationally required. The figures show that the rural forces have been left behind in terms of meeting their operational requirements.

On the Home Office formula, the Hampshire force should be increased by a further 223 officers. Last year, not unreasonably, the chief constable, using the Home Office figures, asked for an additional 200 officers. How many did he receive? Zero.

At the Christchurch by-election we Liberal Democrats were castigated for our profligacy in daring to suggest that the Dorset chief constable should receive 97 additional officers because he had identified them as necessary to his operational requirements, to meet the needs of the Dorset community. Later last year, the Home Secretary wrote:

"we simply cannot approve every request for more officers which is made"

by chief constables, and

"it is of paramount importance that we maintain controls on public expenditure."

How much was the threatened increase in public expenditure? What was the huge amount that was threatened? According to the Conservative party research department, it was some £55 million—an interesting figure, as it is precisely equivalent to £1 per head of population in the United Kingdom. I wonder how many people would think that that was a price worth paying.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I have been following the hon. Gentleman's contrast between the problem in rural areas and the problem in urban areas. I am sure that he will agree that the absolute levels of crime are higher in urban areas. I imagine that he is not suggesting a shift of policing from the urban to the rural areas. He has just stated his spending demands. His party has made spending demands for education, social security, health and many other areas. Has he squared all that with the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)?

Mr. Tyler: I have indeed. I have looked at the figures for Northumbria. The investment of vast sums of money in new prisons and other detention centres is on a scale far greater than the cost of preventing crime. The cost of crime is one of the scandals of today.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the hon. Gentleman treat the House to the conclusions that he has drawn from his consideration of policing in Northumbria?

Mr. Tyler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, although it has put me off the tack. I was demonstrating that the cost of prevention is smaller than the cost of building all the prisons and other institutions that the Home Secretary seeks to impose on Britain.

The conclusion in Northumbria—I have the figures here—is that the rural areas show a dramatic increase in all types of crime. While I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) that historically the urban areas have high levels of crime in real terms, we are fast catching up, as he will know from his own

[Mr. Tyler]

constituency. That is also true of the rural areas of Northumbria. There is no longer any great divide between urban and rural areas.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Tyler: No, I will not give way again. Some hon. Members will have seen recently that the problem of drugs and drug-related crime has come to the rural areas, where 10 years ago drugs simply were not a factor. I accept that other hon. Members may not have had that experience, but those of us who have followed the police authorities' work over the years have to accept that serious crime is no longer confined to the urban areas but has spread to all parts of the community.

The Government pulled a rather gimmicky answer to rural crime out of the hat at their party conference—the idea of bringing back parish constables on the 18th-century model—and I do not deny that there may be some virtues in that scheme. However, it would be a disaster if the idea were used as an excuse for keeping the regular forces below the required establishment and struggling to make ends meet. It would be even more of a disaster if it were used as a cut-price alibi for not investing properly in rural policing.

In many parts of the country—other hon. Members will have the same experience—we have an excellent tradition of voluntary support given to the regulars by the special constables. It would be most unfortunate if the new gimmick were used as an excuse to divert attention from the good special constabulary from which we have benefited in all parts of rural Britain and, indeed, in urban areas. With their proper training and their dedication under oath, they have given a great service to the community and should continue to do so. In some parts of rural Britain, policing simply would not be effective without special constables. Again, I can instance rural parts of Hampshire, where the use of conspicuous patrol cars has substantially reduced the rate of burglaries. What is so special about that is that it relies on the special constables who are an integral part of the scheme.

I know that some theorists believe that all the problems will be solved by simply locking up or threatening to lock up more people, but the practical experience of people involved in policing throughout the country is that the theorists are sorely mistaken. There is no such simple magic-wand answer. People are afraid of crime and of the fear of crime. The answer to that is more bobbies on the beat deterring criminals as well as renewing confidence in the community. That is not a simple solution either, as the Audit Commission has made clear, and it is not the whole answer. Yet trying to operate well below the establishment that the chief constable knows to be necessary clearly reduces the effectiveness of every department of every police force.

Between 1982 and 1992 the crime rate rose twice as fast in the most rural forces as in the city areas. That is a simple fact which I draw to the attention of Conservative Members, especially the hon. Member for Taunton. I know that he shares my concern. Meanwhile, the officer-public ratio is 30 per cent. worse in rural areas despite the difference in convenience in terms of policing logistics.

There is also a problem on the fringe of some city areas. The constabulary often has to pull out of rural areas for specific events or big problems in the town centre. The Bitten division of the Hampshire constabulary is controlled from central Southampton, so the outlying rural areas around Hedge End and West End have seen officers sucked into central Southampton to deal with specific problems. At those times, the chief constable has little room for manoeuvre if incidents occur in the more rural areas. If the shortfalls are not corrected, the trend towards less crime prevention, a lower clear-up rate and ineffective crime deterrence will accelerate.

Crime and fear of crime in the countryside are a serious problem not only for the elderly, to whom the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) referred, but for all of us. It deserves realistic resources, not just rhetoric. It may have been a shock to some Conservative Members to read the public opinion poll this week which showed that the Conservative party was no longer believed to have effective policies on crime. That is a direct result of some of the problems that have occurred in the more rural areas and the failure of the Home Office to provide the resources that we need.

On one side, we have the forces of dogma, myth and ideology drawn from the ranks of the theorists. On the other side are the forces of professionalism and practicality drawn from the ranks of the police, some of the Home Office advisers and those who understand what is happening in the rural areas. It is no surprise to find that the more realistic former Home Secretaries such as Lord Whitelaw are in our camp.

So where does that leave the present incumbent? Anyone who has ever admired that extraordinary architectural edifice the Home Office will know that it is a badly designed ivory tower. I hope that, during the Easter recess, the Home Secretary will come down from his tower. I hope that he will have time, if there is an Easter recess after this debate, to hear for himself from people in the countryside who are trying to cope with the rising tide of crime.

4.58 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I want to take the opportunity of this Easter Adjournment debate to thank my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary for his firm stand in Brussels on the allocation of votes in the matter of the enlargement of the European Union. Other have done so and I know that others will also do so in the debates that follow this one. I wish him well when he defends Britain's best interests again on Tuesday and holds firmly to his position, as he has stated he has every intention of doing.

This is a vital issue and the pressures to weaken—placed on him by the European Commission, France, Germany, other of our community partners and the Foreign Office—will be so great that he will need not only his good judgment but the knowledge that he has the support of most hon. Members, Labour as well as Conservative. He has the support not only of those of us who were sceptical about the Maastricht treaty and the assurances that it was not a step on the road to the federal super-state—which only the Euro-fanatics and the Liberal Democrats want—but of a considerable body of his supporters and admirers who voted for the Maastricht treaty believing that it would not lead to a supranational European federal state.

Those people were reassured daily that the powers of the Westminster Parliament would not be further undermined by concessions on the veto or on qualified majority voting. Those Conservative Members who trooped loyally through the Lobby in support of the Maastricht treaty knew very well that the overwhelming majority of people who sent them to Westminster had no wish to see Parliament's powers further surrendered to an unelected bureaucracy in Brussels, or even to a European Parliament, over which we in Britain have no control and only very little influence.

I know that my right hon. Friends the Leader of the House and the Foreign Secretary agree that the

"principle is, and will remain, a simple one. Where we can work together as Europeans, we do so; where we cannot work together, for lack of agreement or where there is no need to do so, we are free to go our own way."—[*Official Report*, 30 March 1993; Vol. 222, c. 170.]

I know that my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Leader of the House will acknowledge that

"no United Kingdom Government of any political colour would agree to matters that we would regard as being of great consequence or which had a significant effect on our national interest being decided by qualified majority voting."—[*Official Report*, 4 May 1993; Vol. 224, c. 144.]

I know that my right hon. Friend would give that commitment on behalf of the Government.

I know, too, that my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Leader of the House will agree that

"the Maastricht treaty marked the point at which, for the first time, we began to reverse the centralising trend, and moved decision-taking back towards the member state in matters where Community law need not, and should not apply."

I know, too, that that my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Leader of the House would want qualified majority voting on foreign policy issues to be permitted

"only if all member states agreed by unanimity in advance. That is a double lock".—[*Official Report*, 19 December 1991; Vol. 201, c. 489.]

On such issues

"it simply would not be appropriate or suitable, and we would not agree to it. The circumstances in which qualified majority voting can be used are set out in the treaty. There is no suggestion that it should be applied".—[*Official Report*, 19 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 119.]

It was not suggested that it should be applied to foreign policy issues. I know that my right hon. Friends will agree to those statements because they are the statements that they themselves and others of my right hon. and hon. Friends the Ministers have made. They are only some of the assurances given to the House by my right hon. Friends as we debated those vital matters in recent months.

I respectfully remind my right hon. Friends in the Government of what they have said and of the assurances that they have repeatedly given to this House, because I do not believe for one moment that they will want to eat their words. They will not want to go back on them or to betray their intention to resist further moves to weaken Parliament's sovereignty.

When my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary goes into battle on Tuesday, he needs to know that, in honouring the Government's assurances—that there will be no extension of majority voting to other matters or weakening of the extent to which we have already accepted majority voting—he will have the support not only of the Conservative sceptics but the Conservatives who followed him nightly into the Maastricht Lobby. He may also have the support of much of the Labour party. He will certainly have the support of the overwhelming majority of people who sent us to this place.

5.4 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I want to raise the subject of coach safety and seat belts. I expect that all hon. Members can recall the accidents last year involving coaches and the sad loss of life that followed. At that time, statements were made by Ministers and the Department of Transport. They commented on coach safety rules in this country and in Europe. I am sure that many hon. Members will remember the calls made at the time for much tighter controls on safety regulations and, in particular, for the compulsory fitting and wearing of seat belts.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House tabled early-day motions on the subject—it in no way became a political issue. The early-day motions—one of which was signed by more than 60 Members, including myself—referred to the injuries that occur each year in the United Kingdom. Some 4,000 passengers in coaches suffer injuries following collisions. Dangers face young children when they use minibuses or school transport.

Passengers were seriously injured in those road and coach accidents, although, thankfully, they were not killed. An interesting report published by the Consumers Association showed that 12 per cent. of coach deaths could have been avoided if the people involved in those tragedies had been wearing seat belts. I and other hon. Members, including yourself, Madam Deputy Speaker, can doubtless recall our long discussions in years gone by on the compulsory wearing of seat belts in motor cars. There was great opposition to that, but I do not think that anyone would now dispute that the fact that car drivers and passengers are required to wear seat belts has saved a great many lives.

I raise the subject because we are approaching the spring and summer, when hundreds, possibly thousands, of coaches will come on to our roads, many from European countries. They will carry many thousands of passengers each week. A few months ago, following the tragic coach accidents to which I referred, we heard from the Department of Transport, but, since then, we have heard very little about coach safety or about seat belts. I am not saying that nothing is being done, but I should like to know, as would other hon. Members, exactly what is being done.

A constituent of mine was very badly injured in a coach accident and, two years later, is still critically ill. His family have left me in no doubt that he firmly believes that, if he had been wearing a seat belt in the coach, his injuries could have been prevented.

I have done some research, following my constituent's sad experiences. Two special types of seat belt could be used. First, there is a seat belt that is similar to the type that are used in aircraft, with which we are all familiar. Secondly, there is a seat belt that is similar to the type that are used in motor cars. However, I am told that each type of belt presents its own problems.

The type of belt that we are used to wearing when we travel in aircraft—one receives instructions to ensure that seat belts are fastened—would not be suitable in a coach because, sadly, most of the injuries that passengers suffer in coach accidents are to the spine or the head. That often results in brain damage.

[Mr. Tom Cox]

The problem with the other type of belt, similar to the type that are used in motor cars, is the fitting of such a belt to an anchor point in the coach, because the present flooring of modern coaches is not strong enough for that anchor point to be installed. I, other Members and the general public would like to know the Government's thinking on that issue, because it leads to another problem. It would add substantially to the weight of coaches to fit the flooring to which that type of belt could be anchored.

In the past few days, I have asked a number of questions about bridge safety. I am told that there are weight restrictions on about 60 bridges in the United Kingdom. I will not go into detail, but coaches in Europe are heavier than coaches generally in the United Kingdom and, as a result of the age and structure of many bridges in this country, certain coaches, because of their weight, are not allowed to use those bridges. Therefore, the anchor point for what is generally suggested by experts—the car-type seat belt—would place additional weight on the coach, which in turn would not allow them to use certain bridges in many parts of the country.

I realise that hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to take part in this short debate so I will only make two more points. The first is about cost. We are aware that substantial costs will be involved. It would be interesting to hear from the Department of Transport, which is responsible for those proposals for improving coach safety and seat belt regulations, who will help to pay the costs. Will it be the Government? Will it be local authorities?

I refer to local authorities especially with regard to school transport, because I understand that there are special problems with school transport. For example, would each youngster travelling in a minibus or school coach be required to wear a seat belt? That, I am told, could result in considerable expenditure. Having said that, I do not think that anyone disputes the urgent necessity for that issue to be considered in detail.

I conclude, largely echoing my opening comments, that last year there were tragic accidents, both for adults and, sadly, for a group of young people, in minibuses. I am sure that we all want progress in that area, but we have had no statement for a considerable time. Indeed, we have had no debate in the House on that issue. I do not expect the Leader of the House to be able to reply to my comments today, but I feel that I have a right to make them.

I hope that, in the near future, a Minister from the Department of Transport will make a detailed statement on coach safety and seat belt regulations. Members of the House, many organisations who are involved with consumer affairs or car manufacture and, I am sure, the general public would like to hear a statement from the Government about their thinking on those issues.

5.14 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Before the House adjourns for the Easter recess, I wish to make four brief points.

The first point concerns hospital radio. I have the honour to be the unpaid parliamentary spokesman for hospital radio broadcasting. Hospital radio has been trying to obtain its own frequency for a long time. As hon. Members know, it is the largest voluntary organisation in the country without paid workers.

Recently, the Radio Authority issued a consultative document entitled "The future use of 105-108 MHz." Comments on that document have to reach the Radio Authority by 22 April. All hon. Members have been written to on that subject and I am delighted to say that there has been a large response. It is a crucial opportunity for hospital radio to secure its own frequency. I hope that hon. Members will encourage Major-General Baldwin, chief executive of the Radio Authority, to choose option C. That offers a new network lattice of services. It is vital to hospital radio for radio stations to be allowed up to 10 km on FM.

The second point that I wish to raise is the Fenchurch Street line. It must now be about two years since I and other Essex colleagues made a disastrous journey on the Fenchurch Street line with the present chairman of British Rail. His manner and his response to hon. Members on that occasion was little short of a disgrace. Since that time, I and others have felt strongly that the Fenchurch Street line should be privatised. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will be able to tell me when the announcement will be made about the privatisation of the Fenchurch Street line.

It is a great discourtesy to all hon. Members affected by the line—I have three railway stations in my constituency: Pitsea, Basildon and Laindon—that we were given no notice that Fenchurch Street station would be closed for seven weeks in the summer for engineering work. It seems to be a coincidence that the closure would take place in July, when the House will be in recess. No hon. Members were written to; no meeting was sought.

I happen to have to hand a customer newsletter, in which I am told:

> "We know this work will cause severe disruption for many of our customers, and we have looked at other options."

Severe disruption? The railway station will be closed for seven weeks. Some of my constituents have been told, "Take your holidays." I do not know how employers will judge their employees if they go on holiday for seven weeks.

All hon. Members who favour the privatisation of the Fenchurch Street line well understand that heavy engineering work has to be conducted, but we do not understand the cavalier attitude of British Rail and its great discourtesy in not consulting Members of Parliament about the difficulties that will confront their constituents in those seven weeks. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will convey my anger, and that of other Essex Members of Parliament, to the chairman of British Rail.

My third point concerns Essex county council. I and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House have the tragedy of sharing the consequences of the incompetence of the rotten, socialist Essex county council. The county council is a love affair between the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats. They are disastrously engaging in power sharing. There is no area in which we have felt their wrath as much as in education.

I had the privilege of participating in an Adjournment debate with my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale), who touched on the matter of Hockerill comprehensive boarding school. Forty children from my constituency attend that school. The school wishes to become grant-maintained, but wicked Essex county council proposes to phase out the existing

boarding subsidy without giving transitional support, for which there is a precedent, if the grant-maintained application is successful.

Wonderful Barstable school in my constituency is a grant-maintained school. There are a number of outstanding insurance claims which were incurred when the school was under Essex county council. The council is now wickedly passing the buck to the grant-maintained school.

Chowdhary school in my constituency is a wonderful school, which is attended by 107 pupils. It offers a unique type of education which many parents in my constituency very much believe suits their children. Again, Essex county council—Labour and the Liberal Democrats together—is considering closing this school. Yet the chairman of the governors, who stood as a Liberal Democrat candidate against one of my Conservative county councillors—I am pleased to say that he was defeated—is campaigning to save the school, although it is Essex county council, with Labour and the Liberal Democrats working together, which wants to close the school. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will reflect on that.

Wonderful Lee Chapel South primary school in my constituency has now suffered the removal of the lollipop lady. Parents are rightly outraged at this, which is a matter for Essex county council and the police. This Monday, I acted as the lollipop man. If I have time in future, I shall join other parents protesting outside the school and asking that the lollipop person be restored.

My fourth point concerns sex selection. Last February, I introduced a ten-minute Bill which would have prohibited sex selection. A number of feminist Members of Parliament opposed the Bill and it was defeated by 18 votes. If we are to believe newspaper comments, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) has said —I do not know whether he was quoted accurately—that he is not in favour of sex selection.

This morning, I took part in a television programme, which was the first opportunity for me to debate the matter with the owner of the grubby little sex selection clinic in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst). The owner of the clinic had the gall to say that the people who use his services sign a piece of paper agreeing that, if the wrong implantation is made, they will not be allowed an abortion. Emotively, a number of people who were receiving the treatment were present with him in the television studio.

What the clinic owner does not tell the people who are receiving the treatment is that it costs £650 on the first occasion, another £450 on the second occasion and more on subsequent occasions. This is the worst kind of commercialism. I believe that the overwhelming majority of people are against the principle of purchasing the sex of one's child. Above all, the nonsense of the practice is that the clinic itself claims only a 50 per cent. success rate. Is the man mad? There is a 50 per cent. chance of having a boy or girl, regardless.

I hope that every child, regardless of sex, is loved. The overwhelming majority of people, when they experience the joy of a new life, are not bothered about the sex of the child as long as it is healthy. I very much hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will reflect carefully on my correspondence with Department of Health Ministers on the subject and on the response given to me after my ten-minute Bill.

I was told by hon. Members that I should not have had the arrogance to introduce the Bill, but that I should have waited for the report from the committee considering the matter. I have waited. The committee reported that it certainly would not license the practice in its own clinics. When the managers of the British Medical Association said that they were in favour of the practice, their members came out against it. The Labour party spokesman on health, the hon. Member for Brightside, is against it. The BMA is against it and the committee is against it. What do my Government intend to do?

5.25 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): On 15 December 1993, after long deliberations, the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach of the Irish Republic, Mr. Reynolds, signed the Downing street declaration. They predicted that it was the basis on which the two Governments would be able to initiate a peace process. Mr. Reynolds went further when he declared that he would not sign the document unless he had confidence that it would achieve acceptance by the IRA and deliver a cessation of violence by Christmas.

The great suspicion among the Unionist community, based on years of experience, is that anything to which the Republic puts its hand in respect of Northern Ireland is frequently devious and intended to undermine. That is a sad and unfortunate reality, which is not always recognised on this side of the Irish sea. Yet for us to have decided summarily to reject the declaration would without doubt have been judged harshly in the House. It would have been claimed that we had thwarted the opportunity to provide the IRA with the means to move from violence to democracy.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, I make it clear that neither I nor the party that I represent has even the slightest obligation to let the IRA off the hook, but we recognise our responsibility to 90 per cent. or thereabouts of our community who have a real desire for peace. That community, of course, has for the past 25 years made it clear that it cannot be peace at any price. The Government must be no less resolute, assiduous and honourable on that point.

If the declaration had succeeded, that would have been fine. Ulster Unionists, unlike another Unionist party, do not require the community to be kept in fear and trepidation to provide it with a raison d'être. Scaremongering to build up European election credibility is hardly going to save Ulster. What was necessary was that Ulster Unionists should carefully monitor the process, ensuring that what had been agreed was not given a new interpretation to accommodate those who were able to bring violence into the equation. After 25 years, we knew the IRA well enough to believe that the declaration would self-destruct under the pressure that it would bring to bear.

There is a major aspect of the declaration to which Ulster Unionists take serious exception, which is the totally unjustified assumption that, some day, the people of Northern Ireland will inevitably wish to become part of a united Ireland. The assumption is fundamentally incorrect, both now and for the foreseeable future. That is not Ulster Unionist intransigence, but the freely expressed will of the people of Northern Ireland. It is not a sectarian issue as those who glibly cite demographic trends would wish us to believe. Right across the community, there is a large

[Mr. Ken Maginnis]

majority who, whatever they may presently consider to be Northern Ireland's shortcomings, have no aspiration to achieve a united Ireland. There is no popular demand for Dublin rule.

Despite its fears and past betrayals, the Unionist community would do nothing to frustrate the Government in their efforts to bring violence to an end, but the harsh reality is that the Downing street declaration has been rejected by Gerry Adams and his Irish Republican Army. We warned that that was so in early January, again when Adams went to the United States, and at the time of the Sinn Fein conference. Do we need to say it again? It does not matter now whether the declaration was a good idea. It was killed off by the Provos before the end of last December.

So where do we go from here? Absolutely nothing has emanated from the Provisional IRA to suggest that it is war weary. It still has more than 100 tonnes of Gadaffi weaponry in hides, mainly in the Irish Republic. While that is so and the Government permit the command and control structure of the organisation to remain intact, cannon fodder will always be available among the misguided youth. That harsh fact must be addressed.

Bluntly, there is no future in pandering to the IRA. We have all taken political risks in trying to point it down the road to political sanity, but without success. We cannot afford to waste the lives that have been snuffed out and the bodies and minds that it has broken. Nor can we offer any further sacrifice to its madness in the hope that those evil people will be redeemed.

So where else can we look for support in the battle against the men of violence? Anyone who took part in the 1992 Brookes-Mayhew process will remember the negative contribution of the Irish Republic's delegation, and will have reached the conclusion that there is virtually no scope for any Government from the Republic to enter serious negotiations with Ulster Unionists. They are constrained by their inability to live with the political reality of the 1990s and to move out of the myths of the past.

While there is no doubt that the men from Leinster house talk a good game and that those in the present coalition see themselves as being the strongest Government in the history of the state, one has only to recall what happened to Albert Reynolds at the Fianna Fail annual conference last year. When he was seen to question the worth of the so-called "Adams-Hume initiative", the backwoodsmen of his party rallied against him and we had a demonstration of the power of hard and implacable republicanism. Whether Albert Reynolds has the ability to differentiate between one part of his anatomy and another, he can recognise his Achilles heel.

Perhaps that is the reason for Dublin's inability to cope with the political reality of what Ulster Unionism means. There appears to be a belief, even among the more enlightened elements such as one might associate with Mr. Spring's Irish Labour party, that it is necessary continually to appeal for Unionists to talk. One never quite knows whether that is intended to create an aura of goodwill for Great British consumption or an impression that the Unionists are impeding progress. In 1992, Ulster Unionists did everything in their power to get the Dublin Government to talk and found that they had nothing to say.

Even when we went to Dublin and tried to deal with issues that we thought may have been on their agenda, the Dublin team proved to be politically impotent. For example, Ulster Unionists tabled an outline for a Bill of Rights. That detailed document was promptly ignored by the Irish. We later tabled a paper that addressed in practical terms the possible grounds on which a north-south relationship could be developed. The Irish delegation did not even want to discuss that, either. On the advice of his Department for Foreign Affairs, whose officials hated every minute which they had to spend outside their comfortable little world of Iveagh house in St. Stephens green, Mr. Reynolds could do nothing other than rush his team back home and bring the process to an abrupt end.

Mr. Reynold's only reason for closing the door on those talks in which we had invested so much time and effort was that he felt that he should have a conference under the aegis of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I challenge anyone to examine the subject matter and importance of that conference to see whether any issue discussed was so significant that it merited the deliberate destruction by the Irish of the 1992 talks process.

It is time for the Government and, equally important, Her Majesty's official Opposition, to send a clear signal to the Irish that they are both openly committed to the democratic process in Northern Ireland and that, while it would be a welcome bonus to have the genuine friendship of a neighbouring country, it cannot be constructed on the basis of megaphone diplomacy or the variable activity that often articulates co-operation but seldom produces the goods.

For example, the Government of the Irish Republic have had more than eight years since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to sort out their extradition procedures, but have singularly failed to do so. They knew of the flaws in legislation that they introduced several years ago but failed to do anything about it at the time. Now we are told that the problem has been resolved but that resolution is yet to be implemented. I stress that there will be no satisfactory extradition while the Irish constitution continues to incorporate the irredentist territorial claim enshrined in articles 2 and 3-mark my words well.

The idea that, by constantly whittling at our democratic rights, the IRA, the Irish Republic or anyone else will pare aware the resolve of the people of Northern Ireland to determine their own future is a folly. Ulster Unionists are not in the business of violence; we are neither half-hearted Unionists nor half-Unionists like the Democratic Unionist party, which toys with the idea of some sort of Ulster independence but which weakens Ulster's case by hollow rhetoric. By tradition and through the ballot box, we will maintain the British tradition of accountable democracy. I urge the House not to cast aside lightly that honourable objective.

The adage adopted in the 1992 talks that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" defines a foolish and elusive objective, as it sacrifices things that may be worth while now in favour of some utopia at the end of the rainbow. It asks, "How long is a piece of string?", and only a fool would hazard a guess. It is linked to that other cliché about three-stranded talks, which is another good way to create a vacuum rather than make progress.

Strand one is about the internal administration of Northern Ireland—that accountable democracy to which I

referred earlier. It cannot be delayed to suit the mercurial disposition of outsiders. It is wrong to condemn Northern Ireland to a state of limbo. Let us get on with it.

Strand two was about relationships between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, but that was where we found a total lack of reality. The Republic adopted the attitude, "We must talk first about what we nationalists want and, if we can agree that, we might—just might—talk about what Unionists want." In effect, that simply means talking about one thing: more. It is open-ended and destructive. Ulster Unionists have talked, can talk and will talk to anyone operating within the normal democratic process, but we might reasonably ask for some indication that there is a serious agenda, not just an intention to increase the aggravation.

Strand three is about the relationship between the two sovereign Governments. As the Prime Minister has been known to say in this House, that is not a matter for me. Ulster Unionists cannot dictate to whom Her Majesty's Government will talk. We can, however, caution that nothing can be agreed which would ignore the rights of the people of Northern Ireland. Only once democratic principles prevail and Governments meet their obligations to eradicate terrorism can we hope to make progress. Ulster Unionists will certainly not be found wanting.

5.39 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I believe that the House should not adjourn for Easter until it has discussed a matter of vital importance to my constituents. For this Parliament, which believes in free speech and in freedom of association, there can be few more repugnant sights than institutionalised apartheid. That is why we—rightly—took stringent measures against South Africa, where people were not prepared to play sports with other people because of the colour of their skin or because of their background. We repudiated that idea absolutely.

Yet it is with regret that I must report to the House that a system of apartheid is alive and well and living in Cleveland, where there is discrimination not on the ground of the colour of someone's skin but because of the colour of a person's school tie.

Macmillan city technology college serves the area of Middlesbrough and it has brought opportunity to many in that area. Its football team, reported the *Darlington and Stockton Times* this week, is about to win the Middlesbrough cup—without playing a single game. That is because it is the only team playing in the competition; no other school was prepared to play football with the CTC team—not because of any argument, not because of incapacity, not because there were no football teams, but simply because this is a city technology college. So the LEA schools have refused to take part in sports with it.

This is the worst sort of apartheid, because it plays politics with children. Those who took this decision are not the children or the football teams: these children probably live next door to each other. The fault lies with the sports teachers, the head teachers, the unions, the local education authorities, all of whom are backing this system of apartheid.

At one point we were told that the apartheid had stopped. On 21 May 1991, my predecessor, Richard Holt —a doughty fighter for my constituency if ever there was one—took up the issue in the Chamber, saying:

"When my hon. Friend"—

referring to the Minister for Sport—

"leaves the Chamber, will he pick up a telephone and ring the chairman of the Sports Council and tell him that he will not pay one penny piece to Cleveland county council until my constituent, Mr. J.G. Campbell, and his son are treated fairly? The boy, who is a captain of the Middlesbrough football schools XI, has been denied the opportunity to continue to represent his home town and possibly to go on to greater things in football because the mean, vindictive and spiteful Cleveland county council will not recognise the Macmillan city technology college for the excellent place that it is."—[*Official Report*, 21 May 1991; Vol. 191, c. 772.]

Sadly, Richard Holt died soon afterwards, but in the ensuing by-election the issue was very much to the fore. Quite rightly, the parents of the children concerned and the press expressed their worries about the discrimination against a schoolboy whose only sin was that he wanted to play football for his town but was not allowed to.

Miraculously, during the by-election, there was a change of heart in the Labour party—perhaps it found the heat a little too much to bear. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), the then education spokesman of the Labour party, arrived in the constituency in November 1991 to declare that he condemned this type of activity and discrimination. As a result, Cleveland county council apparently experienced a Damascus road conversion and the city technology college was allowed to join the Middlesbrough schools football association. The discrimination was supposed to end there, and the council took all the credit in the press for this change of mind. It claimed to have backed down on humanitarian grounds.

On 21 November 1991 my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South (Mr. Devlin), who takes a close interest in this matter, tabled an early-day motion in these terms:

"This House notes with considerable satisfaction the decision by Cleveland schools sports council to reverse its mean and vindictive ban on participation in county sport by Macmillan college, Middlesbrough; further notes that this will enable the school to take on its neighbours in competitive sport and will enable talented youngsters to play sport for their town; further notes that this change of heart has only come about because of the embarrassment of the national Labour party in the Langbaurgh by election when they had previously regarded the matter with indifference, in spite of a Langbaurgh child being banned from playing for Middlesbrough; regrets that the school sports council made their recent decision only after great pressure from parents, the local press and hon. Members of this House; and further regrets that Richard Holt is not still alive to see this end to victimisation take place."

Unfortunately, it has not ended, as the press reports have made clear. The CTC is allowed to be part of the schools football association, but the unions, the head teachers and the governors are preventing the football teams from taking part in competitive sport with the children from Macmillan.

The Secretary of State for Education condemned Cleveland in the House for condoning this type of discrimination. That sparked immediate outrage and denials that any discrimination was going on. The hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) felt moved to action, in the form of early-day motion 808, tabled on 10 March, just a week ago. It condemns the Secretary of State for Education for daring to suggest that a disgraceful form of educational apartheid exists in Cleveland. Little did the hon. Gentleman know that the policy continues, and that the people who are losing out are the children.

What sort of prejudices must be growing in the minds of the children in these schools? What will they grow up thinking when they find that they cannot play football with a CTC just because it is a CTC? It is all very strange. These people will have to answer for themselves.

[Mr. Michael Bates]

There is, however, something that we can do in this House. The Labour education spokesman—or perhaps today the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on her behalf—can join me, as her predecessor did, in condemning this discrimination against young people. That is not to say that we cannot debate education policy in this House: that is only right and proper. We can debate CTCs, grant-maintained schools and so on, but the place to debate them is on the political field, not on the football field. The sooner that message is rammed home among the people blocking this sort of sporting activity in Cleveland, the better for everyone.

The strangest thing of all is that the chairman of Cleveland county local education authority committee, Councillor Legg, claims that he was not aware of the system of apartheid or that games could not be played by LEA schools against Macmillan CTC. He did say, however, that it was understandable that a team should not play another team, even though they both belonged to the same association, simply because of the colour of a school tie.

It is even more ironic that Cleveland county council's headed paper states that Cleveland county council is an equal opportunities employer. There are equal opportunities policies coming out of their ears, but what about equal opportunities for children who want to play football? Those children are not at a private school, but at a state school. Their parents are not council tax payers in a distant part of the country; they are council tax payers in Cleveland and they deserve equality. Cleveland county council should be ashamed of itself for daring to endorse that discrimination and prejudice against Macmillan city technology college.

We also need to bear in mind the legality of one school refusing to play football with another, not on the ground that it is not affiliated to a football association such as the Middlesborough Schools Football Association or the English Football Association but simply because it is a CTC. If one English FA-affiliated school refuses to play another, surely that casts doubt on the relevance of that association. If it cannot ensure free competition and fair play between its members, what is the point of having it? What can the football associations do about it?

There are some clear challenges here. The first is to Cleveland county council—the equal opportunities employer—to practise a bit of equal opportunity in relation to Macmillan city technology college. The second challenge is to the Labour party to confirm that it still condemns such discrimination on the sports field. Labour Members may, if they wish, continue to argue and debate the policy in this place, but they should condemn using children as political pawns.

There is a challenge to the English Schools Football Association. What can it do if one member refuses to take part in sport with another? Surely that raises a question which needs to be answered.

Above all, our thoughts should go out not just to the pupils and teachers of Macmillan city technology college who want to play sport and who are not prejudiced against other schools; they should also go out to the children at schools in my constituency and others in Cleveland county council who want to play football irrespective of people's background, the colour of their skin or the colour of their tie. Those children want to play sport because sport is a good thing. It should not matter where people are from, what their background is or where they go to school. Democracy should be found on the sports fields of England.

5.52 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): That was one of the least convincing speeches I have ever heard from a party synonymous with selection, protection and isolation. I wonder just how many private schools play football with local schools. I spent my youth travelling around the wilds of Lincolnshire looking for other grammar schools to play against because the local secondary modern schools, which were also local authority schools, were not deemed fit to play.

Mr. Bates: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Worthington: No. It is traditional to mention the speech of the previous speaker.

I should like to use this valuable debate to ask the Leader of the House to find time before the Easter Adjournment to take notice of early-day motion 653, which has already attracted 187 signatures. It concerns the Government's closure after 1996 of the Commonwealth Institute. I ask the Leader of the House and the Government to reconsider.

This is exactly the wrong time to send out a message that the Commonwealth does not matter. In a world where there is too much racism and ethnic cleansing in many places, it is the wrong time for the Government to withdraw from an important Commonwealth institution —the Commonwealth Institute.

We should be building up the Commonwealth and its symbolism of multi-racialism. It is a largely democratic institution in 50 countries. One of the major divisive influences on the Commonwealth during the Thatcher years—South Africa—is changing. We hope that, after successful elections in South Africa on 27 April, the new South African Government will want to apply to join the Commonwealth, as Namibia did a few years ago.

I find it difficult to understand why so many of us who support the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association are not agitated by the Government's proposal to close the Commonwealth Institute in 1996. There has been a firm commitment and statement by the Government that they will withdraw the funding of £2.6 million—equivalent to expenditure on a secondary school—in 1996.

Closing down the Commonwealth Institute in Kensington will also close the Commonwealth Institute in Scotland and the regional centre in Bradford.

The Government expect that private funds will be forthcoming after the privatisation of the Commonwealth Institute, but Lord Armstrong, who they commissioned to carry out a review of the Commonwealth Institute, concluded:

"I can see no reason to suppose that a private sector body could be found to take on the work of the Institute as it now is and in its present building without a Government grant".

The Government are showing a lack of commitment to multiracial values. It is a pity that, after what was probably the most positive Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting for years in Cyprus last year, where the right words were said about the Commonwealth, the Government should be planning to withdraw.

I am not suggesting that the Commonwealth Institute is perfect. In recent years, there has been a lack of impact, but to some extent that is due to the Government, as the grant to the Commonwealth Institute has been inadequate and has been cut in real terms over the years.

The building itself is a major problem, the extent of which depends on what one reads—sometimes the Government say that it requires the expenditure of £8 million to £10 million, sometimes they say £3 million. However, there is a problem about the building, to which I shall return later.

There is also a problem about why solely the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has to fund the Commonwealth Institute. A huge amount of its work involves supporting education—in particular, the national curriculum.

There is a case for other countries to contribute to the work of the Commonwealth Institute. It is strange that there are no concrete links between the Commonwealth Institute and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Such links would seem logical, but the Government are in the driving seat. They should be looking at how the Commonwealth Institute has developed. Two of its trustees are the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Education. The Government are represented on the board of management of the Commonwealth Institute and should have made sure that such problems did not arise.

Simply to step in and point a gun at the head of the institute is wrong. It would be wrong, particularly in Africa, given the difficulties that that continent is experiencing, for the Government to send out a message of withdrawal from the ideals of the Commonwealth. Most people would agree that we need that symbol of hope, of multiracial working together, stimulating good governance, trying to achieve a peaceful world in which the 50 countries of the Commonwealth can demonstrate that they can positively work together.

What is perhaps most difficult to understand about the Government's position is that the building in Kensington is a listed building. It is a building of some distinction but has been allowed to decay. It has to be restored and cannot be allowed simply to close down. Money will have to be spent by the Government to restore it; but to what purpose? What alternative use do the Government have in mind for the building? In view of its location, it is difficult to see what planning permission Kensington and Chelsea council would approve. The area is probably the centre for museums in this country, and the local Conservative council would probably not allow it to be used for any purpose other than the present one. The local Conservative council recently condemned the Government for what they were doing.

In his report, Lord Armstrong said:

"It seems that outright closure cannot be regarded as likely to generate any significant savings on public expenditure in the short term: perhaps even the reverse."

Instead of the Government working with the trustees and the board of management of the institute to make it a fully effective organisation, the proposal is to close it—the institute should be a beacon of light to the world—for no savings whatever.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Does my hon. Friend agree that the United Kingdom's bid to host the Commonwealth games in Manchester in 2002 makes the issue all the more sensitive?

Mr. Worthington: I do. I know my right hon. Friend's interest in this matter. The Government are sending the wrong message on all kinds of dimensions, and this is one of them. It is difficult for Manchester to carry the conviction of the whole nation when the Government are pulling the plug on its bid. In effect, the Government are saying that they are not interested in the Commonwealth any more.

The Commonwealth Institute celebrated its centenary last year. It has gone through various changes during those 100 years. Every Government have said that they could afford first the Imperial Institute and then the Commonwealth Institute, but the present Government have said that it has no priority. I cannot see the financial savings, because the building has to be restored. I can see a major loss of the institute's functions occurring, but this seems an inept move politically by the Government, because primary legislation is needed to close it.

The institute cannot just be closed, because, under the terms of the trust deed from the Ilchester estate, the building and land are on a 999-year lease and can be used only for that purpose. Why are the Government seeking to do that, because I am sure that there will be significant rebellion in the House against it? I cannot think that the legislation would have much chance of getting through the House of Lords, because there are prominent defenders of the Commonwealth and the institute there.

Before the Government get a bloody nose through attempting to close the Commonwealth Institute, they should see sense and withdraw their closure proposal and start working with the board of management of the institute in order to give an effective message of hope for the Commonwealth and this country.

6.5 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): It will not surprise you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to know that, before we rise for the Easter recess, I believe that the House should think again about the high-speed rail link as it passes through Kent, but particularly as it passes through my constituency in the borough of Gravesham, which has been afflicted by a multiplicity of routes during the five and a half years in which the matter has been under consideration.

You will recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, the statement in January by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, when he said that he had decided to omit Pepper hill, in my constituency, and Ashford from the safeguarding of the route. At that time, he was treated with considerable derision, particularly from Opposition Members, for making those omissions to the route. He could easily have said, with great courage and strength, "I have decided. That is it. This is the route from St. Pancras to the channel tunnel." But he did not, and we may well ask why. My right hon. Friend had the courage to refuse the proposal of Union Railways to tunnel beneath the houses of residents at Pepper hill. He instructed Union Railways to engineer up alternatives, particularly the route under the A2, at my request.

The route that was announced to the House last year skirted the entire southern edge of the urban area of Gravesham—Gravesend and Northfleet—all along the A2, but suddenly and inexplicably crossed the A2 and passed beneath the houses of the Pepper hill housing estate, which is on the far corner of Northfleet. It was totally unnecessary to bring misery to the lives of the residents. It was quite

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

clear to those residents and to me that Union Railways' claim at that time—that people living above its tunnel would neither hear nor feel the trains passing beneath—was unbelievable. It does not seem credible that a tunnel with high-speed trains passing through it, at a depth at its most shallow point of only 17 ft, would not have an effect on the residents concerned. Union Railways was adamant.

I called for a geological survey to be done immediately, which Union Railways would clearly need in due course with such a proposal. It took Union Railways three months to say yes. It took it a further two months to get started. That is five months gone in a six-month consultation period. That was why my right hon. Friends the Ministers quite rightly extended the consultation period in Gravesham to the end of 1993 so that the views of the residents of Gravesham, the borough council and myself could be given.

I am not a scientist. A geological survey could be produced with every manner of statistics, bar graphs and goodness knows what else, and I would not know what conclusions to draw. For that reason, I asked Gravesham borough council to retain specialists who could draw conclusions and state authoritatively, drawing on the data from the survey, to what extent, if any, the residents would feel vibration and to what extent there might be subsidence. Those consultants came up with proof that there would be vibration, subsidence and noise.

We laymen might say, "Surprise, surprise," but here was scientific proof, which I conveyed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I argued that it was entirely unreasonable to tunnel beneath those people's houses when an alternative should be investigated. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend's courage in saying, "No, I will not determine the route. Union Railways must go out and try to engineer an alternative."

Union Railways has now done that, and it has called the new route the 227. It involves the railway line continuing westward in its cutting, past Northfleet and beneath the A2, then passing into the Ebbsfleet valley slightly beyond the electricity substation. At last, Union Railways has done what seemed perfectly logical in the first place. It has presented my right hon. Friend with that option, which was revealed to my constituents only last week at an exhibition in Northfleet.

Since then, I have spoken to a number of Northfleet residents, particularly those living in Pepper hill. I was led to believe that they support the route, which would avoid tunnelling under their houses. My campaign for the route has the strong backing of the A2 rail action group—a voluntary group of local residents, led by Mrs. Celia Jones, who have put their case forcefully, democratically and steadily over many months.

I fully expect Gravesham borough council to give similar bipartisan support. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will draw the strong views of those involved to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. It is after the determination of the route that the preparations of our MEP, Ben Patterson, will come into force—that is, his efforts to establish the extent of the European Commission's support, in the form of funds for environmental protection in connection with the great transport infrastructure projects of Europe. I believe that, even if the high-speed rail link is necessary for the transport infrastructure of this country and Europe, it should not be introduced at the expense of the environment of residents all along the route.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for paying close heed to the welfare of my constituents in Pepper hill. We look forward to a positive result from his decision to make an exception and hope that our MEP will succeed in harnessing the funds and the initiative of the European Commission for the support of my constituents' environmental protection.

6.12 pm

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): I believe that the House should not adjourn for the Easter recess without discussing the serious abuses of human rights in the Punjab, and, in particular, the deplorable phenomenon of enforced and involuntary disappearances. The subject is especially relevant this week, because of the visit of the Indian Prime Minister.

I am sure that no hon. Member would argue for the encouragement or support of terrorism. The activities of groups around the world who try to advance their cause by means of intimidation, rape and murder are abhorrent and should be condemned. We should also acknowledge the importance of the relationship between this country and India. There is a long-standing political relationship and a developing trade relationship. We hope that those links were strengthened during the Indian Prime Minister's visit. It is also important to stress that India is a democracy—not the commonest constitutional form in that part of the world.

Even if we take all those factors into account, however, the activities of the Indian security forces in the Punjab cannot be excused. That is clearly of concern to many citizens of this country with families in the Punjab, but it goes much wider than that, especially as a result of a campaign by Amnesty International, which has drawn the problems to the attention of many other people here.

The most recent Amnesty International report, published in December last year, put it very well:

> "However provocative, the grave abuses committed by armed separatist groups can never justify the security forces resorting to arbitrary detentions, torture, extrajudicial executions or 'disappearances'."

I commend that report, and Amnesty International's continued interest in the area. Regrettably, its work has been frustrated considerably over the years by the Indian Government—who have refused access to the area—as have attempts to secure visits by other teams of independent observers, both from this country and from international sources.

Despite those frustrations, Amnesty International has managed to compile reports of torture and disappearances in the Punjab. Last year's report stresses that, each year, scores of people disappear in the Punjab from among the many thousands of political prisoners detained by the state. Some are detained under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act—TADA—regulations. Official sources say that several thousand more are held without trial under preventative detention laws in force in the Punjab.

The report goes on to describe the manner of the arrests. Usually, no explanation of the reason for an arrest is given and arrests are often not registered at the local police station. One can imagine the concern that that causes to relatives. Victims are often abducted by police in plain

clothes travelling in cars without number plates. When attempts are made to follow them up, many are found to have disappeared.

The report says:

"State complicity in such practices is evidenced from a clear pattern of official cover-up. This involves officials routinely ignoring numerous letters . . . Cables from relatives to government officials reporting a 'disappearance' . . . go unanswered. Officials even go to the extent of giving contradictory statements. In court, police persist in denying that 'disappeared' persons were ever arrested . . . or simply claim that the victim 'escaped'."

The position was summed up by *India Today* on 15 October 1992:

"Many of the cases of killing of militants as reported to the police, and dutifully carried by the newspapers are plain disinformation . . . The police have acted beyond the pale of the law time and again, and often in the most blatantly callous fashion. The police have devised many ways of keeping the judiciary off their back. One of them is proclaiming that a militant has escaped. He can then be kept in custody, for an unlimited period to extract information by whatever means."

Let me make it clear that it is to the credit of Indian society that officials—judicial officers—will sometimes expose wrongdoing, and the press will report it. It should be stressed that India is not a totalitarian state, although it may be acting as a repressive state.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the residents of the Punjab require the proper maintenance of law and order, and the proper control of extortion rackets and the like? It is even more necessary for the Indian Government to deal with their police force and army, so that corruption of this kind can be stamped out.

Mr. Spellar: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I thought that I had made clear the opposition of all hon. Members to terrorist activities, which he has just reaffirmed. I shall come to the Indian Government's failure to deal with abuses and excesses in the security forces. That, too, is an issue that unites hon. Members in all parties.

It is all the more regrettable that, rather than following up abuses when they are revealed, the Indian Government threaten journalists, lawyers and others who expose those abuses. Furthermore—as the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) rightly pointed out—concern is expressed about the responsibility of the Punjab police not only for actions in Punjab but for actions elsewhere in India involving disappearances and even shootings.

There is also widespread concern at the operation of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act. There is an absence of fundamental legal safeguards for detainees. Under the legislation, police can often claim that those who have disappeared have "escaped from custody." An even more worrying section refers to

"any action taken, whether by act or by speech or through any other media . . . which questions, disrupts or is intended to disrupt, whether directly or indirectly, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India; or which is intended to bring about or supports any claim . . . for the cession of any part of India or the secession of any part of India".

That attacks not just terrorism but the right of free speech and political opinion. TADA has allowed detention for investigation for up to one year without charge.

We have seen the way in which that legislation has been used in repression of the press during the recent raid on the *Aj Di Awaz* newspaper and the arrest of its staff. That has been the subject of questions in the House and, I hope, of representations by Ministers to the Indian Ministers when they were here recently.

A case that has caused considerable concern in the House and has been raised by several hon. Members is that of Harjit Singh. He is featured prominently in Amnesty International advertisements and is related to one of my constituents. I also took an interest in his case because he worked for the electricity authority in India. In a previous incarnation, I was an official of the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union.

In April 1992, Harjit Singh was standing at a bus stop waiting to go to work at the state electricity board. He was surrounded by police who began jostling him. He was then dragged away. He has "not been seen since". The police firmly denied his existence and then said that he was killed in an incident with armed militants. They refused to produce his body. His father and other relatives claim to have seen him in prison, but say that he has since been moved on. That has put enormous strain on the family and is creating enormous pressures. In many ways, he has become a symbol of many who have disappeared in the Punjab. It is fair to say that the authorities have been obstructive, to say the least.

There is a reluctance to investigate or take action against those responsible. The hon. Member for Gravesham mentioned that, and it has been of concern in not just this case but many others. It was suggested that those who had perpetrated human rights violations should have legal action taken against them, but the director general of police said that it would "demoralise" the police force. The Chief Minister said that the Punjab police would not be "screened and cleaned up", as it would hamper "anti-terrorist operations."

That is not good enough. As I said at the outset, the entire Sikh community in this country is concerned, and we should be concerned, at that abuse. Whatever our views or whatever their views about the constitutional status of the Punjab, we cannot accept that breakdown of law and order. I hope that the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister have conveyed the concerns that have been expressed in the House to the Indian Prime Minister and his colleagues during their visit. We also hope that the pressure will continue to restore proper standards and bring peace to the troubled land of the Punjab.

6.23 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My hon. Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) raised an important subject and I feel almost reluctant to move away from the problems of the Punjab and the weighty problems of national sovereignty to talk about a subject that is of no great moment in that respect. However, it is a subject that gets right up my nose and, I suspect, up the noses of many Londoners—the current state of London's roads.

An enormous amount of frustration is building up among Londoners as they see the chaos with which we are daily presented as we try to move painfully around the capital city. I am not necessarily a great devotee of a roads lobby, but the alternative of using public transport is not up to scratch, either. The buses are affected by all the other vehicles on the roads and, at times, the London underground system, rather like the roads, is approaching a state of near-chaos and collapse.

At times, it seems almost as if every road in London is being dug up, while every Thames bridge is being worked on. I know that that is an exaggeration, but it is the sort of

[Mr. Tony Banks]

exaggeration from which I seem to suffer as I make my journeys on public transport or as I drive into the House each day. The impression one gets is that there is chaos all around us. There is no co-ordination and no one in charge. There is no one to get hold of and brutalise in order to expiate the enormous anger that builds up as one tries to go about one's lawful business.

It is not just the sheer frustration of sitting in a traffic jam surrounded by traffic cones, all of which seem to grin. I do not know why it is, but they seem to take on a life form of their own. In fact, we have become the world's largest exporter of traffic cones. We must be making an awful lot because I should have thought that we would be importing them, given the number that seem to infest our roads. What really gets one is that there is no warning about the traffic jam in which one suddenly finds oneself. It could perhaps have been avoided if one had been given an opportunity to re-route. One is not given that sort of chance. A road that one might have gone down in the morning has sometimes been dug up by the time one comes back in the evening. It is very frustrating.

There is little, if any, evidence of any common sense or planning being applied to those works. I accept that many of them are essential because they represent infrastructure investment. However, many seem to be, if not unnecessary, certainly carried out extremely tardily. Traffic lights are not rephased, and temporary traffic management schemes are not even considered or seem to have been devised by half-mad aliens from space. It seems that maximum inconvenience to Londoners is the objective.

I am assuming that it is not Martians who are responsible for what is going on in London.

Mr. Worthington: It is the Minister for Transport in London.

Mr. Banks: I should like to see that estimable gentleman spending a little more time concentrating on the problems of moving around London. I do not think that he is the only one responsible. I am ready to point the finger at any Tory because I blame the Tories for most things, including the state of the weather. However, I do not think that they are the only villains in this case.

Who are the villains? Essentially it is the public utilities —electricity, water, telecommunications companies and, at times, London Transport. The main villain seems to be the television cable companies. All those bodies have the legal right to break open the streets. Also, the work of private developers sometimes manages to spill over on to the public highway, inconveniencing those who are trying to use streets.

Those public utilities not only have a statutory right to break up the road but seem to take a perverse delight in doing it one at a time on the same stretch of road. The road is dug up, it is filled in and then someone else digs it up again. It does not make any sense and, as I have said, it causes great frustration.

The work on the roads seems to conform to the normal working pattern of the day. In other words, it starts at about 8.30 or 9 o'clock and continues until about 5.30, when everyone goes home. I do not believe that people should have to work unsocial hours, but many people are ready to work on a shift system. We should have more night-working on major road repairs and there should be weekend work as well. Plenty of people are ready to do overtime, but none of the statutory undertakings seems ready to pay it. *[Interruption.]* I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) as he seems to be beside himself with enthusiasm to join in.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Has anybody asked my hon. Friend whether those road works were outside his own house at midnight?

Mr. Banks: I am glad that my hon. Friend made that point, because obviously such works cannot be undertaken in residential areas. He will recall, however, that emergency repairs to a collapsed sewer in Parliament square were conducted at a time convenient to right hon. and hon. Members. The utilities know to get a move on when they will be inconveniencing Members of Parliament, but there is no concern for the poor perishers who live in my constituency. The utilities can dig up roads in the east end, walk away and leave them for a few weeks. When they come back, the holes will be full of litter, but that prevents it from blowing around. But if works affect Members of Parliament, they must get on with them straight away. That seems to smack of double standards.

We have all commented on the enormous profits that privatised companies are making, so there is no economic excuse for their not completing works on London's roads as quickly, efficiently and effectively as possible. They are not short of a bob or two when it comes to shelling out for extra overtime. They minimise their costs on street works and maximise the inconvenience to Londoners.

I hoped that the Government would have included in legislation the recommendations of the Horne report, which was welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. It was felt that the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 would have made some improvements. Far from it—the situation in London seems to have gone from bad to worse. I know that I am getting a little aerated, but I have been waiting for this opportunity. I keep thinking, "I am going to write to my Member of Parliament about this," but then I realise that I am my Member of Parliament. So I am raising this matter not only on my behalf but on behalf of my constituents and many Londoners.

Anyone who uses a taxi only has to scratch slightly to hear the complaints of taxi drivers, who often seem to question the parentage of Ministers, especially Transport Ministers. Naturally, I always stoutly defend Conservative Ministers. Despite the welcome that it received from hon. Members, the 1991 Act has serious defects—primarily, local authorities no longer have responsibility for carrying out street works on behalf of the utilities. The new Act gives utilities responsibility for works under the terms of a nationally agreed set of specifications.

I shall quote from the British Road Federation, which is unusual for me but it is in line with the advice that I have received from my borough council, the London Boroughs Association and the Association of London Authorities. Everyone seems to agree: only action is missing to deal with the problems. The British Road Federation says:

"The legislation has been broadly welcomed and few expected there to be an overnight transformation."

That is an understatement, but we certainly did not expect it to get worse overnight. The federation continues:

"Information about the daily activities of utilities is still very limited. This causes significant problems for local authorities if they are to achieve the inspection levels required in the regulations without incurring excessive abortive costs. The inspection fee is inadequate to fulfil the duties indicated by the

Act and highway authorities are experiencing a real increase in costs. There is also concern that the standards of reinstatement set may not be sufficient."

It can say that again. Good metalled roads are broken up by contractors on behalf of public utilities, only to be repaired in a slipshod fashion. Within a few days or weeks, they are reduced to potholed patchwork quilts. Such is the state of London's roads today.

The British Road Federation continues:

"The co-ordination of street works needs to be improved. The duty to co-ordinate rests with highway authorities"—

local authorities. It says:

"utilities have to endeavour to co-operate but it is not a duty."

I tell the Leader of the House that they do not endeavour much when it comes to informing local authorities, because it is not a duty. We have a permissive, lax system, and unless a requirement is imposed on the utilities, they will not take any notice but will laugh at us.

The federation says:

"In many instances it is impractical to co-ordinate all the small scale works being undertaken. This is because the notice period for minor works is too short."

That may be so, but the delays caused by minor works certainly are not too short. The federation continues:

"Co-ordination, therefore, is only happening on major works, where there is a minimum of one month's notice. The major area of concern is the belief that the implementation of the Act is adding to local authorities expenditure."

That is what all the local authorities and associations in London and, I suspect, throughout the country, whatever their political complexion, are saying. The public utilities simply cannot be trusted. The Act is not working as we intended.

We must address the problem, which is giving rise to enormous frustration and anger not only in me but among Londoners. I ask the Leader of the House and his colleagues to initiate an urgent investigation into the impact of the legislation and to seek ways to deal with the problems that we are experiencing on London's roads.

6.35 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I rise to ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House whether it would be possible to ensure that we do not break for the Easter recess until my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has made a statement on the important issue of the road building programme and on the problem facing my constituency—the proposed new motorway from the M25 to Chelmsford.

I remember sitting in the House soon after I was elected in 1987 and listening to a statement from the then Secretary of State for Transport on the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity". I thought that it did not affect my constituency or any of the surrounding constituencies in mid-Essex, but to my amazement I discovered that it recommended the construction of a new motorway from the M25 to Chelmsford.

Few people—commuters and those in industry and commerce—would dispute the need to have good road and rail communications throughout the country, especially in the southern and mid-Essex areas, offering access into the hinterland of East Anglia, to the ports at Harwich and Felixstowe and up into Norfolk and Suffolk. That is particularly true with the arrival of the single market and the opening later this year of the channel tunnel. Business, industry and commerce must be able to maximise their opportunities to flourish and to take advantage of improving economic conditions.

It seems to my constituents and me, however, and to those of my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles)—and even, I suspect, to those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton)—quite criminal that a new motorway could be constructed from the M25 through the green belt and the small villages and rural areas of Essex, passing through Highwood in my constituency, on to Writtle in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree and back to the A12 south of Chelmsford at Margaretting. That is virgin, agricultural and rural green belt land.

What puzzles our constituents is that nobody ever asked for this road. We do not want it. It is unloved and unnecessary and there are other ways to improve the existing road network into East Anglia. I cannot find many people in south and mid-Essex who are in favour of the road. All the local authorities reject the need for a new motorway. Certainly, my right hon. and hon. Friends with constituencies in the area reject it.

The excellent work done by the "Stop the M12" association has highlighted the anger, disgust and antipathy of local residents towards a new road through that part of Essex. The campaign that has been waged almost ever since the proposal first became known has been successful in that it has been able to sustain itself for a long time and to continue lobbying without splitting into splinter groups and to bring it home to the Secretary of State for Transport and other Ministers at the Department that nobody wants this unloved road.

Ultimately, we do not know whether the campaign has been successful because no decisions have been made or announced, but we shall continue to campaign and lobby until we hear from my right hon. Friend that the road is to be killed off and that the proposal will never see the light of day. I stress that the sooner that the announcement can be made the better, because it would remove the fears of our constituents and the potential blight of properties along the proposed route.

There is a problem as to what the route might be. Three suggestions have been pencilled or sketched in from the M25 to Chelmsford. For the past 18 months consultants have been trying to determine whether any of the three routes should be used or whether the existing A12 should be upgraded. We do not yet have the consultants' report or the results of the public inquiry to go on. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is anxious to save on public expenditure. Some months ago, I suggested to Ministers at the Department of Transport that one way of cutting public expenditure and saving waste would be to stop examining the routes and abandon the proposal altogether, but they have not done that, so we must now wait for the report and the decision of the Department of Transport.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to draw to the attention of the Secretary of State for Transport the concern and desire to have an announcement, if at all humanly possible, before the Easter recess so that our constituents can have peace of mind and so that we can ensure that this hare-brained, unloved and unwanted scheme is killed off once and for all.

6.42 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): The *Evening Standard* of Wednesday 16 March carried the headline, "Victory for Right to Smack". I believe that that

[Mr. Roland Boyes]

is a tragedy for thousands of children. To a great extent, I blame the stupidity of Justice Wilson, who rejected a bid by Sutton borough council to outlaw smacking even with parental permission. It is an interesting dichotomy—who decides and what degree—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman really should not criticise a member of the judiciary—he can do so only on a substantive motion. Will he please bear that in mind?

Mr. Boyes: My apologies, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

An important group—the Physical Punishment of Children pressure group—claimed that the decision to permit smacking went against Government policy, undertakings made by the Government and the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. Will the Leader of the House and his Cabinet colleagues look into the matter?

Let us imagine the serious consequences of the decision for social services departments. I was an assistant director of social services for Durham county council and I am well aware of the organisational and cash implications of such a decision. I make it clear that child minders and other carers should not, in any circumstances, smack, slap or shake children. We should not abuse our children in any way. I have managed to bring up two children—both of whom are now more than 30 years old—without finding it necessary to smack, slap or shake them.

Sutton council refused to register Mrs. Davis as an official child minder because she refused to sign an undertaking not to use corporal punishment, which tells us a great deal. Recently there have been a number of tragedies involving children: three children died in Peterlee and there was the famous case of Maria Calwell.

I deal now with schoolteachers. It is crazy that an unqualified child minder is able to smack a child but a qualified schoolteacher in county Durham, for example —my education authority—could and would be dismissed if he or she smacked a child. I believe that that is right and that the other course of action is wrong.

6.45 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): My hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), given his experience before coming to the House, speaks with great authority on the topic of child abuse. He is also correct to draw our attention to the anomalies which the recent judgment creates. I am sure that the House will have to return to this matter.

If, in their drive to amalgamate Departments, the Government decide to amalgamate the Department of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Department of Transport, the Leader of the House will be able to pass the job of replying to debates of this sort to the new joint Secretary of State, because almost all the matters that have been raised in our three-hour debate relate either to foreign affairs or to transport.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) was joined by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) in praising the Foreign Secretary for the leadership qualities that he is displaying, especially when standing up to the shortcomings of the European Union. The right hon. Gentleman was good enough to list his criticisms of the European Union and to offer helpful advice to the parliamentary Labour party on how we should be probing European institutions. It is a debating device of long standing that those who wish to criticise the stance of their own party challenge the opposing party for not making the same criticisms effectively enough. The right hon. Gentleman gave the game away a little when he felt it necessary to make special mention of a point on which he agreed with the Prime Minister.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), not only rightly but movingly, drew the House's attention to the plight of people in receipt of war pensions and war widows' pensions who will be affected by the Government's proposed changes. I hope that the Leader of the House, who is very knowledgeable on the subject, will be able to say something to set at rest the minds of those who are currently in receipt of such pensions, particularly those who were unfortunately tortured in captivity during the second world war. Those who managed to survive the cruel circumstances of far eastern prison camps, in particular, and who are now of pensionable age deserve to be at the forefront of the House's consideration. My right hon. Friend was quite right to refer to their plight, and I hope that the Leader of the House will say something to meet his concern.

My right hon. Friend also raised the question of our having a Minister in the Ministry of Defence to deal specifically with veterans' affairs and to co-ordinate the work of various Departments. This matter has been dealt with on previous occasions and is certainly worthy of consideration.

The hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) called for help for the elderly. He outlined some of the problems that such people face and some of the things that the Government are doing to help. The assistance that pensioners are being given to enable them to carry the extra burden represented by VAT on fuel bills, while welcome as far as it goes, is not adequate compensation. The average pensioner household will still be £1 a week short. That may not sound like a lot of money, but it is a great deal for pensioners on small and relatively fixed incomes.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies had a look at the changes in the distribution of the tax burden for the period 1985-95 and found that the very wealthiest were better off but that everybody else was paying more, largely as a result of the shift from direct taxation to indirect taxation. Those with family responsibilities and the very poor were particularly hard hit. The poorest decile and the second poorest, into which most pensioners fall, were also hit particularly hard.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) drew attention—slightly implausibly, I thought—to the Government's record on crime. He failed to make any proper analysis of the growth of crime or to offer any genuine means of dealing with it, apart from his call for more police on the beat. Many of us think that the rather woolly liberalism that the hon. Gentleman seems to represent has contributed to the problem rather than provided a solution to it. *[Interruption.]* Well, that is my view.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) struck a seasonal note as we move towards the holiday period. He raised the important question of coach safety and seat belts. If it is true that 12 per cent. of deaths

resulting from coach accidents could be prevented through the use of seat belts, such devices will have to be fitted, and funds will have to be provided for the purpose.

Time does not allow me to deal adequately with all the matters raised crisply—as always on these occasions—by the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr.Amess). The hon. Gentleman, as he often does, denounced Essex county council for being a rotten socialist body, citing in evidence of socialist repression the removal of the lollipop lady. That does not seem to me such a dreadful act of socialist tyranny. Certainly foreign countries have provided more ferocious examples in the past. Characteristically, the hon. Gentleman offered to do the job himself. Given the fact that his seat is a marginal one, although he has held on to it so far, and given the Government's current lack of popularity, I understand why he should be looking around. I wish him well in his future career, for which he is adequately qualified.

The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) restated his case on events in Northern Ireland. I do not feel qualified to make a full and comprehensive response. However, I can say that we all listened with respect and understanding.

That is more than I can say for the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), who drew a parallel between the revolting apartheid regime in South Africa and the refusal of some schools in Cleveland to play football with a team from a city technology college. I hope that hon. Members will understand when I say that the two issues are not the same—not in proportion, and not even in theme. After all, city technology colleges were intended to be divisive, and the hon. Gentleman should not be surprised if those who attend other academic institutions are resentful. That is clearly what is happening in Cleveland.

Drawing a parallel between apartheid and the question whether schools play football with each other is a wrongful statement of the case, but it is also particularly rich when it comes from Langbaurgh. Like the hon. Gentleman, I remember the Langbaurgh by-election. I went down to help my friend Ashok Kumar, who won the by-election but, unfortunately, did not retain the seat at the general election. Those of us who took part in that by-election know that racism did raise its ugly head and that certain people encouraged it. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman invites me to join him in condemnation. I am happy to do so. I condemn racism, I condemn those who incite it, and I condemn those who benefit from it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) presented an impressive defence of the Commonwealth Institute. He was right to ask whether the Government have thought this issue through. Closure of the institute—this is what the Government seem to be moving towards—could cost rather than save public money. It seems to me that that would be a ridiculous state of affairs.

The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) added to the speech that he made in the debate when we last discussed an Adjournment motion by telling us of a concession that he had received from the Department of Transport.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) returned to the question of foreign affairs with a very powerful speech in defence of human rights in the Punjab. He was quite right to put his speech in the context of our relationship with India, with which we have historic connections and very friendly ties and commercial arrangements. He cited the Amnesty International report and condemned the disappearance of militants. It was very interesting to hear him make that point. However, he balanced his comments with references to the Indian judiciary and press and to the role that they can play in restoring government of a type that we should like to see —democratic rather than authoritarian.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) spoke for all of us who have to travel to this building when he referred to the frustration involved in getting through the traffic in London. Who is in charge? Who plans the various works? It is clear that the lack of an overall authority is disrupting the city. I know that the Lord President thinks himself fortunate that my hon. Friend defends Ministers when, travelling in cabs, he explains these matters to enraged taxi drivers. I am sure that he is a powerful advocate.

The hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), having read the document "Roads to Prosperity", hoped that it would not apply to his own constituency. He called for peace of mind for the next general election. I expect that the Lord President will be able to give him some assurance.

I should like the Lord President to provide me with some peace of mind in respect of the Swan Hunter shipyard in my constituency. It is in dire circumstances. It is in the hands of receivers and could close, with the loss of all jobs. Some 2,000 direct employees and 2,000 people indirectly employed have already gone. There are only 600 manual workers left, but it is possible that at least their jobs can be saved if the Ministry of Defence commits a medium-sized order now. There is such an order in prospect, and it would certainly be the most welcome news for Tyneside if an announcement were to be made before we adjourned for the Easter recess.

6.58 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I was put in mind, during the speech of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry if I am mispronouncing part of the name of the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I shall avoid referring to it and stick simply to "Clydebank".

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): It is the Tory bit that the right hon. Gentleman is avoiding.

Mr. Newton: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that that was accidental.

The reference to the Commonwealth Institute put me in mind of the fact that, only yesterday, I spent a very pleasant hour with a large number of parliamentarians who are here under the banner of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

My task was to talk about the job of being Leader of the House. I ventured into most of the details, such as the business statement, the occasional difficulties of having to stand in for the Prime Minister at Question Time, the business of planning the legislative programme and all the rest, but I did not venture into trying to explain the arcane mysteries of the occasional debates in which the Leader of the House, having proposed that the House should have a holiday, sits here for three hours listening to hon. Members expressing, apparently with great passion, their desire not to have a holiday until a certain matter has been discussed.

[Mr. Newton]

The Leader of the House then watches the shiver of apprehension that goes around the Chamber when anyone suggests that he might accept those blandishments and withdraw his motion. Indeed, a distinct frisson passed over the face of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) when he heard an hon. Member say, "If we have a recess" rather than, "before we have a recess." I noted that carefully.

Many subjects were raised during the debate. Manifestly, I shall not have time to respond to them all. Where I am not able to respond fully, I shall ensure that the attention of my appropriate right hon. Friends is drawn to what has been said, and they will reply in other ways, as may be appropriate.

I am especially conscious of that difficulty because several Essex issues have been raised both by my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), with whom I share some concerns, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess), who mentioned some educational problems that are of concern in my constituency, too. To my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford I merely say delicately that I understand why he raised those matters, and that I have no doubt that many of my constituents in the Chelmsford part of my constituency would have wished to echo what he said—and also some of the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon on education and other matters.

Let me now, in as good order as I can, deal with the speeches in the order in which they were made. I fully understand the reasons for the speeches by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) and the importance that they attach to expressing their backing for my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. I am sure that he, and indeed all of us, are grateful for that. However, I hope that they will understand that, after the exchanges during Prime Minister's questions and the remarks that I made during business questions both this week and last week, and as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is in the midst of the negotiations, there is not a great deal that I can now add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have already said.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), in his capacity as parliamentary adviser to the Royal British Legion, raised two points, one about the recent changes in the war pensions scheme concerning deaths caused by smoking-related diseases or by alcohol-related diseases—it is perhaps important that that should be registered. Some of the same things could be said about alcohol. The right hon. Gentleman's second argument was about the legion's wish to have what he described as a sub-department of ex-service affairs.

On the right hon. Gentleman's first point, I must emphasise that the legislation has been changed to ensure that the law reflects the long-standing policy of successive Governments that smoking should be regarded as attributable to service only where a disabling mental condition, itself attributable to service, renders an individual incapable of exercising personal choice.

The Government made some changes in consultation on the detail of the proposals, and I acknowledge that there is scope for some argument about how precisely the aim is best achieved. However, I believe that people in general would accept that no service man was ever required to smoke, and I do not believe that any Government ever intended to compensate for the effects of a habit such as smoking, in the way that at one time I thought that the right hon. Gentleman suggested—although I accept that that was probably not what he intended to do.

As for a sub-department of ex-service affairs, the right hon. Gentleman will know of the Government's general view that it is right for important services connected with people who have been in the armed forces to be a significant matter for every Government Department, and taken into account in the policies of every Department. We believe that that is best achieved within each Department rather than through the kind of co-ordinating system that the right hon. Gentleman implicitly suggested.

The right hon. Gentleman will recognise a development with which I am glad to say I had something to do when I was Secretary of State for Social Security. In my judgment at least, the creation of the War Pensions Agency has materially improved the effectiveness of one vital part of the services that we provide for ex-service people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) made an impressive speech about the problems and interests of retired people. I cannot possibly comment on the very many subjects that he raised, but I shall ensure that what he said is studied with care.

The same goes for the speech of the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), about rural policing, about which I could make one or two comments. I shall, of course, bring the speech to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, observing wryly in passing, however, that I now understand why the hon. Gentleman did not respond when he was asked to tell the House what had happened to crime in Northumbria—because that would not fit in with his speech. I understand that crime in Northumbria fell by 2 per cent. in the 12 months to June 1993—*[Interruption.]* Crime fell in Northumbria as a whole. As I have been reminded, there is a joint force.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), with characteristic courtesy—I am sorry that I was not able to be in the Chamber while he was speaking—said that he did not expect me to be able to answer all his questions, but hoped that they would be answered in some other form at a later stage. I shall do my best to ensure that that happens.

I have already made some comments about the remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and I hope that he will forgive me if in the circumstances, especially as there will be further debate on railway matters later tonight, I do not at this stage attempt to respond to everything that he said. I take on board what he said, and note especially what he said about hospital radio—a matter in which I also have a significant interest.

The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) made some significant comments that I took to represent the position of his party and not merely his personal position on matters in Northern Ireland. I hope that he will have been reassured by the fact that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) on Tuesday and assured him that nothing done or said by the IRA and its apologists would deflect the Government from our chosen course, and that the Government would continue to pursue a lasting political settlement through the three-stranded talks process.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh made some comments that struck me forcefully, and I had much sympathy with them. The hon. Member for Clydebank—and that other place that I find difficult to pronounce—made some comments about the Commonwealth Institute, which I shall pass on, as I shall the remarks about the high-speed link.

Lastly, I come to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)—I nearly always almost miss him. We all understand his frustration about street works in various places. Things sound even worse in his constituency than they are in mine. Perhaps he should change his Member of Parliament—

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 22 (Periodic Adjournments).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising on Thursday 31st March, do adjourn until Tuesday 12th April and, at its rising on Friday 29th April, do adjourn until Tuesday 3rd May.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

BOVINE SOMATOTROPHIN

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8757/93 and 10761/93, relating to bovine somatotrophin (BST), and of the recommendation to prohibit the marketing and use of BST for the duration of milk quotas; and supports the subsequent Council Decision for a continuation of the existing moratorium until 31st December 1994, linked to a declaration that the Council uses this period to consider the implications of long-term prohibition and, in particular, experience of its use in the United States.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

ELECTRICITY AND NATURAL GAS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4911/92, and the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 4th February 1994, relating to common rules for the internal market in electricity and natural gas; supports the Government's view that the Commission's proposals are the minimum acceptable as the second phase of the establishment of the internal energy market; and endorses the Government's objective of progressing to full liberalisation as rapidly as possible.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

The House divided: Ayes 163, Noes 40.

Division No. 170] **[7.09 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
MacKay, Andrew
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Betts, Clive
Boyes, Roland
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunnwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*

Hall, Mike	Mahon, Alice
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wythenshawe)*
Home Robertson, John	Pike, Peter L.
Hoon, Geoffrey	Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Illsley, Eric	Simpson, Alan
Ingram, Adam	Spearing, Nigel
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*	Speller, John
Keen, Alan	Worthington, Tony
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*	
McCartney, Ian	**Tellers for the Noes:**
Mackinlay, Andrew	Mr. Bob Cryer and
McMaster, Gordon	Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Cancer

7.19 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Some weeks ago I received a letter from one of my constituents who had been diagnosed as suffering from breast cancer. She said that, once the diagnosis was finally established, she had received both the best of treatment and the best of support services from the national health service. However, she wanted to make a very important point. She detailed the length of time that her diagnosis had taken and pointed out that she had had considerable difficulty in getting some sort of treatment at an early stage as a result of problems of diagnosis and referral.

My constituent said that it seemed to her that Members of Parliament were concerned about matters that she regarded as not life-threatening, but when it came to something like the death of a woman from cancer—something which is, unfortunately, not altogether unusual—it was difficult to get Members of Parliament to take an interest in the difficulties that women face every day in trying to receive help. I thought that that must be wrong, so I sought the help of the Secretary of State for Health.

I told the Secretary of State the problem. I sent her the letter from my constituent. For reasons of confidentiality, I did not choose to raise the matter on the Floor of the House. I received a reply which is becoming almost standard from the Government. It was the equivalent of, "Don't call me, I'll call you." It said that the treatment of that particular patient was the responsibility of a particular trust and that was all there was to it. I received no explanation of the Government's views. I received simply a bald statement of what had happened in the case of that patient, and the Secretary of State's referral back to the health trust involved.

My constituent was extremely distressed by the letter because, as she pointed out to me, her letter was not a complaint about a particular NHS trust. She had undertaken that task. She had dealt with the NHS trust and had received a reply of sorts. She either accepted or did not accept what it said. The point that she made over and over again to the Department of Health and to Members of Parliament was that what was important was early treatment, diagnosis and referral of cancer. She had received neither an adequate response nor any idea of what the Government intended to do about any of those problems.

Therefore, I went to the Table Office and tabled a series of questions. I discovered that the Joint Council for Clinical Oncology had drawn up a series of sensible guidelines because it was so worried about the whole question of treatment. I asked

"the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many hospitals comply with the target of radical radiotherapy involving complex treatment planning within two weeks laid down in the guidelines . . . (2) how many hospitals comply with the target of urgent palliative radiotherapy within 48 hours laid down in the guidelines . . . (3) how many hospitals comply with the target of urgent radiotherapy or chemotherapy within 24 hours laid down in the guidelines . . . (4) how many hospitals comply with the target of intensive chemotherapy within one week laid down in the guidelines".

I received from the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) the reply that

"This information is not held centrally."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. *83*.]

That is outrageous. What is happening to the Government? Are they deliberately seeking to fragment the prevention and treatment of cancer by splitting up the market into individual small pieces? Are they seeking to hide the information that we need about the delays faced by those in need of cancer treatment? Are they prepared at least to comment on the targets that have been set for treatment waiting times? Or are they prepared to say, as it appears from the reply that I received, "This is really not a matter for Her Majesty's Government because the information is not held centrally"?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does the hon. Lady agree that, in respect of the health service, the Government should be accountable at the end of the day to the House? If the Government have delegated responsibility to the National Health Service Management Executive, as they clearly have, surely it would not be too difficult for my hon. Friend the Minister to obtain a reply from the executive in response to the valid and important questions posed by the hon. Lady. If the Management Executive does not provide such information, it fails entirely to do the job for which it was set up, and the House clearly cannot represent the best interests of the people of Britain.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The hon. Gentleman, who was a most distinguished Chairman of the Health Select Committee, not only understands the subject well but is committed to improving health care in the national health service. I am afraid that he sets out exactly what the Government ought to do. The alternative is the type of comment that we saw in the *Health Service Journal* of 16 September 1993, which read:

"People with cancer are having to wait eight weeks or more for treatment in some cancer centres, a report from the Joint Council for Clinical Oncology reveals. In new guidelines the council suggests urgent radiotherapy or chemotherapy should usually begin within 24 hours of seeing a specialist."

It is worth examining those guidelines carefully, because they highlight exactly what is wrong. The report is headed "Reducing delays in cancer treatment". The joint council deliberately highlighted the problems it saw, because it believed that

"Delay in treating cancer is unacceptable. Its natural history is to spread locally and metastasise distantly. Whilst the reduction in cure rate caused by delay is difficult to quantify, the known biology of cancer and the published differences in cure rate . . . makes it evident that delay adversely affects cure."

That was said by people dealing with the problems of cancer patients every day.

In case the Government find it difficult to understand, the council has also laid out what sort of delays can get in the way of starting treatment. It says that sometimes there are delays in recognising symptoms of cancer. It says that, therefore, it is tremendously important that there should be better public education and more rapid referrals to specialist units. It says that there can be delays in progress through primary care to hospital. It says that the efficiency of administrative arrangements, including waiting times for out-patient appointments and investigations, must be reviewed regularly. Continuing medical education to ensure appropriate and timely referrals must be encouraged and, where necessary, improved. It says that delays in hospital before specialist referral to an oncology unit also contribute to the problems.

Already, within the NHS trust which particularly concerns me, we see clear signs that referrals to radiotherapy departments are taking longer and longer. I am convinced that the split into provider services and the purchaser theory, which is so relevant to, and redolent of, incompetence, is having a direct effect on the provision of treatment. Those waiting times are not even chronicled by the Department of Health and they are not available to individual Members of Parliament. Once upon a time, we would simply have tabled questions and asked how long people normally had to wait before they got an appointment. Such information is now hidden. We are told that it is a matter for the individual trust.

In 1992, the Royal College of Radiologists received a number of reports about delays in starting treatment that had been advised at the initial oncology consultation. Its faculty of clinical oncology carried out a survey of oncology centres in the United Kingdom and received 29 replies, in which 14 centres reported waiting times for radiotherapy of four weeks or longer. In several of those, the delay was of seven or eight weeks. Those delays were after a clinical oncologist had seen the patient and advised radiotherapy, so it was not that people did not know what treatment was required—the patient had been seen and referred by a specialist.

The report states:

"Whilst there are recognised emergencies in cancer therapy"—

it mentions spinal cord compression—

"the majority of cancer patients do not need to begin their definitive treatment within hours. The clinical situation, including severity of symptoms and the anxiety of the patient, should properly determine the arrangements made. In some patients a 'fast track' to treatment will be needed with waiting times shorter than the targets"

which the joint council set out. I shall place those targets on the record because I want some publicity on the matter. I want some action.

The joint council recommends waiting time targets from the date of the first consultation to the start of radiotherapy or chemotherapy. For urgent radiotherapy or chemotherapy, good practice is within 24 hours, and the maximum acceptable is 48 hours. For palliative radiotherapy, according to the severity of the symptoms, good practice is defined as 48 hours, and the maximum acceptable period is two weeks. For radical radiotherapy involving complex treatment planning, good practice is defined as two weeks, and the maximum acceptable period is four weeks. For intensive chemotherapy, good practice is defined as one week, and the maximum acceptable waiting time is three weeks. Those targets arose because the joint council had been told that people were waiting anything up to eight weeks.

[Mrs. Dunwoody]

I began to inquire into not only obvious cancer figures but cancers generally. Of course one is concerned about cancers that particularly affect females. The numbers of registered deaths from breast cancer in the UK were: in 1990, 114 men and 15,179 women; in 1991, 90 men and 15,403 women; in 1992, 98 men and 15,221 women.

The figures on deaths from other cancers show that the changes have not been remarkable. Despite changes in treatment and advances in medical care, the number of people dying has not altered a great deal. Even in my region, where there are considerable problems with industrial and lung cancers, one only has to consider the figures on prostate cancer to see what is happening to men.

The information given in a written answer in *Hansard*, at column *43* on 7 February 1994 shows that in 1988, 7,458 men died of cancer of the prostate and in 1992, 8,735 men died of that disease. In my region of Mersey, the number of deaths from cancer of the trachea, bronchus and lung in 1992 was 1,198 for men and 700 for women.

In what other situation could one imagine a House of Commons treating those consistent figures as a matter of little concern? What other disease or set of circumstances that killed that number of the population would be treated with that sort of superficial response? It would be difficult to find any other set of circumstances where the House of Commons would accept deaths in those numbers without taking urgent and immediate action.

It is clear that problems arise not only with breast cancer and breast cancer screening. A variety of screening methods can pick up cases of prostatic cancer much earlier. Does the Department intend to take any steps to develop a screening programme? There should be more fast tracking of patients with suspected cancers. The waiting list initiative which, whatever the Minister says, has distorted clinical priorities, could well interfere with the fast access that patients should have to screening facilities. There is no reason why general practitioners should not have much better access to screening facilities, such as ultrasound and CT scans. As far one can see, however, none of that is happening.

The House faces a Government who have adopted an accepting attitude. They seem to say, "Here is a major disease; we have done a certain amount, we have cervical screening and a certain amount of publicity. Of course, it is true that we do not spend anything like the amount on cancer education that we spend on glossy reports for NHS trusts or individual publicity campaigns for the Department of Health, but that should not matter to us because, after all, the people of Britain will not be particularly put out if more and more of them are faced with this problem in the coming years and nothing is done to assist them."

We should be concerned, and not just that my constituent has to write to me asking, "Why cannot I get a Minister to take seriously what I am saying?" We should ask ourselves why other constituents who have not written to hon. Members, but who are fighting fear and illness and, in many cases, major problems caused by poverty and illness, have not been given the voice they need on the Floor of the House. The Department of Health has not shown anything like the vigour and the campaigning in the treatment of cancer that has been shown in highlighting other diseases.

Why does the Secretary of State for Health, who appears to refuse absolutely to push hard for the banning of tobacco products, not do something to monitor the rate of response of doctors to the needs of those who are suffering from carcinoma? At what point will we receive accurate information? We do not want the answer, "Write individually to each health care trust and if you are lucky you can put all the bits together. If you go to the Library, someone else might do it for you." We want accurate information on how long people have to wait before they are referred for their first appointment, what sort of treatment they receive and how long they have to wait for it after their first appointment with a consultant and what sort of general support services are available.

I was impressed when I telephoned the service of the British Association of Cancer United Patients—a service which is run mainly by the nurses of St. Bartholomew's hospital to help people who may have been diagnosed, or think they may have been diagnosed, as suffering from cancers. The response was helpful, civilised and informative. It gave exactly the type of support that one would need if one was very frightened.

The word "cancer" terrifies people, especially women. They are terrified if they think that they might have something that needs treatment. Many of them are still not confident enough to come forward at an early stage because they are terrified. If an unnecessary barrier is put in their way, such as the need to wait for an appointment or the failure of the system to refer them to a specialist early enough, they will give up or, in some cases, decide that they ought to try to obtain some other treatment.

If one were a private patient, one would not have to wait for a suitable appointment in a radiotherapy department or with a consultant oncologist. The response would be rapid. Indeed, one might be offered a series of appointments. What does one do if one cannot, or will not, go to a private doctor? What does one do if one lacks the money or the back-up to go outside the national health service and demand some immediate care pattern? One worries oneself into a state of collapse before there is any sign of suitable treatment, whatever it is and whenever it happens.

I believe that the Government are determined to wreck preventive health altogether by the way in which they have split the national health service, so one should not be astonished by their response on that subject. However, some people demand that we force the Department to give us some answers—instead of allowing it to reply to five or six questions in the House, tabled correctly, with a reply about whether the information is "available". It does not say, "We cannot collect it." It does not say that it is too expensive. It does not even say, "We are terribly sorry; we used to do that; now we do not." It simply says:

"This information is not held centrally."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1994; Vol. 23, c. *83*.]

The lack of information has one immediate effect. It means that no one realises the extent of the emergency, no one puts pressure on the Ministers and no one does anything other than treat the matter individually at every level.

Before I give the Minister the chance to read his usual anodyne series of unrelated statistics, I shall read another letter to the House, which sums up some of the difficulties. It is about a disease which, oddly enough, is not capable of responding to early treatment. It was sent to the Speaker and I have her permission to quote from it because it is of importance to the debate.

The gentleman who wrote the letter asked the Speaker to send his letter on to Members of Parliament, and especially the women Members of Parliament. He says:

"Right Honourable and Honourable Ladies,

I approach you in this way respectfully but unashamedly for the manner of the approach.

I wish to bring to your attention a situation that potentially affects all ladies . . .

At 4.45am just before dawn on Wednesday 22nd September 1993 my gentle, caring wife became a little known statistic.

She was one of ten that day, one of nearly 4000 women in the year, to die from ovarian cancer.

She died after a five month illness.

This cancer is lethal and this year more than twice as many women will die from it than cervical cancer.

Over 75 per cent. of these women will have gone to their doctors when the disease has spread outside the ovary—it is then already too late.

More than 72 per cent. will die within 5 years compared with 38 per cent. and 42 per cent. with cancer of the breast and cervix respectively.

If detected in its early stages, ovarian cancer, limited to the ovary itself, can be treated by surgery and over 90 per cent."

thus treated

"will survive 5 years.

For those of you who think 5 years is a short time then think of my wife and I who only had 5 months to say the things we needed to say and say goodbye with as much dignity as we could.

Incidences of this horrendous disease is limited of course to women . . .

If the deaths had . . . been due to say, influenza, with its 134 deaths in a month of this years outbreak then there would be an outcry against the Health Service and dark tales of epidemics and shortage of vaccines.

It is almost inconceivable that there is not a national outcry against this cancer, sometimes called, even by the normally stoical medical profession, 'The Silent Killer.'

The Silent Killer is not detectable in early stages with present day medical techniques . . . It is undetectable until it is too late . . .

I would be made a leper of society if I were to go out into the outside world today and denigrated women as second class citizens. Yet this is what this disease does. Deaths"

in

"this particular branch of . . . cancer go unreported, unnoticed and it seems only the immediate families care how the loved one became a victim."

He goes on to say that there is one chance, and one research unit. There is no clear sign that there will be sufficient funding even to start the research work at the Royal London hospital, which could make it possible to save many more women. He finishes:

"I am not appealing on behalf of any charity. I did this simply for ladies everywhere and for the memory of my wife. I know I may have been unethical in my approach; respectfully I apologise for that but not for the content of the letter . . . read this and"

I will know that you care.

We need a series of targets; we need action from the Department of Health; we need to take the work that is being done and to say how many departments throughout the United Kingdom do their job properly. We should not leave it to individual Members or individual doctors. We should act on behalf of the people who need our support.

No other group of people would be allowed to suffer as women are being allowed to suffer and it is an added disgrace that a female Secretary of State for Health has done nothing—nothing—to change the situation.

7.47 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), not only on being lucky in the draw, but on the way in which she decided to present to the House the issue of early treatment of cancer. Each year, 16,000 women die of breast cancer. In this country each and every year, there are more than 110,000 cancer-related deaths because of tobacco consumption. However, I want to debate not tobacco consumption but the three areas of cancer and prevention strategies. My hon. Friend has covered some of it eloquently. There are other areas which she has highlighted.

It is necessary for the Government to give clear and precise answers about their strategic approach in relation to the early diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Only improved diagnostic skills, with improvements in screening, will determine whether the outcome for the sufferer is a period of progress and health or one waiting for a slow, lingering death.

The profile of cancer prevention has never been higher because of the debate in relation to the banning of advertisements of tobacco products. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) has assiduously asked the Minister questions about the cost-effectiveness of screening and early detection.

The Minister would see an immediate return in one area without one extra penny having to be spent. Professor Smee's report on the banning of tobacco advertising shows that by that measure alone, 5,000 lives a year would be saved. The lives of 5,000 of our fellow citizens would be saved without an extra penny being spent on the national health service. Some £95 million of immoral earnings goes to the Treasury through the tax yield from children's purchases of cigarettes; yet only £5 million of that—5 per cent.—is reinvested in prevention programmes. That is an obscene set of priorities for a Health Minister.

I should like the Minister to turn his mind to three areas. I will give only a snapshot of the problems raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich to illustrate the way in which the Government fund, manage, resource and plan the national health service. I shall refer to prostate cancer, bowel cancer and primary liver cancer.

The incidence of prostate cancer has risen by 19 per cent. in five years, from 9,127 a year to 10,837. Death rates are up 17 per cent. in five years, from 7,458 to 8,735. In the past five years, 40,722 men have died from prostate cancer. It is the most common cancer affecting men over 60 in the United Kingdom. It is a silent killer; post mortem investigations prove that 10 to 30 per cent. of men between 50 and 60 and 60 per cent. of those between 70 and 80 have silent prostate cancers—undetected cancers—at the time of death.

Using those figures, at least 20 male Members of Parliament currently have an undetected, silent prostate cancer. Yet with screening methods, 15 to 18 of us would be identified early enough to survive. The survival rates are good if the cancer is detected early. Some 43 per cent. of those whose cancer is detected early are alive five years after diagnosis. In 1990, the British Medical Association's "Family Health Encyclopedia" said of the outcome of this very dangerous cancer:

"When the growth is discovered at an early stage, the outlook is very good. However, if the cancer has spread outside the prostate gland and does not respond to hormone treatment, the prognosis is poor."

Despite that, the Government remain stubbornly opposed to the introduction of a screening programme.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) recently asked the Under-Secretary of State for health what was his policy for the screening of this cancer. He replied:

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

"The key to any screening programme must be to secure a demonstrable improvement in health by increasing length of life and enhancing quality of life. There is, as yet, no evidence to suggest that this would be achieved in relation to prostate cancer. The Department of Health is pursuing research in screening through its own centrally commissioned programme and through the national health service research and development programme. A copy of the Chief Medical Officer's speech to a recent 'British medical Journal' conference setting out current policy implementation issues for screening in the NHS will be placed in the Library."—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1994; Vol. 236, c.*855*.]

In 1992, the disease claimed 9,396 mens' lives; that is four times the number of deaths from cervical cancer. There are rightly screening programmes in place for cervical cancer, yet the Government will still not introduce screening devices for men in relation to a killer disease. As I have said, the figures are alarming. Yet the prostate gland is an accessible piece of the anatomy for clinicians to reach. New scanning techniques, such as ultrasound, can detect prostate cancer. There are a number of proven treatments, such as radiology, chemotherapy, hormone therapy and, if necessary, surgery. With the use of those proven treatments, survival rates are good.

It was left to Doctor Thomas Stuttaford, writing in *The Times* on 6 March 1992, to put the matter into perspective. He spoke for many colleagues in the medical profession in advocating the institution of a screening programme. He said:

"If the tumour is localised, early surgery gives a 65 per cent. chance of surviving for ten years. As well as saving lives, a screening programme would reduce the number of men condemned to suffer lingering ill-health, and pain, for years."

However, among the Department of Health advisers and among the medical establishment, there is a group of people who discriminate ideologically against men in relation to prostate cancer. Many say that the cancer is part of the aging process and that it is not, therefore, cost-effective to screen men. They say that we should simply leave growing percentages of men, as they age, to be susceptible to the disease. Intellectually, that is an unacceptable and unsustainable argument.

If Department of Health officials are saying that they will intervene only at the point at which the individual concerned has a cancer and is unable to maintain his fitness, they are treating only to die and not to live. If that is not the Department's position on men and prostate cancer, the only option is to treat to live. To treat to live, there must be the option of screening, because without screening there is no early detection. Without early detection, it is difficult to sustain life after the operation, but with early detection, as Doctor Stuttaford has shown, there is a 65 per cent. chance of life after 10 years.

The Department and those in the medical establishment who advise the Department must come clean on the issue. Why are they discriminating against such a large proportion of the male population? Why should men simply have to accept that in the aging process, between 55 and 70, a growing proportion of us will have prostate cancer? As there is no screening, we shall have to accept that a growing proportion of us will die even if we have expensive and intensive treatment. That is nonsense in medical terms and in moral terms, but it is what the Government offer middle-aged men.

The argument for screening is overwhelming. Let us consider the evidence in the United States and in Germany, where all men over the age of 45 are advised to undergo an annual screening test—a prostate-specific antigen or PSA blood test. If the Government are in the business of preventive medicine, it is inconceivable that they can hold out much longer in such discrimination against so many men. If we accept the concept and principle of screening to prevent cervical cancer among women, how can we refuse to accept the concept of prostate cancer screening for men when the death rate from prostate cancer among men is four times as high as the death rate from the deadly disease of cervical cancer among women?

Some 22,000 of our fellow citizens die each year of cancer of the colon and rectum. Survival rates are poor even when it is detected, at 30 per cent. after five years. Yet in the specific area of colorectal cancer, which causes 17,500 deaths a year, early detection increases survival rates dramatically. With detection through early screening and the work done by consultants concerned, 80 per cent. of people survive.

The two cardinal symptoms of the disease are a change in bowel habits and rectal bleeding. As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich said, because of the lack of coherence, the failure to identify the disease through screening, the lack of patient involvement in preventive health care, and the lack of significant effort being made to give general practitioners and practice nurses better training and information, a growing number of men and women are having those cancers identified too late. If treatment took place, their life expectancy would improve dramatically.

We therefore need to take a number of steps. We must improve general health education, with information for patients and patients groups and work done at GP level. We must improve education and training for doctors and nurses, particularly general practitioners and practice nurses. We need a technique to improve screening methods.

Screening does not necessarily mean blood tests, urine tests and samples on every occasion. It means introducing into the NHS a preventive strategy whereby, on a regular basis at community and primary health care level, people susceptible to those diseases are seen regularly by GPs and practice nurses, who discuss with them whether the pattern of their bowel habits has changed or there is rectal bleeding. That general approach would significantly improve the identification of the disease and thus the survival rate once treatment has been implemented.

In a written question on 27 May 1993, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South asked the Secretary of State for Health:

"what plans she has to publish guidance to doctors in relation to screening for occult blood."

That important test can determine at an early stage whether someone is likely to be suffering from the consequences of bowel cancer. Yet the Under-Secretary replied:

"We have no plans to issue guidance at this time."—[*Official Report*, 27 May 1993; Vol. 225, c. 668.]

So the Government have no plans to notify or explain to GPs that that screening method is one of the most effective ways to identify the disease at an early stage.

Where is the Government's strategy for prevention? Where is the Minister's concern and interest? He is not even prepared to send a letter to tell GPs that the introduction of an occult blood test would assist greatly in identifying cancer in so many of their patients. He should

not forget that that cancer causes 17,500 deaths a year. The stakes are high. He could at least send a letter to GPs about the matter.

Tests and procedural advice would help greatly in ensuring that GPs did not misread the symptoms of colorectal cancer as haemorrhoids. A constituent of mine is now terminally ill because such advice was not given to his general practitioner, who misread his symptoms. My constituent's symptoms went unchecked for more than 12 months. When that gentleman was admitted in an emergency to a local district hospital, sadly, he had a tumour in his colon bigger than the palm of the surgeon's hand. That is no exaggeration—it is in the discharge notes written by the surgeon, who said that on carrying out surgery to save my constituent's life he was appalled to find an inoperable tumour that was larger than the palm of his hand.

My constituent had consistently been to his general practitioner with symptoms which could have shown that he was suffering from cancer of the colon. If the Secretary of State had given that general practitioner the advice sought in the question tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South, the general practitioner and his colleagues in the medical profession would have been more aware that symptoms suggesting haemorrhoids could also be symptoms of cancer of the colon and rectum.

Primary liver cancer is the most common in the world. Its main cause is the hepatitis B virus. Thankfully, a large proportion of this country's population are not infected by that virus and deaths from that common cancer so far are relatively low compared with other forms of cancer that have been outlined. However, this debate is about early detection and prevention. The World Health Organisation wrote to the Government, along with other Governments, advising them that, for a variety of reasons, the spread of hepatitis B in the developed world poses a potential threat to future and current young generations. The World Health Organisation could not have given a clearer message that there has been and will continue to be a spread of hepatitis B in communities such as the developed industrial society in which we live.

Until now, it has been a disease of the third world and the developed world has ignored it, as we have ignored the spread of tuberculosis, which is the world's largest killer. We have turned a blind eye to it because deaths from it have been mainly in the third world. We have therefore failed to recognise the growth of tuberculosis in the United Kingdom and have at the same time allowed health authorities to ignore screening and vaccination programmes for the first time since the introduction of such programmes in our society. That short-termism will undermine the community's long-term health and well-being.

Despite the increase in tuberculosis, the Government have so far ignored the World Health Organisation's warnings about the spread of hepatitis B in our society. The World Health Organisation has come back to the Government and recommended that we should put into place by 1997 a hepatitis B preventive vaccination programme which should target not only children in socially deprived communities but all children in the UK. Why do the Government refuse to comply?

I am talking about a vaccination to prevent cancer. The hepatitis B virus is the most common factor in the development of primary cancer of the liver; yet the western world faces now the possibility of our young people being put at risk because the hepatitis B virus is becoming more widespread. In later years, therefore, there is likely to be a significant increase in primary liver cancer. Medical science has given us a vaccination which can prevent the onset of this cancer, but the Government refuse to take the advice offered by the World Health Organisation.

The Government are penny wise and pound foolish. They allow health authorities to spend millions on BMWs, Jaguars and Range Rovers for executives while denying our children access to preventive strategies against hepatitis B. In some areas our children are not being vaccinated against the onset of tuberculosis either. That shows that the Government are not interested in preventive strategies or in a co-ordinated approach to the prevention and treatment of disease.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich I shall end by reading out a letter. It is typical of the letters that I receive in my role as shadow spokesperson on health. I could have brought a hundred similar letters sent to the Leader of the Opposition, the shadow Secretary of State for Health or the shadow Minister for Health. All those hundreds of letters offer poignant proof of the Government's failure to introduce the right surveillance programmes to deal with many of the cancers that threaten our society. The Government's failure has led and will continue to lead to thousands of needless deaths.

Not only will middle-aged men die needlessly: they are being discriminated against in terms of access to the health care that they need. What is the Government's position? When are they likely to make an announcement about the right of men to screening for prostate cancer? Do they intend to continue to discriminate against men? With detection, there is an excellent chance of successful treatment and longevity.

The following letter was sent to me by a lady about her husband:

"For a period of time my husband complained of backache. There was early diagnosis by his GP of rheumatism. At his most recent check in February 1992 he was informed that things would be okay. To the horror of his family when he could not stand the pain any longer in June 1992 he was diagnosed as having cancer of the prostate. No screening in the intervening period was ever provided, yet I understand that this disease, if screened, can be successfully treated.

I believe this is one of the major causes of death among men, yet there is a simple blood test that can detect whether the prostate gland is working correctly. All the time we are hearing of the need for better preventive medicine.

The result of all that was that my daughter had to leave her home and her work and for six months help me to nurse the unfortunate victim, my husband, who died in agony on 14 July 1993.

It seems unbelievable that much of the expenditure which ensued as a result of his illness could have been prevented had this type of cancer been detected early enough."

The lady is saying, poignantly, that her husband was treated to die, not to live. If only a small proportion of the NHS resources that are used to prolong life after diagnosis had been used to screen this man, he would have been saved. Screening is therefore cost-effective, not just for the Exchequer but for that priceless thing, family life. I am talking about love, togetherness, and the ability of families to live together for life, all of which can be torn to shreds in a matter of months because of the failure of the system to intervene early enough to treat positively gentlemen such as the one mentioned in the letter.

The lady continued:

"As there was no alternative offered in relation to nursing my husband at home we had no option but to sacrifice everything to nurse him through his final months. As a result we, his carers, are

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

still suffering the effects of the trauma we had to go through. For many months we were on duty 24 hours a day nursing, with little or no room for improvement. We were supplied with seven extra hours help per week, and it needs to be remembered that patients are ill 24 hours a day, seven days a week—including weekends and bank holidays.

Vast amounts of NHS money have been used to supply drugs, sometimes up to 10 different types, visits to specialists and regular hospital check-ups. Some of the most distressing experiences we had were too extensive to write to you in this letter, but we feel it will draw your attention to some of the matters which have caused great concern to us."

The irony is that when the NHS was asked to intervene with all the resources at its command—primary and secondary care, consultants, drugs—one vital ingredient was missing, and the treatment came too late.

I urge the Under-Secretary of State to respond tonight to the issues that I and my hon. Friend have raised, and to respond positively. For every positive action that the Minister takes, some family in Britain in the weeks, months and years ahead will be spared the trauma undergone by the woman who wrote to me and by the woman who wrote to my hon. Friend. Every week, thousands of families in this country lose a loved one prematurely because of treatable, curable cancers.

8.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): There is no disagreement between us about the fact that cancer is a terrible scourge which kills many people prematurely in a most distressing way, or about the fact that we must make every effort to deal with it.

Controlling cancer forms an enormous part of the NHS's work. It consumes nearly one tenth of the total NHS budget. Probably one in three people will be treated by the NHS for cancer at some time in their lifetime. Some 200,000 cases are diagnosed in England and Wales each year. There is no disagreement on the seriousness of the issue, although we could argue about the technicalities and the efficacy of certain screening programmes. However, I shall return to that later.

First, in response to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), obviously we have been at pains over the past few years, and particularly over the past two years, to bring down waiting times. Although more people are waiting for treatment on the NHS, the average time they wait has fallen considerably in recent months and years. That is good, although we must make further progress.

It is particularly important, however, that urgent cases —which must include cancer cases—for whom delay in investigation or treatment would pose an unacceptable risk, are treated promptly. That is why we wrote last month to remind all those involved in the NHS of the need to ensure proper clinical priorities—that is, giving priority to those patients who have an urgent need to be seen or treated and ensuring that GPs and everyone else concerned makes that distinction.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does setting clinical priorities also include closing specialist hospitals such as the Royal Marsden, or is that simply a by-product of the policy?

Mr. Sackville: As the hon. Lady knows, it was agreed in February that the Royal Marsden would be an NHS trust. Whatever happens, I can assure her that there will be a proper network of cancer centres in London, as elsewhere. I have no knowledge of what she says about closing the Royal Marsden. If she has some information that I do not, perhaps she would let me know.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): The Secretary of State told the Select Committee that funding would be guaranteed only for 12 months. Of course, purchasers could withdraw contracts and put them somewhere cheaper, so the market could close the Royal Marsden very quickly.

Mr. Sackville: Any unit within the NHS has to have the appropriate demand for its services. Health authorities have to make decisions about how they use their funds. If we did not adhere to that principle, we would be running an extraordinarily inefficient health service and we would be spending money on buildings instead of patients.

We cannot guarantee funding any particular unit. The health authorities have to make decisions to spend the resources available to them with particular units.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The Minister could save us all a lot of time and he could certainly save me a lot of blood pressure. Does he not understand that if no long-term support is promised to a very specialised unit such as the Royal Marsden, he will be negating everything he has said about the necessity of setting up specialist units elsewhere or making information available to people throughout the United Kingdom? The existing market will destroy those specialised units, because the money will not be there to maintain them for a long time. Why does he not admit that that is one of his objectives? Why does he not stop treating Members of the House of Commons as if we were incapable of understanding that reading out long lists does not constitute a health policy?

Mr. Sackville: I was not aware that I had read out any lists. There is no hidden agenda against specialist centres. There is a place in treating cancer for specialist centres, district general hospitals and the community; it is diverse and will remain so.

Obviously, cancer must be treated promptly and sympathetically. Delays must be reduced to an absolute minimum. We all know that to wait, whether for the result of tests, for diagnosis or for treatment, is agony for anyone. People are understandably scared of cancer; they are terrified and we have to recognise that fact in anything we do. Clearly, long waits, such as those the hon. Lady mentioned, for radiotherapy or chemotherapy are unacceptable, and we have to make sure that they do not happen.

Mrs. Dunwoody: How would the Minister know?

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Lady must let me get on to the questions that she asked. She wanted to know how many hospitals met the standards set by the report of the Joint Council for Clinical Oncology. I said that we did not collect that information. That was a factual statement.

The NHS does not exist to collect information, but primarily but to treat people. We have to take decisions on how many civil servants, officials and administrators to employ—the people that the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) talks about; the men in grey suits who simply collect numbers from units. We have to accept that

every extra employee in the NHS who carries out that task is consuming NHS resources which should be used for treating patients.

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman is being disingenuous when he links the so-called men in grey suits with the use of information as a diagnostic tool to identify what is going on in our health care system. My hon. Friend is trying to find out from Minister why, when cancer levels continue to be high—both the incidence of cancer and the deaths from cancer—the system fails to take account of the issues raised because the Government will not examine the available information.

Why can the Minister not keep the information for which my hon. Friend asks, when he can tell me how many cars executives have? It is matter of priorities. If he can tell me how many cars national health service executives have, he can provide the information we require.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Interventions should be short and on one specific point.

Mr. Sackville: We have to consider carefully how many resources we spend on administrators and people who process returns from hospitals. It is true that we have an overall figure for the leasing expenses of cars used in the NHS. We certainly do not have a figure for how many are driven by managers or anyone else, but we know that in most trusts three quarters of cars are driven by community midwives, nurses, doctors and people visiting patients. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should admit that.

We are all aware that bodies such as the Standing Medical Advisory Committee, which represents the medical royal colleges, has issued guidance on the clinical management of cancer on lung cancer and ovarian cancer in recent years. I must make it plain that we are also conscious that there is carefully considered clinical advice prepared by the experts in the professions which is not always put into practice. The treatment of cancer is probably a good example in many cases.

For that reason, the Department launched last year a major new initiative to see better use made of research-based evidence of clinical effectiveness. Good practice guidance has been issued to all health authorities, last year and this year, about the management of cancer in detection and treatment.

We have helped to make a growing body of information available to the NHS. For example, last year we issued as part of the "Health of the Nation" programme a handbook to help health authorities draw up plans precisely for reducing mortality and morbidity from cancers. We commissioned work, which will be published shortly, on the needs of populations for the management and care of patients with cancer of the lung and lower bowel. A series of effective health care bulletins have been issued; we are currently considering a further one on breast cancer. That, principally, is what we are doing on treatment.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich referred to the Joint Council for Clinical Oncology, which set targets for reducing delays in cancer treatment. That is just one of the pieces of data that we are using.

Early detection is enormously important and was covered at some length by the hon. Member for Makerfield. We must ensure that patients receive early treatment for cancer. To do that, we must detect it at the earliest possible stage. That is why we have established national screening programmes for breast and cervical cancer. We lead Europe in having established national screening programmes for those cancers.

Between 1987 and 1990, some £70 million was allocated to set up and run the breast screening programme, which is extremely successful, because we know that some 70 per cent. of women invited for screening are accepting the invitations. We are also the first country in the EC to have a comprehensive cervical screening service based on computerised call and recall. We did not hear much about that from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. McCartney: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Sackville: I will carry on, because the hon. Gentleman spoke at some length.

GPs' contracts have been designed to encourage all GPs to improve the take-up of cervical screening among eligible women. Nearly 97 per cent. of GPs achieved one of the targets. The screening programme will undoubtedly save lives and make a major contribution to the health of women in this country.

Before one embarks on a national screening programme, one must be absolutely sure that there is unequivocal evidence of the efficacy, that one will not have a system that will unnecessarily spread alarm, which would lead to a great many false diagnoses and to a great many operations and not achieve an overall improvement in health and longer life. It is too simple for the hon. Gentleman to say "Let us have a letter to GPs about faecal blood, and a screening system." It is more complicated than that.

It is not necessarily feasible to say that we can have a screening system for colorectal cancer based merely on occult faecal blood. That might mean that, to be effective, we would have to invite all men of a certain age for a fairly unpleasant investigation such as flexible colonoscopy. We might find fairly great resistance to such a screening programme among people who are healthy and who feel healthy. We must think carefully before we commit ourselves to any new screening programmes, although several are definitely currently under review.

The chief medical officer, who is a cancer specialist, has established an expert advisory group that will look carefully at the whole question of cancer services in this country. Its first task will be to advise health authorities on how to improve their services, from primary care right the way through to palliative care.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Sackville: I will carry on, if I may, because I have a few more things to say.

I am certain that, within the system that we have, there are problems and instances of lack of co-ordination. There are gaps. I think that the hon. Lady talked about people having a series of appointments. That is precisely the sort of problem that we need to address. We need a better co-ordinated approach to cancer services in this country. People can get lost between the primary care system and the hospital system, or lost or delayed between different parts of the hospital system—for example, between radiography and different consultants. That is precisely the sort of advice that we need and which the chief medical officer's advisory group seeks to introduce.

The chief medical officer must also decide with his colleagues the general shape of cancer treatment in this

[Mr. Sackville]

country. It is divided between specialist cancer centres, district hospitals and the community. Perhaps we shall see more instances of cancer treatment being delivered at the primary care level. But the claim that patients do better in specialist cancer centres is unproven except, perhaps, in very rare conditions such as eye cancers, bone tumours and particularly in children's cancers.

We cannot just say that it is all about specialist cancer centres or that everyone should be treated in cancer departments in district general hospitals. The evidence on the more common cancers is currently being reviewed by the chief medical officer's expert advisory group and will need to be updated regularly.

We are also concerned that patient services may suffer because of outdated radiotherapy and other specialist equipment. That is why we have made £15 million available centrally over the three years as part of a rolling programme to help replace equipment. That includes linear accelerators, scanners and mammography equipment. Some equipment is old and is being replaced. We must have the highest standards of quality of treatment and we intend soon to issue, for example, model guidance on quality assurance in radiotherapy.

Cancer is a common disease and is a large part of the whole NHS effort, which is measured by what is done or by total spending. There are no easy answers that suggest to us that we should immediately move to a whole series of further screening programmes, although, as I have said, several are potential. If we have absolute evidence of the efficacy of calling for a national screening programme a particular group, whether it be of men or women of a particular age group, we will do that.

Cancer is a disease of the elderly. Clearly, with a larger aged population we will see more cancers. We must work harder to ensure that we have better detection and treatment to prevent the alarming figures to which the hon. Gentleman referred from going further.

We take seriously cancer and the need to improve its detection and treatment. I take it seriously. I lost a close relative in the past few weeks from a long undiagnosed cancer and know well precisely what it can do to individuals and families. I assure the House that we intend to ensure that we have the best services possible in this country for the detection and treatment and cancer.

In accordance with Mr. Speaker's Ruling—[Official Report, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19]—the debate was concluded.

Air Traffic (Liberalisation)

8.39 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): For several reasons, I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this issue. It is probably eight or nine years ago that my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and I debated these matters in Committee; we are doing so again now, and—as I shall try to demonstrate—events have not moved on much in the intervening time.

Let me explain my reasons for raising this issue. First, civil aviation is an industry in which Britain excels: in Europe, it is without peer. Britain has 13 scheduled airlines —excluding three Hong Kong-based airlines, one of which is extremely important—and 19 charter airlines, many operating from the world's busiest and fifth busiest international airports. Each year, 47.6 million people travel through Heathrow, and 20 million travel through Gatwick, bringing those airports revenues of £527 million and £200 million respectively.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): First, let me apologise for having to dash upstairs at 9 pm. I am not being rude to my hon. Friend; I am on a Standing Committee, so I shall have to leave.

May I draw attention to one of the tragedies of Europe? When my hon. Friend was a Minister, I badgered him about this; and if I had the opportunity, I would badger the present Minister tonight. The United Kingdom excels in aviation, but we are told that we are not good Europeans because we complain about the fact that Europe will not deregulate in the way we want. Surely that is what the Common Market was meant to be about.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend has made the speech that I wanted to make. Perhaps I should sit down, and save the House a lot of time. I could not agree more—and the same is true of other areas in which we excel.

Not only have we successful national airports in areas such as London; we also have successful international airports in cities such as Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and Bristol. As my hon. Friend has implied, Britain has enormous scope in the success of European air travel.

My second reason for raising the issue is that it provides a perfect example of rhetoric and aspiration for free trade in Europe that is unmatched in practice. For that purpose,I could just as easily have chosen the energy or financial sectors: Britain excels in those respects as well, and is still frustrated by restrictive European practices.

In aviation, the formal position is now relatively satisfactory. It has taken a long time; indeed, we must go back to the days—now deeply shrouded in the mists of time—when I was Minister for Aviation. The process began seriously in 1984, with the European Commission's rather weak second memorandum. In 1985, I had the honour of signing the first really liberal air service agreements with the Benelux countries, which began to bring down fares and introduce a modicum of competition. At least there was a model—a model that was formalised in 1986, with the first package of liberalisation, introduced by the British presidency.

It was not until June 1992, however, that the third package came into limited effect, a process that was completed on 1 January 1993. It will be fully effective on 1 April 1997, four years after the single market was meant

to be in existence. By that time, airlines will be able to fly freely between and within European Union countries, charging whatever fares they wish—as long as they are economic, and subject to safety and noise restrictions and ground and air space availability.

That is the theory. What about the practice? As is so often the case in the European Union, when it comes to trade matters, as opposed to restrictive regulations—many of which are concerned with standardisation, and therefore actually antithetical to free trade—practice does not match up to the law. Furthermore, in the case of trade liberalisation—certainly with respect to civil aviation—the Commission is consistently slow to enforce the law.

Two matters are currently of particular interest, and especially at stake. The first concerns state aid. Perhaps I may quote from a definitive work on the matter, my own book "A Treaty Too Far". On page 69, I say:

"Almost on the same day that the third package Air Services Regulation was signed by the governments of the EEC"—

as it was then called—

"the state-owned Banque de Paris injected £128 million of cash into Air France in what it said was a 'normal' financial transaction. Normality in this context is open to several different interpretations. It may be standard practice in France for one state enterprise to give to another large sums of money when one of them is in financial trouble; but it is doubtful whether private undertakings would have considered this particular transaction as 'normal'.

It took place immediately after Air France had turned in a loss of 685 million francs. From the airline's point of view, the gift (disguised as an 8.8 per cent. investment stake by BNP) could therefore not have been more conveniently timed. Not only did it meet the airline's losses without the latter suffering any real penalty, but it enabled it to pursue its plans to take a 6 billion franc . . . shareholding in . . . Sabena, which was in an equally parlous . . . state."

Since I wrote that, some months ago, the full picture has begun to emerge. Let me give the House some figures. In the case of Air France, since 1991 the EC has approved state aids to the tune of £800 million. There is some doubt and controversy—to which I shall return—about whether such aid, given through the Banque de Paris, or in the form of so-called investment or soft loans, constitutes state aid; but, in any event, £800 million of French taxpayers' money has, in effect, gone into Air France.

In the case of Iberia, the figure is £667 million; as it happens, it is the same for Sabena. For Aer Lingus, it is £167 million—that was subject to a great court case; for TAP Air Portugal, it is £133 million. Those are large sums going into state airlines.

Far from being coy about all this, Air France—perhaps sensing the Commission's basic good will—is, in a literal sense, going for broke. Rather than backing off or being shy, it has now put in for the astronomical figure of £2.47 billion in subsidy—a staggering sum in the circumstances.

Mr. Bill Walker: The sheer volume of those figures is very disturbing. Moreover, British Midland, British Airways and all the other British airlines are having to compete—in a so-called open market—with airlines that are being heavily subsidised. Our airlines are making profits. Does that not tell us something?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend is on tremendous form tonight. He is absolutely right. In a moment I shall deal in specific terms with the question how that affects our airlines.

I want to give the House two other figures. Having had £133 million over the past few years, TAP has now upped the ante to £607 million of subsidy. Olympic, which is a tiny airline in comparison with ours, is putting in for £1.5 billion of subsidy. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North is on to a strong point when he compares that with what is happening in the United Kingdom.

Part of the problem is that the institutions of the European Union, notably the Commission, wrongly tend to treat support for state industries in a different light from support for private industries. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North has implied, all United Kingdom airlines are private and all the major continental European airlines are, to varying degrees, state-owned. Again, the analogy could be applied to many other industries. For example, there would be the same phenomenon in the energy industry.

The airlines on the continent are state-owned and, particularly in France, they are greatly supported and highly restrictive. That means that the major continental airlines have, in large measure, been supported by being able to attract to themselves new capital on terms and conditions that would simply not have been available to them had they been in the private sector. If they had been in the private sector, four of the seven major national carriers would have had to go into liquidation. There is not much doubt about that. By common consent, Air France would have gone into liquidation some time ago, as would Iberia, Aer Lingus and Sabena.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I do not fully understand the position that my hon. Friend is describing. If the funds were given to private companies that were competing in the market to enable them to survive, surely they would be regarded as subsidies. Therefore, should not the public funds that have been paid to those public companies be regarded as illegal subsidies, and should not the businesses involved be fined by the Commission? Why does not the Commission impose fines?

Mr. Spicer: In fairness to the Commission, it has at last, to use an expression, got off its butt and started to become interested in this matter. It is bringing Air France to court. The question is how the British Government will assist the legal process to reach the conclusion mentioned, correctly, by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), which is that we are talking about subsidies. The fact that they are given to state industries is neither here nor there. One hopes that the matter will be sorted out by the courts.

So far, when the matter has been brought before the courts, the airlines have got off lightly. Aer Lingus in particular got off very lightly. The European institutions, especially the Commission, have been slow to move and the courts have allowed the practice to continue by letting the airlines off lightly. As I have said, they are all coming back to their Governments with their snouts in the trough for more subsidies.

Even more pernicious than the straightforward handover of cash is the fact that the state-owned and protected industries are able to borrow new capital on terms and conditions that would not be available in the private sector. Also, in the past the French have tried to disguise subsidies by calling them, not even loans, but investments and getting away with it. In the case of Air France, money from the state-owned Banque Nationale de Paris was called an investment. That has occurred within the state sector.

[Mr. Spicer]

As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North, said, that must be contrasted with happens in the United Kingdom. When British Airways found itself financially threatened, it had to shed 20,000 jobs and radically improve its efficiency. For the continental airlines, it was loss-making business as usual and, with support, the continental airlines were able to continue to compete in a predatory manner against companies that have made themselves efficient without any state aid.

The Commission has hardly turned a hair in recent years until—this deals with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North—Air France made its most recent outrageous cash demand of £2.4 billion. The Commission is bringing Air France to court. On the basis of precedent, the effect of that is doubtful.

It is clear that it is essential that our Government give as much encouragement and support to our airline industry in the legal battle against Air France as the French Government will, on the basis of precedent, give to their industry and as the Irish Government gave to Aer Lingus when it was battling to defend its subsidies some years ago. It is especially important that Air France should be made to comply with the disciplines of the marketplace by being made to stop subsidised predatory pricing and to close loss-making routes.

Mr. Bill Walker: I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend again. The so-called British Airways dirty tricks campaign has created a lot of interest in the United Kingdom. Does my hon. Friend agree that we could have shown over many years how all those airlines have been carrying out similar passenger poaching with the pricing policies and practices and the interlining which have distorted the market tremendously?

Mr. Spicer: Yes, without a doubt. My hon. Friend is extremely knowledgeable on these matters, and if he says that other national carriers are involved in such practices, I am sure that there is much factual evidence to support him. Because they are state-owned, they are protected by their Governments. There is one law for the state sector and another for the private sector. We saw the way in which British Steel was clobbered for what it was doing in the private sector. That contrasts with the way in which state-owned airlines are treated, particularly Air France, but I could name many others which are engaged in cross-subsidies and all sorts of doubtful practices. I hope that, in reply, my hon. Friend the Minister will address his mind to state aids.

The second distortive effect in the practice of the European aviation market, as against the concept of it, has been protectionist countries' exploitation of the conditions attached to free trade in air travel, especially conditions of air space and airport capacity. For example, the French Government have refused British Airways and the French Airline, TAT, in which British Airways has a 49 per cent. stake, certain landing rights at Orly airport.

That stake is quite significant because, although there is already meant to be free flow of investment within the European Union, I am told that British Airways has been advised that it cannot increase its stake to 51 per cent. because the French Government will not allow it to do so until 1997. British Airways sees no point in pursuing the matter in the courts, but again we are already seeing a practice—in this instance, the free flow of capital—being frustrated. TAT is being prohibited from having certain landing rights at Orly airport, which is clearly a restrictive practice under the conditions that are attached to the free trade market, to undermine the concept of free trade.

A similar point can be made about the Italian Government with respect to Linate airport at Milan. There are other examples where phoney air traffic and capacity restrictions are being imposed specifically to restrict free trade and the operations of what in formal terms is already meant to be a single market.

Mr. Jenkin: And at Athens.

Mr. Spicer: I suspect that my hon. Friend is right about that.

This all shows that much remains to be done before we shall establish a true common market in aviation. Air fares are still two or three times as high as those in the United States.

I shall not trouble the House with the further point that the establishment of a true free trade area in Europe should take precedence over extending the powers of the European Union's central institutions into other matters of policy. That point has been made before, and I am sure that it will be made again.

9.1 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I should perhaps have guessed that this would not be a particularly wide-ranging debate. It has centred on unfair competition, as alleged by the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer). We are grateful to him for initiating the debate and for giving us an opportunity to discuss these issues, but I almost feel that I am intruding on the private grief of the Conservative party, as this is almost the battle of the skies chapter in the on-going war between the anti-Europeans and the Government, as represented by the Minister.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Everything that I have been saying is pro-European and aimed at achieving a proper single common market, which is the key objective. I am trying to say that we need an active free market for our airlines in Europe. That was the thrust of my speech.

Mr. Wilson: I recognise the semantic trap. Anti-Community Members invariably describe themselves as pro-European. I recognise the distinction between Europe and the European Union as it has developed. I was trying to avoid the word "sceptic", because the Tory argument on Europe is giving sceptics a bad name. It is not a particularly accurate description, either. Tonight's debate is a dimension of the dispute that is flourishing on the Conservative Benches, although there are serious issues and major British interests at stake.

I react a little against the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that a drive towards privatisation is synonymous with good policy in Europe. It is not part of the job of the House or of the European Union to pressurise other Governments into taking privatisation decisions simply because our Government have, or to hold up the success, real or imagined, of privatised industries in this country as a model for every other member of the European Union to follow.

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman has suddenly become anti-Europe. The Commission's advisory panel has just

decided to advise the Commission that it should encourage all the other airlines in Europe to become privatised. If the hon. Gentleman is criticising the Commission for being pro-privatisation, I suppose that he is about as anti-Europe as we are.

Mr. Wilson: I detect a slight difference between the views of the panel and those of the Commission. Of course, the Commission's views can be argued about—they are not set in tablets of stone. In some cases, I might disagree with the Commission's view on privatisation, but my point was that the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South seems to regard it as axiomatic that privatisation was "a good thing" and that other Governments were obliged to follow that course.

Mr. Jenkin: It is a good thing.

Mr. Wilson: I shall not be tempted into an analysis of that argument, which seems to be a minority view that is losing support rapidly.

The decision of other Governments to maintain state airlines is entirely a matter for them. The question is whether they are operating within the rules of the Commission and the European Union. If they are not, the mechanisms exist with which to pursue them.

On the issue of French subsidy and any illegal subsidy in contravention of the treaty of Rome, the European Commission is due to recommend a policy on state aid to airlines. It is clearly investigating the issue, just as it investigated the allegations against Britain in other spheres.

I now quote Air France's defence, as reported in the *Financial Times*. I am not advocating it, but a defence exists about which we have heard nothing tonight. That defence is Air France's claim that

"the FFr1.5bn injection involved convertible bonds and other paper issued under normal market conditions. It also stated that the earlier FFr5.84bn it had received involved FFr2bn in a government capital injection approved by the EU as not consisting of a state subsidy, with the remainder raised on the French financial market."

It is that defence, as opposed to the indictment served by the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South, that will be the substance of the investigation by the European Commission and the courts into the reality—or otherwise—of state aid. They are the forums in which those issues should be discussed. The idea that one should throw out the whole policy on the basis of the untested assertion that everyone else is cheating while Britain, uniquely, is playing by the rules, shows the anti-EC, or anti-EU, attitudes of one section of the Conservative party.

The wider issue is whether Britain would be in a better position to pursue its strategic interests and press its case within these forums by adopting the negative attitude that we have seen this week or by being a full partner in the European Union. What we have heard tonight is a microcosm of the debate about whether we would get more out of the European Union by being a full and enthusiastic player or by always working on the assumption that everyone is out of step but Britain and that it is all some sort of conspiracy to do us down.

We believe that the balance that we must seek is between the market and regulation. In setting out the criteria for the "third package", Commissioner Karel van Miert made it clear that it was not to be regarded as a simplistic move towards an unregulated free market. On the contrary, he set out a complex range of objectives. For example, he accepted the need for public service obligations in respect of services to less-developed peripheral regions and stressed that air links should be viewed as part of a network if trade and tourism were to be properly served.

The Commissioner highlighted the interests of the consumer but did not overlook those of people living near airports or of airline employees. He felt that the future regime should have a modicum of competition but recognised the importance of the Community's industry being competitive on a worldwide scale. That is a fair balance of the interests for any European airline policy to pursue. The approach of the third package aims to reconcile some highly complex considerations and, as part of that, clearly implies the aim of securing a reasonable balance between British interests and those of the social partners.

There is an argument that the forces of competition alone will bring down fares. However, it is worth recalling the fact that our own Civil Aviation Authority has pointed out:

"the removal of bilateral restrictions will create the opportunity for more widespread and vigorous competition between the major EC airlines, but there seems little prospect that this will actually occur."

Therefore, the case is made that regulation as well as the market have a role to play. There is a fear that, if competition fails to emerge naturally, there will be a temptation to go further by sponsoring a type of new entrant that is unlikely to operate according to the principle of the social charter. In extreme form, that may result in "flag of convenience" airlines. In our view, Community air transport has no place for that concept.

The opening up of intra-Community routes in 1997 to the carriers of any member country may be the next logical step, but it is important to stress that individual Governments should be able to place rather more weight on certain domestic policy objectives—for example, the nurturing of regional lifelines, the maintenance of long-term obligations to the public and the pursuit of multi-modal transport integration. It should be specifically accepted that such objectives are legitimate and that they do not simply belong in some transitional or residual category.

Consistent with the development of Community policy, the real issue is how to open up the operation of such services to the airlines of member states, without discrimination. That is one example of a number of areas where there is a potentially important role for regulation at Commission level. The right of establishment implies that the ownership of airlines based in any member country and the opportunity for such airlines to fly each and every intra-Community route must be opened up to all EC citizens. However, if that is to be realistically workable, each member state must apply identical licensing criteria to would-be new entrants to the industry within its own frontiers. This proposal would thus affect a state's national designation policy.

In the absence of a Communitywide licensing authority, the best approach is to lay down harmonised rules relating to the technical and economic fitness of airlines. Differing criteria could seriously hamper other member states' airlines in operating on what the latter would consider to be a fair and equal basis.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilson: No. I am winding up. *[Interruption.]* There is not exactly a mass turn-out of hon. Members to whom to give way.

We support the broad thrust of Community policy on air transport, with the safeguards, controls and regulation to which I have referred. Reliance solely on market forces to secure lower fares and wider consumer choice will lead to disappointment. We should frankly accept that, although there will be considerable liberalisation, logic points clearly towards a regulated regime.

9.12 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key): I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) for raising this important subject. United Kingdom airlines and airports do indeed play a leading role in international air transport services, both within the European Union and beyond. My hon. Friend was, of course, right in saying that the United Kingdom excels. He said that the rhetoric and the aspiration are unmatched by the practice. I fear that here too he was right. On this issue, there is not a chink of light between us.

The British Government support our industry. Indeed, we believe that the way in which we have done so over the past decade and more is one of the many reasons for our having an industry that is perhaps the most efficient in the world and, indeed, the most popular with customers. Because of our island status, good air links with Europe are essential if we are to foster trade, in terms of both goods and passenger services, with the Community, but this is essential worldwide too. It is essential not just for the airports in the south-east of the country, but for the regional airports, which are flourishing so well under the regime that we have been pursuing all these years.

We have long argued for liberalisation of air services within the Community as essential to the completion of the single market. The benefits are self-evident. More competition leads to more frequent and better services at more competitive prices. That is good for the consumer and for the industry. That is why the United Kingdom was at the forefront of efforts to bring about liberalisation of air services within Europe.

Mr. Jenkin: Will my hon. Friend take the opportunity to deal with one of the more fatuous points made by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), who spoke for the Opposition? He said that air transport liberalisation and privatisation would lead to the collapse of minor services in the further extremes of Europe. Are not the services in the highlands and islands, all privately owned and virtually unsubsidised, an excellent repudiation of that nonsense?

Mr. Key: I am sure that, in his heart of hearts, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) knows that that is true. After all, he is the founding editor of the *West Highland Free Press* and must know the benefits that liberalised air services and privatisation have brought to the airlines in that part of our wonderful United Kingdom.

Mr. Wilson: Unfortunately, I have already sent my notes to *Hansard*, but the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) has completely misrepresented what I said. I pointed out—I should have thought that he and the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), from their "anti-European" standpoint, would agree—that national Governments must maintain the right to incorporate into their policies the defence of their interests.

Although the British Airways highland division operates profitably, there are always question marks over some of the routes. The island of Skye, on which the newspaper that the Minister was kind enough to mention is based, lost its service some years ago and now has no direct service because the market could not sustain one when the subsidy was taken away.

I should not have thought that there was more than a debating point between us. I believe that, if there is a social case for doing so, national Governments should have the right to subsidise services where the market cannot provide them.

Mr. Key: That need not necessarily divide us. Incidentally, what a pleasure it is when the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman and the Minister can present a balanced transport policy. The House is familiar with hearing the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North speak about railways and me speak about roads, but here we are both speaking about airways.

However, if we are to talk about Skye, perhaps we had better not talk about bridges. I have looked across at the isle of Skye over many years from the island of Raasay, where my family used to go on holiday. Raasay has never aspired to an airline, but I recall the campaigns that the hon. Gentleman led against a Dr. Green.

Mr. Wilson: Did we agree on those?

Mr. Key: I had better not pry into that territory, but I understand the hon. Gentleman's love for that part of the United Kingdom. I count myself lucky to have tramped up and down the isle of Raasay, sailed round it and fished off it—but I see that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are beginning to think that I may be wandering from the point, so I had better return to the subject of liberalisation.

Liberalisation has now been achieved, in the form of the third package of measures that came into effect on 1 January last year. That provides uniform criteria for the licensing of air carriers to be adopted by all member states when granting licences to Community carriers. Restrictions on cross-border investment have been removed—I shall deal with what my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South said about TAT later. Member states are no longer able to favour national flag carriers by issuing licences on a discretionary basis.

Access to routes within the Community has also been opened up by ending the previous arrangements for sharing capacity. The only remaining restrictions on the provision of domestic services will be removed in April 1997. Carriers are now free to set fares according to their commercial judgment. That has been a long time coming, but I believe that there is evidence that it is already operating to the benefit of the consumer.

The benefits of the changes are beginning to show as airlines offer new and innovative fares packages and introduce services that would not have been possible in the past. For example, British Airways has introduced a new service between Hanover and Leipzig as an extension of its London-Hanover service, and British Midland's introduction of its Diamond Euroclass service resulted in reductions in business class fares on a number of European services, including Heathrow to Amsterdam and Heathrow to Paris.

Some commentators have claimed that the single market in air transport is not working because fares have not fallen significantly across the board. Apart from the fact that the single market is not exclusively concerned with fares, and some fares have come down, that misses the fundamental point that we have created the necessary conditions for airlines to compete. It is a matter for them, based on their commercial judgment, how they respond to the new opportunities and freedoms.

Looking to the wider Europe, we have strongly supported the extension of the third package of liberalisation measures to other European countries so that the benefits are more widely available. That has already been achieved in the case of Norway and Sweden where the measures have been in force since August 1993 and, under the European economic area agreement, Iceland, Finland and Austria are also expected to join in the third package arrangements during 1994. So far, so good. The priority now for the United Kingdom is to ensure that the single market is fully implemented throughout the Community and, in future, throughout all the EEA countries.

In the past year there have been calls from some member states and from their nationalised carriers for measures that will slow down or go back on the liberalisation measures, on the grounds that they were, in some way, responsible for an alleged crisis in the aviation industry. We have resisted such calls as unfounded and a thinly veiled attempt to return to the old days of protection for state-owned carriers which would seriously undermine the benefits of the single market.

In response to this, the European Commission set up a committee of wise men to assess the situation and to report with recommendations on the future of the industry. I am pleased to say that when the committee reported its findings earlier this year, it supported what we had said all along, that the real problem facing some, though not all, European airlines is that of low productivity, which is a matter for airline management to tackle.

The wise men's report also fully supported our argument that there should be no going back on the single market in air transport and that the internal market must be made to operate properly if the full benefits are to be realised by consumers and industry alike. There was welcome emphasis in the report on the need to reduce Government intervention in the industry and to allow the industry the commercial freedom to adapt to the challenges of a global and competitive industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South mentioned one or two points, in particular, about the funding of state airlines and private airlines. If I may, I will quote what the wise men said about state aid on page 21 of their report:

"In a competitive market, access to finance means should be equitable, it should not be based on ownership. This principle applies both ways. A state which owns an airline should neither privilege the carrier against privately owned companies nor disadvantage its carrier by failing to assume the responsibilities of a commercially oriented shareholder. This principle of equal treatment irrespective of ownership requires a very sophisticated policy on the broader issue of financial relations between states and publicly owned carriers. It requires a clear separation between the normal commercial operations of a shareholder and state aids granted under articles 92 and 93 of the EC treaty."

That is extremely significant in view of what my hon. Friend went on to say.

Mr. Jenkin: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the efforts that the Government made to help the Commission along to that particular point. Have we not, however, witnessed up to now a serious institutional failing in the political partiality of the European Court in that it has made judgments on a political and partial basis which have not led to the single market that we thought we had already legislated for and that should be enforced by the court even-handedly?

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend describes the case very well in his own words. What I said earlier was that I agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South when he spoke about rhetoric and aspirations being unmatched by practice. That is exactly the sort of subject that I think he was referring to.

Mr. Jenkin : This is a failing that seems endemic to the institutional structure. What are the policies of the Government towards reforming those institutions to make them more even-handed, less political and more impartial in the way that they enforce the policy that has been agreed between member states?

Mr. Key: I feel a touch of Maastricht coming on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that you will not thank me for introducing that line. I am about to come to the specific point of what we are going to do next, particularly about Air France.

Mr. Wilson: I wanted to help the Minister out when he felt that he was coming to Maastricht. He can recover his ground. Does he agree that an air of unreality was setting in, with his hon. Friends attacking the European Court, the European Commission and every other Government? The conflict is presented as one of public versus private, yet within Britain we have dog fights between the privatised British Airways and other British private operators. We seem capable of producing our own intense conflicts of interest and dirty tricks without attributing everything to a Britain-versus-the-foreigner category or public-versus-private category.

Mr. Key: I would far rather have a lively and responsive private sector than the fossilised system that we see too often in our European neighbours' airlines.

We firmly believe that state aid to airlines serves to hinder the industry by shoring up inefficient companies and limiting consumer choice. We should talk not only about the structure of the airlines but about the services rendered to the customers of those airlines. That is why we have pressed the commission to take action on the issue and called for a thorough, independent investigation of the recent announcement by the French Government of their plans to inject up to FF20 billion—about £2.3 billion—into Air France.

We had been expecting the announcement of a restructuring plan for Air France for some time, since the debacle that accompanied last October's attempt at restructuring. Even so, I am astonished by the scale of the aid package involved: £2.3 billion is an unprecedented amount of state aid. It could have a seriously detrimental effect on competition throughout the European market. As such, it is entirely contradictory to the principles of the single market.

We called on the Commission to freeze the aid pending a thorough independent investigation of the case. It is vital that there should be parity of treatment througout the

[Mr. Key]

Community. It is simply not acceptable that some airlines have to make investment from their own resources or go to their banks and shareholders while others can simply go to their Government and receive funds at no cost or at repayment levels significantly below those which the private sector would charge. Why should British carriers that have ensured their financial viability through efficient commercial practices and without money from the British Government have to compete with a monolithic flag carrier propped up by money from the French Government?

Mr. Michael Spicer: Was my hon. Friend shocked that, despite all the head-down mumbling into some brief throughout his speech and his refusal to take interventions and debate his position properly, the Opposition spokesman had nothing to say about Air France? He seemed to be on the side of the French. He seemed to encourage the subventions and so on against our airlines. Was that the feeling that my hon. Friend got from the speech that we heard from the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Key: I was surprised that the hon. Gentleman was not more forthcoming and more grateful for the way in which the airlines responded to the new markets developing north of the border, for example, and in other peripheral areas of the United Kingdom, including the Isles of Scilly and the south-west, including Newquay St. Mawgan and Plymouth as well as Exeter.

Mr. Wilson: I do not want to cause any problems in the internal conflict, but the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South berated me for something different that the Minister may have failed to pick up. I said that, if the rules had been broken, judgment should be made accordingly. This is not the place in which to hang, draw and quarter Air France and the French Government, attractive as the prospect might be to two thirds of the Conservative Members present tonight. If there were a two-thirds majority, the French would probably be in trouble tonight. I am not prepared to engage in the vacuous tub-thumping that we heard from the Minister before he got on to the Isles of Scilly. It is completely at odds with what his hon. Friends asked for earlier.

Mr. Key: I am talking not about hanging, drawing and quartering, but about the guillotine.

The United Kingdom is not alone in its view about the antics of Air France and the French Government. The wise men's report argued strongly against the granting of state aids on the basis that they lead to unfair and unacceptable distortions of competition. They concluded:

"capital injections and state aids have severely contributed to overcapacity and uneconomic pricing".

which represent a potential distortion of competition between state-owned and privately-owned airlines.

True, they accepted that there might be a need for "one last chance" transitional aids to restore carriers to financial viability, if only for political reasons, but where is the evidence that this is the last time that Air France will turn to the French Government for handouts? It has already received three capital injections since 1991 totalling some £670 million and a further case, involving a £170 million bond issue, is currently under investigation by the Commission. Moreover, the details of the restructuring plan that we have seen so far make no reference to reducing dependency on the state by attracting private sector investment, let alone by moving towards privatisation.

There is also little evidence that the programme is severe enough to address the fundamental problems facing Air France, it envisages no real reductions in capacity and it is far from clear how the proposed cost reductions will be achieved. That is why we called on the Commission to instigate an independent investigation of the latest aid and to open consultation on it in accordance with the treaty of Rome. That will enable the UK, other member states and the airlines affected to submit comments on the case. We shall use that opportunity to argue forcefully against the aid and to seek to ensure that, if the Commission decides to approve the aid, it is accompanied by stringent conditions.

In particular, those conditions should include the requirement that the aid should not be used in a way that would distort competition with other Community carriers, through expansion of capacity or expansion on to new routes—indeed, if anything, there should be capacity reductions—and there should be a categorical assurance that this will be the last time that the French Government bale out Air France.

Incidentally, the Air France case is not the only state aid case under consideration at the moment, although it is by far the largest and most important to the operation of the single market. The Commission announced last week the instigation of investigations into state aids for Olympic Airways, involving about £950 million, and TAP Air Portugal, involving about £690 million, plus Government guarantees for future borrowing. When commenting on those cases, the UK will similarly argue against the granting of state aid and press for rigorous conditions to be attached to any aid that the Commission approves.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South mentioned the case of Orly airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have established that the Opposition have nothing to say in defence of British interests in this sector. I could not hear what the Opposition spokesman said. Are the Opposition trying to set up Europe as some total licensing authority, which will debate as a European authority against, principally, the United States authority? Does my hon. Friend's research into Labour party policy confirm that it is moving in that worrying direction? I sensed that that was the case from the mumbles of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) before he sat down.

Mr. Key: While my hon. Friend spoke, I looked in vain at the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North for nods or shakes of the head, but none did I see. I am sure, however, that he will make the position clear.

Mr. Jenkin: Was it not obvious that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North was reading an old Commission brief and that it is Labour party policy to lie down in front of Europe and let itself be run over? If the electorate recognises that in the forthcoming European elections, there might be some hope of our doing better than people expect.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend is right, and if anyone tries to run me over, they will find me fairly immovable.

The French do not allow air services between London and Orly airport by any carrier, whether French or British owned. We have raised that matter with the Commission

not only on behalf of TAT, but on behalf of other UK airlines that wish to provide services to Orly. We understand that the Commission is on the point of making a decision requiring the French Government to allow services to Orly in a non-discriminatory way. We would welcome that decision.

As for the question of limits on British Airways' investment in TAT, there is nothing in Community law to prevent British Airways increasing its investment in TAT to 100 per cent. I understand that British Airways has an option to increase its investment, but if there is a problem with the French Government I am willing to inquire into it and take it up with the French and with the Commission if I receive evidence of it.

This has been a helpful debate. I hope that it has been especially helpful to British airlines and the British interest in the aviation industry. In conclusion, I reiterate the Government's commitment to the liberalisation of air transport services, both in the Community and more widely throughout Europe. I believe that that offers the best way forward in the interests of passengers as well as the air transport industry.

Child Support Agency

9.35 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): When I speak about maintenance or the Child Support Agency, I start from the position that the welfare of children should be put first. Children are a very precious asset and I support the principle that parents, absent or otherwise, have a financial responsibility for their children. However, I believe that that principle must be put into practice in a way that creates a fair and effective system of child maintenance, and which benefits all the children concerned.

Unlike the Under-Secretary of State, I do not believe that we can rank children in priority order. I found his statement extraordinary when he said that one of the principles of the Child Support Act 1991 was

"the principle that a natural child should have first call on a parent's income."—[*Official Report*, 2 February 1994; Vol. 236, c. 945.]

The implication of that statement is that stepchildren are less deserving; their needs matter less. I do not agree with that principle.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise), who put it very forcefully:

"The stepchildren are regarded as 'unnatural' children. The Under-Secretary of State talked about 'natural' children and refused to take the cost of parenting stepchildren into account. The concept of deserving and undeserving children is disgusting; yet that is what the Conservative party is introducing into family life and it will cause more family breakdowns."—[*Official Report*, 10 February 1994; Vol. 237, c. 516.]

I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Preston was right. The children of second marriages are equally precious. The sentiments expressed by the Minister were disgusting and the 1991 Act and its agency are seriously damaging second marriages and the children of those marriages.

On 17 December, as I am sure that the Minister will remember, he responded to complaints that I made to him about the Child Support Agency in a letter by saying:

"We believe the basic structure of the formula is sound, and that the basic principles of the scheme stand up to scrutiny and are supported by the vast majority of people in this country."

By 22 December, the Secretary of State for Social Security wrote to all hon. Members, telling them that he intended to make changes to the Child Support Agency.

I predict that the Secretary of State will appear before the House in the not-too-distant future, bringing forward further changes to the 1991 Act. I think that he will have to accept that the Child Support Agency is not supported by the vast majority of the people in the country, and that it is doing incalculable harm to countless children and families. I have had many cases where the payment has been increased by the Child Support Agency far beyond the amount that the individual can afford to pay, and I do not think that I am unique in saying that all the cases that I have on file at the moment have been from so-called "absent parents" who were accepting responsibility and were already paying. I do not have a single case where the absent parent was not paying—talking to many of my hon. Friends suggests that that is the pattern.

Some people have made a clean break settlement and are still paying a fair amount in maintenance and court orders. The changes to the formula for child maintenance assessment forced on the Secretary of State by the Select Committee report are simply piecemeal changes to a draconian formula. They do not constitute a fundamental

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

change to the Child Support Agency and the way in which it operates. The changes have not made much difference to how much many of my constituents pay.

One of my constituents was ordered to pay £80 from a take-home pay of just over £200 a week. His payments have been reduced to £73—a grand £7 reduction. Another constituent made a clean break settlement—something which the Government have stubbornly refused to take into account. Clean break settlements are often arranged amicably between partners, to the benefit of both. My constituent paid what I thought to be too low a figure of maintenance. However, the sum was agreed by the court and by the constituent's ex-wife. He has remarried and has two children by his second wife. He is not a highly paid worker, although he is a skilled man who has done up two homes beautifully so that they are now worth a lot more than when he bought them. The Child Support Agency has demanded £75 a week from my constituent even though he is not well paid. That payment means that he could be in serious danger of losing his new house.

My constituent's ex-wife was on invalidity benefit and will lose £48, plus free school meals, housing benefit and, I believe, free swimming lessons for her child who has extra tuition. None of the absent parent's contact costs has been taken into account. My constituent and both his families—his ex-family and his current family—are worse off because of the intervention of the Child Support Agency. The Minister must justify that position. The Minister regularly stands at the Dispatch Box and says that the agency has benefited women. The two women that I have mentioned have not benefited, but have been heavy losers.

Dramatic mistakes occur. Last week, I received a phone call from a constituent who woke up on a Monday morning to find his wife with a letter from the Child Support Agency accusing the man of having an ex-wife and three children. The man has been happily married for 10 years and has one child of his own. Clearly, a mistake had been made. To his credit, the man rang the Child Support Agency and suggested that he was probably the victim of an administrative mistake. He did not want to become too uptight about the issue, but his word was not accepted. He was told that he had to fill in the forms.

He said that he was staggered at the response that he received, which was, "You would say that wouldn't you —they all say that." I intervened and the man and his wife have received an apology. I do not think that such a response is good enough. I do not see why innocent people who have clearly been the victim of a mistake should have to fill in any forms. I want the Minister to consider that.

More seriously, three women in my constituency have told me that they are not co-operating with the Child Support Agency because they do not wish to have any further contact with their former partners who were violent. They are willing to pay the fine which is, I think, £8.50 a week, from their meagre benefit rather than be exposed to further violence. The Child Support Agency has not yet come back to the three women on that issue. It seems to be taking a long time to make a decision on whether or not to fine them. I should give the Minister the opportunity tonight to remove once and for all the punitive ploy to punish those who need our help and support. It should never have been included in the Act in the first place; it is disgraceful.

The Minister and the Government must accept some responsibility for the break-up of second marriages. We pass all our letters on to the Minister; I am not naming names tonight, because the Minister has had copies of every case. If there are a couple of letters that he has not got yet, they are certainly in the post.

A constituent of mine formed a second relationship with a divorced man. She, her new partner and two children were low-paid, but perfectly happy, until the Child Support Agency, chasing his former wife who was on benefit, gave the man such a high assessment that he could not pay. The ensuing pressure and stress led to the second relationship breaking down. That trend is on the increase. Both women and the children, even more tragically, lost out in this case. Who does the Minister think has been helped in that case? Nobody in that case has come out of it better off; they have all suffered.

I highlight another case of a father who was paying under a court order and who had to travel to see his child. The high maintenance that he now has to pay has put a limit on the visits. In a recent letter to me, he says:

"The Child Support Agency have ruined my life. As a result of their actions I am now receiving counselling as I am unable to sleep at night and my work is suffering as a result. This is dangerous to other people who have to work with me because my mind is on other things. I am unable to cope with the simplest of problems and I feel as though I have had enough.

I see no hope for the future. Thank you for asking me if there was anything that you could do to help me. What I would ask is what else can I do?"

There is despair in that letter. Sadly, I have other letters that are just as desperate.

There is another case of a man who cannot and does not think that he should pay the large increase in maintenance. He is denying paternity of his 15-year-old son. One can imagine what will happen if the son gets to know about that. At the moment, the man's ex-partner has kept that from the son. One can imagine the hurt that will be caused all round for that family.

I have another case which I passed on to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who chairs the Select Committee on Social Security which produced the report. It is the case of a man who, because his wife left him, took responsibility of his little girl from birth until she was eight years old. He has received no maintenance and he does not want any because he wants to keep the bond between the mother and daughter—the daughter goes to the mother's every weekend.

The mother has now put it into the child's head that, if she goes to live with her, she can get £100 a week from the father. She has said that they could have a good time spending £100 a week. That is a serious and unusual case. This monster—this Child Support Agency—throws up such cases every now and then. I am sure that other hon. Members have similar experiences.

The recent changes were an admission by the Government that the original child maintenance formula was unfair, yet the Government are not prepared to repay any money taken under the original formula. The Minister said:

"any absent parent who will benefit from the new phasing arrangements will get their full phasing entitlement but from a forward date."

Although everybody's payments have been reassessed from 7 February, those who had the misfortune to be first

through the system have ended up paying more. The feelings of injustice expressed to me by those who were already paying is beyond description. It seems to them like a double punishment. I do not believe the Government when they tell us that two thirds of the absent parents contacted were paying no regular maintenance. My experience in Halifax is not unique, as other hon. Members relate the same experience.

When Ros Hepplewhite gave evidence to the Social Security Select Committee, she admitted that, when dealing with a caring parent on benefit, the agency would deal first with the absent parents who were paying maintenance under previous agreements. She said:

"We are taking payers first."

That is reflected in my constituency cases. I emphasise that none of the absent parents who have contacted me—we have now reached 63—paid nothing before the introduction of the Child Support Agency. They had taken responsibility for their children. There may be an argument that, in some cases, that payment needed to be raised, but they had all taken responsibility.

The reason for taking payers first is obviously so that the Child Support Agency's financial targets are met. It is extremely distasteful that the chief executive of the agency is on performance-related pay. As a result, those who have suffered financially, rather than those who have shirked their responsibility, are being caught up in that nightmare.

I remind the House that £480 million of the £530 million that the Child Support Agency is to raise in its first year will go to the Treasury. I have said all along that it is a tax. It is not about helping children; it is about benefiting the Exchequer. The Minister has said that the formula-based scheme would provide consistent and predictable results. The results have certainly been consistent and predictable, in that they are placing both parents with care and absent parents in the poverty trap.

The Minister said that Ros Hepplewhite's performance-related bonus would be based on arrangements of maintenance for people with the care of children keeping to the agency's agreed budget, the achievement of the specified level of benefit savings and the level of claimed satisfaction. That is a particularly cruel statement to make because of the misery which the agency is causing.

My colleague on the Front Bench, my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram), believes that the Child Support Agency should be fundamentally reformed. I think that we should scrap it and start again.

Absent parents have a duty to support their children. I agree that the old court system did not work, but it could have been made to work for a fraction of the cost of setting up the Child Support Agency—or should I say the Treasury Support Agency? A system could have been devised to pursue defaulters and enforce payments. Had it been done that way, we would not have been pursuing those already paying but tackling some of those who are getting away scot free and still not paying a penny because we are concentrating on the soft targets.

At least the courts would have had discretion. They could have assessed all the valid factors, including children of second marriages, who should not be considered to be less deserving than children of first marriages.

How much has the reassessment of payments cost taxpayers? That question has been raised previously, but I do not know whether it has been answered. Has the Minister apologised for the many mistakes that have been made, particularly to the family that I mentioned? That case was outrageous. Will the payments be backdated? Treatment has been particularly unfair for those caught in the trap first.

The Child Support Agency is causing great harm to many families. I believe that the weight of public opinion will force the Government into major changes sooner rather than later. The agency is divisive, unfair and damaging to family life. Sooner or later, the Government will have to listen to the opposition to it. It might be a shout at the moment; it is going to develop into a roar that will engulf the Government, just as the poll tax did.

9.54 pm

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): I did not vote for the Act that set up this agency, for the simple reason that I was not in the House at the time. *[Interruption.]* I am explaining my own position: others will have to speak for themselves. If the Minister wants to intervene, I shall be delighted to give way to him.

I first became aware of the operation of the agency last September when a couple of policemen came to see me about problems that they were having with their assessments. They also drew my attention to problems that a number of their colleagues in the station were experiencing. As a result, when we reassembled here I tabled an early-day motion which attracted a small amount of press interest. I was astounded by the ensuing overwhelming explosion of letters from people all across the country describing the problems that they were facing with the Child Support Agency.

The phrase that struck me most often in those letters was, "Our world has been turned upside down." That is a heartfelt cry from people who had carefully built up their lives or who often had rebuilt them and then found that everything was to be put at risk by a drastic and dramatic change in their circumstances.

Perhaps it would have been better if Ministers had looked at the world upside down, by which I mean that they should have carefully scrutinised what has happened in Australia. Australia has a Child Support Act that seems to be working fairly successfully. The Australians do not face the problems that we are facing or the enormous degree of upset in this country. Many of us have attended mass meetings around the country where we have heard about that upset. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) has, with some of his colleagues, organised two or three extremely successful meetings in recent months, the last only a couple of weeks ago. At these meetings we have met irate, indignant and desperate families.

None of this is happening in Australia. The fundamental difference is that the Australian scheme is not retrospective.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): In the Standing Committee considering the Finance Bill, one of the main criticisms levelled at a particular clause by Conservative Members was the fact that it was retrospective. Retrospective taxation makes it difficult for people to adjust their financial circumstances. Exactly the same applies to the CSA. The retrospective nature of the Act has meant that it is impossible for families to adjust their finances to accommodate the massive increases forced on them by the agency.

Mr. Spellar: I thank my hon. Friend. He reminds us of a number of occasions when Conservative Members have been extremely concerned about retrospection. It has generally been a principle of legislation that it should not be made retrospective. That applies particularly to financial legislation. I am sure that colleagues recall the successful attempt to remove penalties for councillors who had fallen foul of housing legislation. That retrospection caused uproar among Conservative Members.

Unfortunately, the CSA operates retrospection with a vengeance. People have made choices in arriving at their settlements with their partners—sensible settlements based on the law at the time. They were given advice on the best ways of resolving their differences so as to ensure that their children could remain in the family home in the same neighbourhood and attend the same schools. They wanted to make sure that their children's standard of living was maintained. Usually the wife stayed in the family home, debts were covered by the husband and he moved off to set up a new home. That was their legal and sometimes financial advice at the time and they made prudent and sensible decisions.

Now, that is all being torn up; they are told that it is irrelevant and counts for nothing. All those arrangements have become meaningless and they will be assessed merely on their income. As my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South said, they suffer dramatic and drastic changes in their circumstances.

In other circumstances, such as when the Government introduced the council tax, and in other areas of taxation —even in national taxation as introduced by the Chancellor—transitional arrangements were introduced. Obviously, when people are facing a change in local taxation and the results will be dramatic, especially if that occurs around the time of local government elections in the London boroughs, transitional arrangements are made to soften the blow. There is no such softening for those who are hit by the Child Support Agency. They get hit by the full amount right away from day one. They sometimes face a doubling, trebling or quadrupling of the amount they pay.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) said that some people were paying too little, although when one looks at all the surrounding circumstances, things are not always as they seem. An increase in taxation of £50, £60 or £70 a week is drastic and dramatic and can have a devastating effect on people's standards of living, way of life and security.

The decision is in the Government's hands. Quite simply, 90 per cent. of the money that is recovered goes directly to the Government. That is partly due to the take-up strategy. It was clear from the Select Committee report that the first groups to be targeted were those where the parent with care was on income support and the absent parent was already paying maintenance. Those groups are the prime targets and 90 per cent. of the money recovered from them goes directly to the Treasury.

When that point was made in previous debates, the Minister's reply has been that moving away from that would mean increasing public borrowing. I caution the Minister against using that argument tonight. If he does, he is admitting that the Child Support Agency is a tax—a tax that falls directly and particularly on certain limited groups in society: divorced and separated people. It is a divorced and separated tax.

If he is suggesting that people should have to change the arrangements they make for their children, it is legitimate to do that over time. The evidence from Australia is that the percentage of parents with care on income support and other benefits is falling—but steadily, not dramatically and drastically. That is the Government's problem. The financial bind that they are in means that they cannot take the matter slowly and steadily and in an acceptable manner; they have to rush to get the money all in one go. That is the fundamental difficulty at the root of the problem.

I shall address some of the detailed problems that are arising. They may be details, but for many individuals they are enormously important and cause immense difficulty and heartache. One example that has been raised by a number of Conservative Members, particularly those representing towns some distance from London but dependent on the London travel-to-work area, involves travel costs.

Workers in central London receive higher incomes in recognition of the fact that they experience higher travel costs. Unfortunately for them, however, the higher income is included in the assessment, but travel costs are not offset against it. Although that has been the main problem raised, it is not unique in this country. A considerable number of construction workers and long-distance lorry drivers throughout the country experience significant travel costs, and that is recognised in their remuneration. The problem is that their remuneration counts; the other is not offset.

On the issue of retrospection, problems are also being experienced throughout the country, as I can see from my mailbag, by those who build up huge debts between the initial letter and the assessment. Considerable delays occur, even in straightforward cases, and people then build up 10 or 12 weeks quite normally, and longer periods in many cases. That means that they then face debts of £1,000 to £2,000. That is quite dramatic.

We all know the problems of people once they are in debt: they fall into the debt trap and start to borrow from high-cost areas, not pay off their visa and access accounts and are then juggling between their various accounts and starting to pay a lot more money. Those problems have arisen not, I would argue, because people have been evading or avoiding answering the form, but in this instance merely because of the amount of work that the CSA has taken on and the delays in the system.

We must also be concerned at the errors in the system. A new problem that I have found, which has not been mentioned in debates on this matter before, is where an assessment is agreed, the DSS is notified of the amount of the assessment, which is then deducted from benefit and, for one reason or another, the money is not then paid to the parent with care.

Sometimes that can be because perhaps the money is not paid in, but one woman who came to see me was concerned about her daughter's welfare as she had been losing a considerable sum of money. The mother had seen her daughter's ex-husband's paying-in book and he had been paying for the past 13 weeks. Unfortunately, the money was not coming across. It is all very well to say that there will be administrative problems in every system, but the difficulty is that in such an unresponsive system people then find that they are short of money week after week and get into increasingly desperate circumstances.

I am sure that we have all seen people whose assessment was based on the amount of overtime that they were paid, or the amount of holiday pay that they received. They have

a high assessment, but are now on basic time and find again that they are desperately short of money and cannot make ends meet.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most frustrating aspects for hon. Members when raising these cases is that no matter how much detail we provide in our letters to the Minister, we are always sent a standard letter from the chief executive which does not deal with any aspect of the case until the second or third last paragraph, and even that is a standard paragraph?

Mr. Spellar: My hon. Friend had obviously been looking over my shoulder, because the next item in my notes was responsiveness. That problem is faced not only by us, but, of course, by our constituents as well. For them it is even worse. I will check with my colleagues on the time that it takes us to receive a reply, but it is usually between four and six weeks. I note my hon. Friend's comments on the nature of many of those replies.

Many of our constituents are given telephone numbers to call, but they get answering machines; the telephones do not get answered personally. It takes them eight to 12 weeks to get a reply. Often those replies do not address the particular problems. The responses that they receive are often in computer-speak. It is almost as though standard paragraphs are built into the machine and those replies come out. They cannot find any way of getting a response from the system to their questions. That is immensely frustrating, particularly because, under the scheme, the money keeps clocking up. It applies from the time when the first assessment was set up.

I referred earlier to the take-on strategy. We should urge the Minister tonight to look at a new take-on strategy of saying that the legislation should be changed so that we take out the retrospective element. That would remove a huge amount of work from the system; it would mean that the agency would be able to concentrate on new cases and therefore be able to take into account many of the factors that we have outlined so that people could deal properly and responsibly with the maintenance of their children, but without being forced into desperation and bankruptcy and being put in the position, as some of them are, of having to decide whether it is worth staying in work.

We are already encountering cases of people giving up work. I am told by shop stewards in the midlands that union members are approaching them and saying, "Next time redundancies arise, put me down on the list; I shall be unemployed, but at least I shall be able to draw benefit." If those workers left their jobs early, they would not be able to draw that benefit; if they take redundancy, two families will be on benefit, rather than only one being on a lesser benefit.

The CSA and the Department must get to grips with the problems that people face out there in the real world. I congratulate the Minister on meeting parents from the north-west recently. On that occasion, he experienced the sheer frustration and anger that they are experiencing.

Some may say that people do not like paying more money. I am sure that that is true, but that is not what we are talking about. We are talking about people who are desperate—whose world is being turned upside down, and whose lives and second families are being threatened by the changes. Some of the stories are heartrending: couples are having to decide whether to embark on a second marriage, and whether they can afford to have a child. I have had two letters saying that a second wife or fiancee is pregnant, and is having to decide whether to go through with the pregnancy. We can all imagine the traumas that that is inflicting on people.

I do not think that the CSA and the Department have assessed the difficulties being caused throughout the country. It is time to step back and examine the details, particularly the fundamental problem of the legislation—its retrospective nature.

10.11 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I apologise to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) for having missed her opening speech. Only in the last few minutes was I released from a Standing Committee, and I came straight to the Chamber to try to catch part of her speech. I did, however, listen to the speech of the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar), and I have great sympathy with almost everything he said.

Perhaps inevitably, one hon. Member after another will refer to the particularly harrowing cases that have been brought to them. Earlier this week, I asked my hon. Friend the Minister how many letters on the subject he had received so far from hon. Members. The answer was 5,089. I must be responsible for some 70 or 80 of those letters, on behalf of my constituents, and I suspect that other hon. Members who are present have been bombarded with letters from people suffering the effects of the legislation.

Like the hon. Member for Warley, West, I must begin with the question of retrospection, which is a killer for too many families. Let me give the House a small example from my postbag. A couple in a second marriage waited to have their first child until the one child of the first marriage had passed the age of 16: that was the age at which the court order applying to the couple had said that maintenance would end.

Thirteen months after the child turned 16, the CSA decided—retrospectively—to insist that maintenance should have continued at the higher level. The couple were therefore faced with 13 months of retrospective maintenance payments. They have no means to pay that, particularly as they have started a second family and face all the bills associated with a young child. I fear that the same circumstances have hit young and less well-off families up and down the country in a horrible way.

Second on what I would regard as the short list of problems caused by the Child Support Agency must be the failure to take into account existing binding, legal, financial commitments such as loans that people take out to improve their lives. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will not do so, but it would be easy for him and the agency to say that people should have thought of that. How could they have thought of that when they had no idea that a ton of bricks was about to descend on their heads? It is fine that we take into account the mortgage and the council tax, but if we do not take into account major financial commitments, whether it be a loan for a car or for home improvement or whatever, we deliver to those people something from which they cannot recover and with which they cannot cope.

Third on the list is the problem of the tightness of resources with which couples are left as a result of the assessment that they have received. There is simply not enough money for them to continue to care for their

[Mr. Simon Coombs]

children on a part-time basis. Many fathers with a second wife are happy to take the children of the first marriage over a weekend—it may be one weekend in three or one in four. That has stopped in at least five cases that have been brought to my attention because there is no longer the money to go and pick up the children, bring them home, feed them and look after them over the weekend. It cannot be right that we are driving children away from their fathers when the fathers are anxious to play at least some part in looking after them.

Fourth on the list is the problem of wrong assessments. That may be caused by bureaucratic error, but it may be caused because the income of the father or the couple has changed. Income may change because of shift work or overtime, where payments change from week to week. A particularly high figure may have been used in the assessment, but that may become rapidly out of date. There may be a loss of income—not a loss of job—and there is then the question of how long it takes for a fresh assessment to be made. In the meantime, the debt continues to mount month after month. That is the sort of problem that is drawn to my attention.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): Is not the essence of the problem the rigidity and vindictiveness of the system? There is an insistence on total rigidity and a refusal to understand individual circumstances and to take into account changed circumstances, such as travelling expenses. Circumstances have changed for one of my constituents. His job has moved from Blackpool to Preston and he has increased travelling expenses. He has been clobbered by the Child Support Agency, which has increased his payment from £5 a week to £31 a week. He now has to maintain a car on top of that. The Child Support Agency totally refused to take that into account, because of its insistence on the bureaucratic procedures that it has set. That is what ordinary people find incomprehensible and iniquitous.

Mr. Coombs: I suspect that officials at the Child Support Agency were only carrying out the rules with which they were confronted. I wish to say nothing in the House that in any way suggests criticism of the way in which officials are carrying out their duties on behalf of the agency. I am aware that there have been stories of that nature, but I do not want to dwell on that.

Having heard that intervention, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will comment on it. Clearly, that rule should be changed. If the Government are saying that people should not take a job if it means that their travelling expenses are increased so that they are no longer able to afford their maintenance payments, I hope that they will think again, because clearly that is wrong.

I had high hopes for the Select Committee when I heard last year that it was going to look at this issue. Sadly, the Select Committee spent a short time taking relatively few accounts of the position and produced a report that did not go to the heart of the problem. I hope, however, that it will return to the issue as soon as possible. I asked the Clerk to the Select Committee today what were the chances of its doing so and was told that there was interest in pursuing the subject again but no fixed date had been given for an inquiry. I hope that the inquiry will begin soon. I have the highest regard for the Select Committee procedure, and if only the Committee would give weight of evidence to what hon. Members have said in this and previous debates, we might begin to make progress.

On Sunday morning, I shall attend a meeting of 150 victims of the Child Support Agency. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say something that I can pass on to them, rather than my simply saying sorry. Like the hon. Member for Warley, West, I was a Member of the House when the Child Support Bill was given an unopposed Third Reading. All of us who were Members of the last Parliament must accept some share of the responsibility.

Mr. Andrew Ingram (East Kilbride): Does the hon. Gentleman recall that Labour tabled a well-argued reasoned amendment on Second Reading—if he remains for the rest of the debate he may hear its exact terms—in support of which Labour Members expressed their opposition to the Government's proposals?

Mr. Coombs: I am aware of that, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will explain why the Opposition were prepared to give the Bill a Third Reading without a vote. I hope that he will not try to say that the agency is the responsibility of Conservative Members only. In the past few weeks, I have heard many of his colleagues accept that they did not fully appreciate what would develop, and I see the hon. Member for Halifax nodding. I am trying not to score a point but to say that none of us realised what would happen. I certainly did not, and all I shall be able to say to the meeting on Sunday is that I am sorry but that I shall go on trying to persuade Ministers to make the necessary changes.

When I was in local government, there was a saying —other hon. Members will recognise this—that if one wanted a pedestrian crossing, one could go on hoping and hoping but, until somebody was injured, one would not get it. What will it take to change the rules under which the Child Support Agency works? Will it take defaulting on loans, which I see from my constituency case work is imminent? Will it take giving up jobs and going on the dole? Will it take the break-up of second marriages? Will it take even worse consequences than those before we say that enough is enough and that we cannot go on like this any longer? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will answer that question, as my constituents and, I suspect, those of other hon. Members present wish to know what the future holds.

10.23 pm

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): I believe that the issue that we are debating is not about administration or a formula of Einsteinian complexity but about politics. To clarify that, I wish to say where I start from.

We need simply to ask who has benefited from the introduction of the Child Support Agency and whether, on balance, it has benefited society more than harmed it. If we examine the costs and benefits, one beneficiary is immediately obvious. As my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) said, it would be more appropriate to have called the Child Support Act 1991 the Treasury Support Act, because, of the £530 million targeted for the first year, almost £480 million is due to go to the Treasury. On that basis, the Treasury will do very well indeed, but that is not the only way in which the Government and the

Treasury will benefit. There are hidden "benefits" that are as yet uncosted but have serious consequences for the rest of society.

At some stage, someone will ask what is the cost of the "loss" of 11,000 women from the benefits system as a result of requiring them to name the father of their child or children. The disappearance of those women will also constitute financial savings for the Treasury.

A further uncosted element is the loss of access to 'passported benefits' for some households. I am sure that I am not the only Member of Parliament whose constituents have complained that, as a result of the new formula imposed on them, they are poorer in terms of their net disposable assets. When we do the full accounting, we shall be surprised—some of us will be alarmed—by the full cost to society and the full benefit to the Treasury.

Those are starting points, but it is worth going back to the notion of what propelled the House to believe that the previous arrangements needed to be changed. Three issues were at stake. The first was that, under the previous arrangements, children lost out. The second was that women lost out on maintenance payments under the separation and divorce arrangements, because the court system did not deliver a structured basis of family support from fathers who were in a position to pay for their children but were not doing so. The third was the notion that fathers should take responsibility for their children.

I believe that the House shared those three important concepts but then reached some conclusions about which I can say only that, if I had been a Member at the time, I would not have dreamt of supporting them within the framework of the CSA. We have not stuck to the most important premise, which is that the child comes first.

Under the Act, children do not come first and they are not treated equally. I shall run through some of the ways in which the Act is phenomenally divisive. Stepchildren are not treated as the equals of biological children. Households that were not previously divided are now divided by the Act. Children in the United Kingdom are not treated as the equals of those outside it. Many people with parenting responsibilities have sought, and continue to seek, to maintain children who are not in the United Kingdom, but the financial obligations that they seek to discharge are not recognised under the Act.

I have already raised with the Minister the position of members of the armed forces serving in Germany who have second families with German citizens. For such people, those families are their permanent family, but they are not recognised for the purposes of maintenance. Such personnel have to ask themselves not merely whether they can afford to work but whether they can afford to serve their country and pay what is required under the Child Support Act. It is ludicrous that we have such an absurd disregard for the parenting obligations of fathers who currently maintain children outside the United Kingdom.

The children of second relationships are not treated equally with those of first relationships. I know of cases in which the children of second relationships have been deeply disturbed by the fact that their bank accounts have to be examined when their stepfather's contributions to his first children have to be assessed. It was said that that would not be assessed, but it forms part of the presumption about the available income of the second family. As has been pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax, the break-up of second families will be a dreadful consequence of the way in which the legislation has been working. We may well end up seeing more relationships destroyed than supported.

Children in second relationships are also divided. When there are children conceived in a second relationship and children conceived in former relationships there is a new divide. One has to start thinking in terms of family activities that no longer take place on a unified basis, and about whether a father outside the family is willing to pay for a share of them. It seems to me that that division of children is a most cruel consequence of the way in which the Government have structured this system.

As I have said, children who are no longer the beneficiaries of passported benefits lose out, as do those who are caught in conflict between separated parents. Some children are now the victims of fathers' having to make a choice between supporting them financially and seeing them. There are men who cannot afford the cost of seeing their children. The need to make provision for the development and maintenance of a relationship between a father and his children is not recognised in the formula. Those are the victims of the cruelty of an Act that does not treat children equally and does not start from the premise that we want to develop the best models of parenting, not the worst.

What should we be doing to support the notion of better fathering? Well, we would not have begun with a premise that hits contributing fathers rather than those failing to contribute. But that is precisely where the Child Support Agency did begin. It has made no bones about the fact that it is the contributing father, rather than the one discharging no responsibilities and providing no financial support, who has been pursued. It has made parental contact more difficult and for growing numbers it has turned work into an uneconomic activity.

As has been pointed out by my hon. Friends, a further cost will be the number of fathers who find that it is no longer cost-effective to work. What an absurdity it is that an Act should have that consequence. The system has turned civilised separations into civil wars, and the cost will be borne by society and will eventually fall into the lap of the House in the shape of additional demands on social services and local authority support services.

To have a sensible starting point, we need a different set of principles. I should like to outline two things that must be done. First, we have to address the question of whose responsibility this society's children are. In other debates, Conservative Members have made the point not only that there should be direct parental responsibility for children but that, if the cost cannot be afforded by parents, we should turn to the grandparents for a contribution. That is an individual line of responsibility that fragments the notion of common and community responsibility for our children.

It must be understood that we all have a common interest in the well-being of children. For the next 50 years at least, there will be an increasing proportion of retired people and an increasing dependency ratio. It is in the interests of all of us to have a well-brought-up, well-educated, well-trained set of generations of children, as they will be the wage earners and pension contributors on whom some of us will end up being dependent. We have a common interest in the parenting of children—not just a set of separate and individual interests.

Secondly, we must ask ourselves what the models of "best parenting" are, and how a Bill that goes through the

[Mr. Alan Simpson]

House can encourage them. I say to Ministers and to my hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench that, if we want to put the child first, we should concentrate on payments that go directly to the child. We already have such an arrangement in child benefit. A doubling or more of that would be an extremely efficient way of delivering the money to the child. If the money is not to be delivered through child benefit, the litmus test of whether the method works is simple: does it benefit the child? The test is not whether the money goes to the Treasury but whether it reaches the child.

The second question that we should ask ourselves about separation arrangements concerns family courts. We could learn a lot about those in other parts of the globe. There are family courts in Scotland and in Australia, and they address many of the shortcomings of the previous system in England. The notion behind them was to develop sensible and responsible separation arrangements, with enforceable maintenance payments.

Thirdly, if we want to make adjustments, the best way is through the tax system. Some of the people who do not pay at the moment are those who cannot pay—irregular earners, and people who are in and out of work or whose hours of work are uncertain and unpredictable. Through the tax system, through the imposition of a higher tax coding, we could even out the payments without doing so at the expense of the child and of the parent with care.

I believe that, in the end, the Act will be scrapped, as the poll tax was scrapped, because society and the public at large will not tolerate it. The cost that they know is being borne because of the divisiveness of the Act will force the Government to abandon the CSA. It will be replaced with arrangements that begin and end with the questions, how do we deliver support for the child, and how do we give children in this society the best experience of being parented, in whatever sort of household they happen to be brought up?

10.36 pm

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on obtaining the debate. As on every other occasion when we have debated the subject, it has provoked a wide range of criticisms and views of the Act that set up the Child Support Agency. I fully recognise my hon. Friend's strength of feeling on the subject; she made some extremely valid points. My hon. Friends the Members for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) and for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) added to her arguments and criticisms.

Only one Conservative Member has spoken tonight, but contributions by Conservatives in previous debates on the subject have given the impression that the Child Support Act and the way in which it has been implemented have reached the same high level of parliamentary opprobrium that was accorded to the hated poll tax. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South made that analogy, too.

It is now clear that the Government have badly misjudged the commitment of Conservative Members to a measure that cuts social security spending by imposing cash penalties on their constituents. They seem to say, "We agree with the principle of cutting social security spending, but do not visit the cost upon our constituents." That message is coming over in many of the debates on the subject.

As each day passes, it becomes clearer to Conservative Members that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South said, the Act is not really the Child Support Act but the Treasury Support Act, and it is a deeply flawed and socially damaging measure. We all know from our surgery cases the widespread anger and dismay felt by the many thousands of families whose lives have been affected by the Act. As more and more individuals are brought within its ambit, the number of those who oppose it has grown in direct proportion.

As the Minister knows, the problem is not declining; nor will it go away. It will be with us until the Government act on it. I must remind him that many of the concerns now being raised and all the main criticisms now made of the Act were stated in June 1991 when, as a Bill, it received a Second Reading.

It is salutary to look back at that debate and read what hon. Members said at the time. All the Opposition Members who spoke in the debate expressed serious reservations about the Bill. That was not matched by the contributions from Conservative Members. I have no doubt that Conservative Members who participated in the debate or who went into the Lobbies and voted for the Bill have changed their minds, now that they have seen the Act in operation. Much is made by Ministers and by Conservative Members of the Labour party's position on the Act, and we have had the same view expressed by the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) tonight, as if, somehow or other, we have to be sucked into the consensus on the Act.

It would be useful to put on the record the reasoned amendment that was moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) to the Child Support Bill when it was given its Second Reading. It read: "this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, while providing that absent parents should contribute to the support of their children, leaves lone parents on Income Support not one penny better off, makes lone parents worse off where they receive maintenance just above Income Support levels and thus lose access to passported benefits, allows maintenance payments to be disrupted if the absent parent defaults, does not take account of property settlements which could lead to an increase in orders for the home to be sold, leaves unclear in which cases the lone parents will be exempt from the requirement to help the agency trace the absent parent and therefore from the penalty of loss of benefit imposed on the caring parent, and does not tackle more serious problems facing lone parents and their children, notably the provision of better child care facilities.—[*Official Report*, 4 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. 194.]

I know that the hon. Member for Swindon did not vote in that Division. He obviously had very good reasons for not being there. But for him to come along now and to accuse Labour Members of somehow being tied into the consensus on this legislation is a piece of genuine nonsense.

Mr. Simon Coombs: It is very good of the hon. Gentleman to give way and I hope that, having had his moment on the reasoned amendment at Second Reading, he will turn his attention to the Third Reading and explain why Labour Members did not oppose the Bill then. It seems to me highly relevant. Before I give him that chance, let me say that I was not seeking to suck in the Labour party in a party political sense; I merely wanted to indicate that there were hon. Members on both sides who genuinely did not anticipate the effect that the legislation is having.

Mr. Ingram: The usual way, if hon. Members have reservations and a reasoned amendment is put forward, is to vote for the amendment. If the hon. Member had been present—I accept that he had reasons for not being there; I do not know what they were—he could have come into the Lobby with us. Opposition Members made the very same points that he has made tonight, and the reasoned amendment set out their criticisms of the Bill. Hon. Members who shared those criticisms had the opportunity to express them in the Lobby, but they did not do so. I am pleased that they are now on our side, but, at every opportunity that we are given to vote to bring about a sensible change to the legislation, Conservative Members are noticeable by their absence from the Lobby for those voting against the Government. That is a very important point, which Conservative Members should note.

The criticisms set out in the reasoned amendment are just as valid now as they were then. It must be a matter of regret to the 221 hon. Members who opposed the amendment and supported the Bill. They must feel, on second thoughts, that they should have done something different, in the same way as, on second thoughts, they approached the hated poll tax. If only the Government had not been so pig-headed and inflexible, and if only they had taken greater cognisance of the points made in the amendment and during the debate, perhaps they would not be in the mess that they are in with the Act.

We now have the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security acting like King Canute, standing in the way of change as wave upon wave of mounting criticism threatens to overwhelm him. Not even the most insensitive of Ministers—I do not put the Under-Secretary in the bracket of insensitive Conservatives; indeed, I put him in the higher bracket of sensitive Ministers—could be impervious to the pressures that the Under-Secretary is under.

We know that a case has been made time and again for the Government to undertake a fundamental review of the Act. We know that that demand has the support of many Conservative Members. We can hazard a guess that even the Under-Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Social Security, with his little hit list for attacking those in poverty, are perhaps secret supporters of the demand that changes should be made. If they take that view in secret, they perhaps do so only because they want to get themselves off the hook on which they are now impaled.

The only message that we hear from the Minister time and again is that the Government have no current plans for further changes to the scheme. That message was stated as recently as 28 February by the Under-Secretary of State at column 643 of the *Official Report*. I could almost hear the groans of despair and howls of outrage of the tens of thousands of families and individuals affected by the Act when that message went out on 28 February. The one message that those who are affected by the Act do not want to hear from the Government is that there are no further plans for change. That is the message which the Minister is getting from his own Benches.

I do not know how much credence can be given to press reports about people who have committed suicide as a result of the actions of the Child Support Agency. We can probably discount most, if not all, of those press reports. But I know that genuine hardship and misery have been visited on tens of thousands of hard-working citizens who have been caught in the trap of the Act.

The Minister will argue that the Government have shown a willingness to listen and adapt. He will give the example of the changes in the regulations introduced in the House on 2 February. We all accept that those changes were welcome. At least they were an improvement on what was there before. They were an overall improvement and had to be welcomed. They certainly gave a measure of relief to certain categories of parents who had been asked to pay substantially increased maintenance.

However, it was pointed out when the changes were introduced in the House that, as a side consequence, they had a deleterious effect on certain parents with care in receipt of family credit. Those who were paying maintenance benefited. Those who were supposed to receive the benefit were affected in a damaging way as a consequence. The Minister has claimed time and again that one of the purposes of the Act was to help parents who were left to bring up children on their own. Yet the Government have introduced changes to the regulations which achieve the very opposite.

The effect of the changes on family credit recipients was pointed out to the Minister during the debate on 2 February, when the regulations were passed. On that occasion, I asked him to recognise the problem. It is interesting to note that if people have been paid too much family credit, the level of payment can be reduced by a reduced benefit direction from the appropriate Department of State. Yet if people have been paid too little family credit because of changes introduced by the Government, they have to wait six months before they can be given their full entitlement. Surely that cannot be right. The Minister has ignored the points made to him on 2 February and continues to penalise mothers in certain circumstances in receipt of family credit.

In recent parliamentary answers to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston), the Minister tried to play down the full effect of the regulations on those who receive family credit. The Minister tells us that he estimates that fewer than 1,000 families are affected and that the average loss per family will be less than £100 in total. Of course, that is an average figure and it means that some families will lose substantially more than £100.

I said earlier that the Minister was a sensitive Minister. Surely, he must be aware that someone with limited resources who loses £100—£2 per week—from a very tight budget faces difficulties when trying to make ends meet. That has been the effect of the regulations—if only for 1,000 families—for those on family credit. The Government must have known that that would happen. They did not balance the figures and they did not take action to protect such parents with care.

I should like to have raised a number of other issues in the debate. I am grateful that so many of my hon. Friends contributed to it. I want to give the Minister sufficient time to answer the questions raised so that we can have a proper debate on the subject. More important, tonight the Minister must take all the criticisms that have been repeatedly made inside and outside the Chamber, from many bodies, including the organisations that have been established to campaign specifically against the Act. He must take on board the arguments and undertake a fundamental review of the legislation. If he does not do so, like King Canute he may well drown.

10.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): If I remember rightly, King Canute walked away from the beach at the end of the day, but we shall not worry too much about that.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on initiating the debate. I thank all hon. Members who have participated. I know the interest and close involvement shown in the subject by the hon. Members for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) and for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall). I noted what my hon. Friends the Members for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) and for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) had to say.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) introduced some philosophy into the debate by ranging slightly wider and considering the role of children generally, which I welcomed. My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), who was on the Front Bench earlier, has expressed his interest to me by way of letters. The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) made a brief intervention.

I also welcome the comments of the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram), with whom I have debated the subject before. I am grateful for his kind personal remarks, but he skipped daintily away from the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon about Third Reading. I take what the hon. Member for East Kilbride said about Second Reading, but he managed to avoid the point about Third Reading. He also avoided the fact that, when we debated regulations on the Child Support Agency last year, the Opposition did not vote against them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swindon was not trying to make a party political point—I heard the bluster of the hon. Member for East Kilbride as he tried to introduce that aspect—but was expressing an honest view. I also noticed that the hon. Member for Halifax nodded her head when he said that some of the consequences of legislation are not always anticipated on either side of the House. I shall comment on that later.

Amid all the complaints and criticisms levelled at the scheme, it is important not to lose sight of just how bad things were before, and why the legislation was necessary. Almost 1 million lone parents had become reliant on income support by 1992-93, with three quarters of them receiving no regular maintenance, which was wrong.

Let us consider those figures. The vast majority of parents with care and their children were living at the basic level of income provided by income support. Meanwhile, many absent parents had been able to enjoy a higher standard of living—they were not on benefit. The new scheme was designed to go some way towards redressing the balance. The method chosen for achieving that—there was a measure of understanding of it in the House—was to move to a formula-based system that would produce a more equitable distribution of income in a reliable and consistent manner.

It is true that a formulaic system is less flexible than one based on discretion, but there were far more inequities under the old system and far more people were disadvantaged. It has been easy to forget about that during the past nine months.

The vast majority of parents had been reliant on income support. All absent parents, even the hardest cases, are protected from falling to that level of income under the new rules. Many absent parents are unhappy with the new demands. I recognise and understand that. Yes, it is difficult to adjust when maintenance bills are brought up to more realistic levels. That does not necessarily make it wrong or unfair.

One of the problems of the old system was that its inequities had become accepted—even condoned. People who were disadvantaged by the system did not complain—or, if they did, no one listened. It is sometimes easy to forget that there were hard cases before. People walked out of divorce courts and ancillary proceedings, having been, and feeling, hard done by. When there are so many interests, it is not possible to create a situation in which everyone feels content and that all has been done.

I make those comments to put all the criticisms of the Child Support Act 1991 into context. I am still convinced that the scheme that we have put in place is an improvement on the one that we left behind. I believe that, in spite of some of the comments made by hon. Members tonight, the House would not favour a return to that system.

I cannot allow the basic principles that we have all stood for and the gains that we have already made to be undermined. Our response must be measured and, above all, it must ensure that the interests of all parties are recognised and taken into account.

Mrs. Mahon: I deliberately outlined a number of cases. In every case the children are not better off and, in almost all the cases, nor are the women. So how can it be a better system?

Mr. Burt: For two reasons. First, in many cases in the past, when maintenance had not even been thought of and was not being paid to the vast majority of women on income support, their situation would never improve. *[Interruption.]* Will the hon. Lady hold on? Most lone parents, as we know, do not want to remain on benefit for ever. They want to get back into work. It is of considerable advantage to them to have maintenance available in the medium and longer term. A recent report by the Policy Studies Institute said that that was very clear, and that to achieve maintenance early was probably the most important factor on its own for improving the position of single parents and encouraging them back into work.

Even if maintenance does not mean a pound-for-pound increase, the fact that it will be available and will be there is an advantage. If people receive family credit, there is a maintenance disregard, and if they do a job where benefit is not involved they will notice an advantage. In those circumstances, they will be better off. The very fact of establishing maintenance is terribly important and in many cases in the past it was not there. That is a distinct advantage.

Mr. Spellar *rose—*

Mr. Burt: I will move on, because I have only until five minutes past eleven and I shall not cover the topics raised otherwise.

Hon. Members are aware that we recently introduced a number of measures to ease the burdens of the absent parents who were most affected by the Child Support Act. Those measures were based on some of the Select Committee's recommendations. I feel that the Select Committee's report has been rather easily dismissed by colleagues on both sides of the Chamber.

Mr. Ingram *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Burt: It was. It was said that it did not go far enough and was not what people wanted. In fact, it was a considered report by a group of colleagues. We all have some time for most of them. The fact that the report did not necessarily come out with the answers that everyone wanted does not mean that it should be dismissed. It made some approaches to the questions and suggested some ideas for change that we accepted.

We have made changes to include a substantial increase in the minimum amount of income that an absent parent would keep after meeting maintenance liability; a reduction in the additional element where there is a liability for only one or two children; a reduction in the amount included for the care needs of the children as they grow older; and an extension of the arrangements for phasing in the new amounts. Those are not minor tinkerings. They represent a substantial reduction in the amount that many absent parents will have to pay.

Let us consider some of the effects of those changes. About 55,000 cases were reassessed as a result of the 7 February changes. Of those, 41,000 had a decrease of liability and about 14,000 had no change in liability. The fact that those changes have been made has meant something to people in receipt of those reductions. Moreover, they have been designed to be of most benefit to absent parents at the lower end of the income scale and those with second families.

Those changes are proof of our commitment to keep the policy under review, and to make adjustments as the need arises. The fact that we acted so swiftly and decisively shows that our commitment to keep the scheme under review is not just empty rhetoric or a formula of words: we mean what we say. We remain true to our pledge, and to our determination to build a fair and just system for child maintenance that will be a cornerstone of United Kingdom family policy well into the next century. We must now allow the changes to feed through into the system. Once that has happened and we have fully evaluated the impact, we shall be able to judge whether further changes are necessary. That is the responsible way to deal with the matter.

The hon. Member for Halifax raised points about good cause and co-operation. She will remember that the House spent considerable time on that in the run-up to the introduction of the agency. It was assumed by many colleagues to be the major issue that we would face. That turned out not to be the case—partly, I hope, because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I, and the chief executive of the agency, put time and effort into ensuring that it would not be the case.

Good cause has been investigated in 49,000 cases. That sounds a lot, but it is only 6 per cent. of the applications issued. Good cause has been accepted in 50 per cent. of those cases—24,760. In 11,570 cases, the parent with care has named the father because we have been able to reassure those parents that it is the right thing to do and that we would protect them if they feared any difficulty. That system is working well and it is right to keep it in place.

If the hon. Lady persists in her view that we should not have that degree of incentive, I must tell her that I do not believe that the way in which the Act has worked has given her cause to feel that. It may be a philosophical objection on her part. I hope that she agrees that we have tried very genuinely to meet that worry and to provide that degree of care.

A number of colleagues raised again the issue of the soft target—the idea that it is wrong to try to increase maintenance payments from those who are already paying, because that makes the CSA the Treasury Support Agency. There is a real divergence of opinion here between what Labour Members say and what the Select Committee says. I am not sure whether it would have formed part of Labour's approach to the issue if it had been in office. Again, I direct colleagues to paragraph 18 and the following paragraphs of the Select Committee report, which deal not only with the soft targets argument, but with retrospection. The hon. Lady many not agree, but many people do. The arguments are fair and genuine, partly because hon. Members of her own party signed up to them and must, therefore, have believed them.

The Select Committee says straightforwardly:

"A large part of the public debate about the Child Support Agency has centred on the accusation that it was picking unfairly on 'soft targets', that is, those absent parents who were already making maintenance payments. Behind this accusation has been an allegation that the Agency's work is governed by the requirement to make substantial sayings in the social security budget. We believe this objective to be an important one. The Committee believes that taxpayers have for too long been asked, in effect, to pick up maintenance bills that should have been met by absent parents."

The House either agrees or disagrees. If Labour Front-Bench Members disagree with that—if they do not believe that that is a legitimate aim and object of Government—I am happy for them to say so. I believe that it is a legitimate aim and that the way in which the Select Committee dealt with that point was important.

Mr. Simon Coombs: I hope that my hon. Friend will address himself to my point. The element of retrospection is driving many of my constituents deeper and deeper into debt and is destroying their happiness, their marriages and, perhaps, their lives. What message should I take to them when I meet them on Sunday morning?

Mr. Burt: The first message is that the fact that previous settlements would be looked at was an implicit part of the Act, which my hon. Friend supported. Secondly, the changes we made on 7 February included some that were designed to ease that pressure because we had felt it necessary. The reason why previous settlements were looked at was to try to ensure that everyone would have the same base for maintenance in the future and to leave behind some settlements which, in the past, had left women with low levels of maintenance which they could not increase. The previous system gave some legitimacy to settlements in which taxpayers had borne the brunt of the burden because they were picking up housing costs and the like. That was the point specifically referred to by the Select Committee. To allow that position to have remained would have been unfair on everybody else. That is why those matters were considered.

A variety of issues have been raised tonight, many of which, alas, we shall not have time to deal with. The question of the Australian system was raised again. It is fundamentally different from ours. It is very broad brush. It has no equivalent of protected income. It does not take housing costs and similar matters into account. The number of appeals is beginning to increase. So far, it has had 11,537 applications for review out of a total caseload of some 150,000. Of the finalised cases, 2,647 were successful, while 2,127 were unsuccessful. Some 46 per cent. of absent parents' appeals were allowed, while 54 per cent. were refused; 87 per cent. of parents with care were

[Mr. Burt]

successful, with average increases of $36 a week. Obviously, an appeals system would have to work both ways.

There is a lot of material here and I could happily speak for three quarters of an hour. I take seriously all the comments that hon. Members have raised, as they probably know, but I am in no position to say other than what I have previously said about the future: that we intend to keep the matter under review. I pray in aid of that statement the fact that, when changes were suggested to the Government before and we thought them right, we made those changes. I am true to the pledge to keep the system under review, as we want to make it right. We all have a vested interest in doing so. In the meantime, we shall look carefully at what hon. Members say—

In accordance with Mr. Speaker's Ruling— [Official Report, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19]—the debate was concluded.

Northern Line

11.5 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Having raised the subject of the Northern line more often than any other hon. Member, I do not apologise to the House for raising it yet again. Earlier this evening, someone told me that the answer to the Northern line's problems would be to steal some of the trains from the Central line and put them on the Northern line. I asked how that would be done and he said, "Well, you'd stop running trains to Epping." I said that that would not necessarily win the support of my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London, as his constituency would be adversely affected.

First, I thank the media for the publicity that they have given to this campaign, particularly the *Evening Standard* for its constant support of all campaigns to improve the quality of life of Londoners, especially those who travel on the Northern line. Although I thank the media for their support, their tactics in trying to doorstep the Chief Secretary may be slightly counter-productive. He should not be treated in the same way as Lady Buck or someone else who is frequently doorstepped.

Everyone knows that the Northern line is characterised by a series of disasters. Many of the trains on the Northern line go back to 1959 and, therefore, are 35 years old. It is a sobering thought that the trains on the Northern line are older than certain Members of the House. That brings the problem home vividly. The track is literally crumbling; the signalling belongs to the dark ages rather than state-of-the-art technology; and the dot matrix system is certainly not infallible. The Northern line originates in the Victorian era and the quality of service today is inadequate for the last decade of the 20th century.

The result of all that is that the service is inadequate and irregular and the trains are often graffiti-ridden and rather dirty. Although there has been some improvement in service recently, it is as much due to the recession as to anything else. The dangers inherent in the current state of the Northern line have been underlined by two recent events. Only the other day, one of the 1959 variety of trains was derailed at Edgware station. Previously, there had been no service for some days between Edgware and Colindale because the embankment had collapsed and the trains could not get by. A bus service had to replace the train service. How many more disasters must we have before the Treasury recognises that seeking to run trains that date from 1959 is not terribly sensible in 1994? Port dating back to 1959 may be all right, but 1959 trains are not suitable.

The Northern line serves the City and the west end. The City was a victim of the recession but will clearly benefit from the continued upturn in the economy. A number of surveys have suggested that tens of thousands of jobs will be created in the City in the next few years. As the number of those jobs increases, so the pressure on the Northern line will become more severe. That serves to underline the need to improve the service.

The Northern line is also an important service for tourists seeking to go to the west end and the south bank complex. In a few months' time tourists will be disgorged at Waterloo international station, having come through the channel tunnel and then up through Kent. They may need to take the Northern line for the last bit of their journeys. What sort of impression will they be left with if they make their first tube journey in a 1959 train on the Northern line?

The issue facing the Government and London Transport is simple: the Northern line needs to be modernised, and quickly. Asea Broron Boveri has come up with a scheme that meets the needs of London Transport, and I believe that it is financially ingenious. Any business man would accept it. London Transport should not be allowed to founder on an unimaginative interpretation of Treasury rules. There is a rumour—perhaps the Minister will be able to comment on it—that the Treasury is saying that although the costs of the scheme will be spread over 20 years, and although the amount each year will not be large, the total cost must be charged against LT's external financing limit in the first year of the scheme.

That is quite barmy; it is not how a business would operate. No private company going in for a long-term scheme would ask how the total cost compared with one year's depreciation charge. It would ask how the cost in any one year compared with the cash flow of the business in that year. At a time when we are trying to encourage private sector financial initiatives, I hope that the Government will look at the scheme in these more sensible terms, especially as it will be cash-positive within a short time. I hope that a Treasury ideology that seems designed to stop private sector involvement will not be pursued.

In 1993, the Government agreed that ABB could build and lease 41 Networker express trains for the north Kent routes. The justification was that British Rail would be privatised, whereupon the obligation would be transferred from the public to the private sector. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister is not so lacking in initiative or ambition that he tells us that the Northern line and London Transport will not be privatised in the next 20 years. That would be a fairly unambitious and unimaginative approach for any Minister in the Government to adopt.

Surely the Minister will be able to say that the same rules as applied to Network SouthEast will apply to London Transport. I cannot understand a system that decrees that trains can be provided for the commuters of Kent but not for the commuters of London. There is no logic in that at all, and I hope that the Minister will confirm as much.

The Treasury is full of men who are much cleverer than hon. Members—certainly cleverer than an hon. Member who wants to speak here at 11.15 in the evening. Those ingenious men, instead of saying non, nein or nyet, should set out to find a way of breaking the impasse and encouraging this proposal.

The Government have rightly encouraged private financial initiatives. Sir Alastair Morton, after his success with Eurotunnel, has been encouraged to persuade the private sector to invest in public sector projects. The Opposition have decided to support some private sector financing of public sector projects.

Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister can tell the House this evening whether Sir Alastair Morton approves of the ABB proposals. I suspect that he does, but my hon. Friend may be better able to inform the House about the position. ABB is willing to take part of the risk, but it is quite unrealistic for the Treasury to suggest that ABB should be asked to take a revenue risk.

One factor in any revenue risk is the level of fares. We would not expect ABB to have any influence over the fares charged on the Northern line. After all, a little word called politics can sometimes intervene in the fares charged on London Transport. We all remember what happened in 1981. The fares dropped dramatically when there was a change of control—until the law courts told the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) that his policy was illegal, and the fares went up again.

A private sector business providing trains could not be expected to run the risk created by future fare levels, over which it would have no influence or control and which might be determined by politics rather than business.

I accept that ABB has produced an ingenious scheme, but it is equally fair to say that when a large sum of public money is involved, it would be quite wrong for one company automatically to get the contract. If the Government were even to promise ABB the project because it had been ingenious enough to think of it, and because it has the spare capacity and therefore would give them a better deal, they would be open to challenge from GEC, as a British company, and from other suppliers within the European Community. The challenge would go on for months.

By far the quickest solution, as well as providing the best value for money for the taxpayer, would be to have an auction between ABB and GEC and whoever else seeks to bid for the contract. I believe that ABB would win that contractual auction, as it has delivered trains to the Central line and will run into a capacity problem later this year. GEC is in a different position. It still has to deliver the trains for the Jubilee line and does not have the under-utilisation that ABB will have in a few months' time. A competitive deal would almost certainly end up with ABB getting the contract and it would be perceived as providing value for money for the taxpayer within the rules of the European Community.

There is an alternative—the "refurb" option. What does that do? It gets rid of the guards and costs £60 million. It would not improve the quality of trains; they would be increasingly unreliable and accident-prone, and breakdowns would become more frequent. Getting rid of the guards would simply ensure that there is one fewer person to whom customers can complain. That is not what the travellers on the Northern line want.

If we do not accept the ABB option, and take the "refurb" option, there will be no new trains for the Northern line until 2009, when the present trains will be 50 years old. That is far too long to wait. There will be no signalling until 2010, which again is far too long to wait.

The ABB proposal offers London the chance of new trains on the Northern line by Christmas. I promise my hon. Friend that, if we can have those new trains, I shall not call for another Christmas Adjournment debate. I can guarantee that he will then have an early night. My hon. Friend has been pestered; he had to come here in July at 3 o'clock in the morning and he has to stay up late tonight. But if he can be Father Christmas to London and give us an early train, he can have the night off.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): The hon. Gentleman referred to Christmas Adjournment debates. Does he recall a debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill shortly before Christmas, when, at about 6.15 in the morning, just before a debate on London Transport was due to begin, he acted to stop it taking place? Is he not somewhat hypocritical now to call for debates on this subject?

Mr. Marshall: As the hon. Gentleman will know, I instigated an Adjournment debate in July that took place relatively late at night. I have instigated a number of

[Mr. Marshall]

Adjournment debates on London Transport and have raised the subject frequently at Question Time. If the hon. Gentleman compares the number of times that I have raised the matter with that of other hon. Members, the comment that I made at the beginning—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman goes back to the events of last December, he will remember that the Labour party, or a number of Labour Members—

Mr. Raynsford: What about the debate on London Transport?

Mr. Marshall: Let me finish.

The hon. Gentleman will remember that many unnecessary Divisions were called, which cut into private Members' time. He will remember also that, on the previous Friday, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) spied Strangers to stop my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) from having his private Member's debate. Quite frankly, the delaying tactics prevented an important debate from taking place later that night on the prosecution of City fraud.

Since last December, the House has come back to its senses to some extent. It is much better to carry on in that frame of mind. What we discovered last December was that if one side spied Strangers, the other side would do so equally as effectively. If we have taught the House that lesson, we did some good last December.

Mr. Raynsford: The hon. Gentleman has not.

Mr. Marshall: Well, it is certainly true to say that the House has come back to its senses since last December in quite an effective way.

Our choice is simple. If we support the ABB scheme, the Northern line could have 75 per cent. of the new trains by the end of 1997—within three years. The Northern line could have new signalling by 2000, and what a great bonus that would be to celebrate the millennium. The quality of service would improve. Journeys would be quicker. Trains would be more frequent, cleaner and better ventilated. There would be less disruption and an increase in peak capacity of 30 per cent.

The Government have an opportunity to show that a private finance initiative can improve services in the public sector. They have an opportunity to show that they care about the infrastructure of London and that they listen to the concern of Londoners, who, I suspect, are more worried about public transport than about any other local issue. The ABB project is supported by London Transport, London First, the *Financial Times* and the *Evening Standard.*

I have spoken this evening on behalf of the 400,000 people who use the Northern line every day. I have spoken on behalf of the residents of Barnet, Islington, Haringey, Morden, Westminster, Camden, Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth who use the Northern line every day. That underlines its importance for Londoners. I believe that what is proposed could be of great benefit not only to the residents of those boroughs but to the City of London as a whole, the people of London as a whole and the millions of people who use the Northern line throughout the year. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) is not here, because I was going to end by saying that that project managed to unite her and me. That is quite a rare event, but it may even have united me and the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). If it has done that, it has achieved almost a miracle.

11.24 pm

Mr. Keith Hill (Streatham): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on securing this important debate. I agreed with almost everything that he said. I was relaxed about his promise that London Underground would be privatised over the next 20 years, because, palpably, we shall not have a Conservative Government during that time.

Notwithstanding that somewhat partisan shaft, let me declare at once that I speak as secretary to the all-party Northern line group, and also on behalf of thousands of my Balham and Clapham constituents who use the Northern line and endure its misery daily.

I do not propose to detain the House for long, as the arguments are obvious. If all the usual economists' tools are used, the proposal to renew rolling stock on the Northern line shows a positive result. It shows a 3:1 benefit-to-cost ratio; it maximises passenger benefits; and it will start earning profits in the year 2000. The attraction of brand new rolling stock is equally obvious.

I understand that there is a cheaper alternative—to which the hon. Member for Hendon, South has already referred—involving the refurbishment of the 1959 rolling stock, which is apparently being touted by some elements in the Treasury. The argument for that scheme, compared with the benefits of an entirely new build, do not stand up to scrutiny. The refurbishment will prolong the life of trains for a mere 10 years and will mean that the introduction of new trains will be deferred until the year 2009. It will even mean a delay of 10 years in the introduction of new signalling, to the year 2010.

Moreover, the refurbishment will still mean a longer journey time for the passenger, more waiting time, more overcrowding and a less regular and reliable service. By contrast, the new rolling stock will mean faster journeys, reduced waiting times, less crowding and a vastly more reliable service. It will give the commuter better security, better passenger information, better ventilation and a smoother and less noisy ride. There really is no choice —and there ought to be no hesitation either. ABB has come up with a welcome and highly innovative lease-back scheme.

I recognise the requirement for competitive tendering via the *Official Journal* of the European Communities, but the Government should get on with it now. It is preposterous that inappropriate Treasury rules should be invoked to stymie the scheme. Nowadays, there is consensus across all the parties on the virtues of such private-public initiatives. How will the Chancellor's own new and commendable commitment to projects of this kind ever get off the ground if such antiquated Treasury thinking is allowed to prevail? Are the rules made for men and women, or are men and women made for the rules?

An ABB-style scheme will cost London Underground some £35 million a year. London Underground's annual capital programme is running at £450 million-plus—it ought to be more—and its revenue amounts to £1 billion a year. An extra £35 million a year is clearly manageable, against the background of that capital spend and revenue base, the Government's own total spending programme and the variations that inevitably occur each year in that

spending total; indeed, it is hardly measurable. It would be ludicrous to allow short-term considerations about the control of public expenditure to undermine a project of such inestimable long-term value to the people and economy of London. With proper dispatch, the new trains could be on stream by December this year.

The message to the Government is simple, urgent and clear. We want the tender in the *Official Journal* now; we want the leasing deal now; and we want the new trains now.

11.29 pm

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and, like the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill), I wish to congratulate him on bringing this subject before the House. Unlike other hon Members in the Chamber, I do not have a constituency on the Northern line. I shall speak rather more generally. I am honoured to be the chairman of the London Conservative group of Members of Parliament.

The Northern line is a disgraceful sore thumb in the overall underground railway structure of the capital city. There is no doubt that the underground service is critical to the commercial and tourist life of London. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South pointed out, in the near future, tourists from Europe will come to Waterloo via the channel tunnel route. They will come off the trains and possibly continue their journeys to some other part of London by the Northern line. What an extraordinary and undesirable contrast that will be.

To be fair to London Underground, a great part of its service is now to be commended. Management has taken a greater grip on affairs since the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report of the early 1990s. I am told that in the past year 98 per cent. of scheduled trains were running in the peak period, and 92 per cent. of lifts were in service, as were 89 per cent. of escalators. I am not sure that 89 per cent. of escalators is quite the figure that I would wish to see, but things are improving greatly.

In its report last year, the Health and Safety Executive talked of a "transformed" safety culture on the underground. That is something which we all welcome, particularly those who travel on the underground regularly. In 1992-93, the generous funding of the 1991 autumn statement allowed 60 underground stations to be refurbished, with work taking place on 40 more. The first new Central line train entered service in April 1993, and the reconstructed Angel station opened in September 1992.

That is a fairly optimistic picture, and one which my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London will be building on in his reply to the debate. However, alongside all that progress, which we welcome, there is the disgrace of the Northern line, which has been described graphically by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South and has been described for several weeks in the *Evening Standard* as the misery line. I commend the newspaper for that.

Many of us are taking a message to our colleagues in the Government—my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London and, through him, to our colleagues in the Treasury. We are approaching the time when we will see tourists coming in through the channel tunnel link and we must get to grips with the problems on the Northern line. How do we do it? There is no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary is doing his best for the benefit of this country and the taxpayers to reduce the horrendous £50 billion deficit that confronts us. That is an essential task.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South said, the ABB company from the north midlands has put a business proposition to the Government. It has proposed a lease arrangement, with full service back-up, for Northern line trains that would ensure a good service for users of the line and, indeed, for my constituents who travel by British Rail to Waterloo and take the Northern line to other parts of London, and about whom I, as a London constituency Member, am concerned.

My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary is worried about the public sector borrowing deficit constantly creeping up. I do not dispute that whatever solution is found must be consistent with the sound management of the economy, but I call on him to put the brains of the Treasury to work to find a solution to the problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South mentioned the involvement of the private sector in the funding of British Rail trains. Why cannot the same solution be adopted for the underground? As we approach 11.40 pm, time is running out. The Treasury and my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary must get to grips with the problem for the benefit not only of Londoners but of the commercial life of our capital city and of this country as a whole.

11.36 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am here to complete the set. There are about 30 stations on the Northern line, which diverts into two branches at its northern end, loops around the middle of London and as one line almost goes off the edge of the planet—

Mr. Tracey: Morden.

Mr. Hughes: Yes—almost off the planet!

The line is represented by a number of hon. Members, three of whom have spoken and many of whom represent the Conservative or Labour parties. By definition, not many London Liberal Democrat Members represent the Northern line: I encapsulate the lot of them, which is a modest honour.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) for initiating the debate. He has raised the profile of the issue, backed by others who have signed on. He has had the support of the *Evening Standard*, which has adopted the line as its campaigning issue. It is all to the good if the only daily London newspaper can take on a key public sector infrastructure project and be willing to rehearse the argument.

I wish to make three brief points. Some work has been done in recent years not on stock or vehicles but on the structure as a result of pressure within tight confines. I represent three stations—London Bridge, Borough and Elephant and Castle. Elephant and Castle was dire and Borough, which was dire, has been refurbished. London Bridge is in the process of wholesale revamping as a result of the work done after the King's Cross fire to make it safe and because it will intersect with the Jubilee line.

Access and the entrance to London Bridge have been improved significantly, and they needed to be. It was bad enough having a grim set of rolling stock that might have appeared, full of people, or that might not have appeared at

[Mr. Hughes]

all, but it was even grimmer if one was on a terrible platform that was reached by a lift that often did not work or by stairs that were very deep.

In addition, the entrance to London Bridge looked like a building site—it still does to a certain extent. There is a great wall which is just awaiting a wonderful mural, an idea which I hope to persuade London Transport to accept. At the moment, however, the wall is raw, unfinished concrete. For a long time, one had the impression of passing through a building site and into a half-finished building. That is not inviting and it certainly is not good public relations; nor does it encourage people to use the station or to feel comfortable and safe on it.

Progress has been made, but, irrespective of rolling stock, it would be good if there were an early programme to finish the small amount of remaining work, which would not be costly, but would make the difference between stations being nearly finished—nearly adequate—and adequate.

Secondly, I make the fairly obvious point that has already been mentioned by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). The Jubilee line extension will be very welcome—I, for one, will be able to step out of this building and arrive home in four stops. It will clearly be a well-used line, and the Minister for Transport in London knows that we have battled long and hard, especially about getting two stations in Southwark that we were not necessarily going to get. The Jubilee line extension and crossrail will be very useful, but, while we are thinking about or proceeding with new lines, we should not forget that the Northern line is a strategic through line, and therefore needs a continuing commitment of public investment.

It is no good if, having inherited the Northern line as part of London Underground, we do not sustain regular investment to upgrade the line continuously. We need to upgrade the system of information to inform passengers when trains are due, how far away they are and so on to make it a line that people want to use. We do not have a straightforward underground system like that of some capital cities, but the Northern line is of central importance; it carries huge numbers of people. We have already debated how much the Government, and London Regional Transport, invest in the underground compared with what the Greater London council invested. Whatever is or has been invested, we need to catch up, because it has not been enough to keep pace with demand or need.

My third point was reflected in the substantive part of the speech of the hon. Member for Hendon, South and in those of the hon. Members for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) and for Streatham (Mr. Hill). What deal can be done this year, can it be achieved and is it desirable? The Minister has been kind enough to listen to representations, so he knows that there is very little dogma or prejudice about this issue in any of the parties. No one is saying that there is a categorical reason why there cannot be some sort of leasing agreement. As we understand it, the reality is that the problem is fitting common sense into the process of government; it is about making sure that what the Department of Transport and we who represent the users of the Northern line think could be a perfectly viable system can be processed quickly without running into any buffers, or Treasury rules.

The Minister has heard this before, but it bears repeating: it is generally accepted that common sense dictates two things. We, of course, have to go through the process of ascertaining who might be the best tenderer for the deal. I accept that, but, if we bear in mind timetables and the date by which things need to be done, we must ensure that by the end of the year—comments were made about Christmas presents—the necessary commitment is made and, if necessary, Treasury rules can be modified to allow for flexibility of financial arrangements. The deadline must be the end of the year because it would allow the matter to be taken on board in the Government's public expenditure statement in the unified Budget in the autumn.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), on behalf of the Labour party, and others have long argued that we are prisoners of old accounting procedures in public and private sector financial partnerships. Such procedures are a barrier, not an advantage.

I hope that the Minister understands that he will have no opposition from any part of the House. He will have the support of professionals in the transport industry and of politicians on all sides for any necessary effort to get the Treasury to be much more flexible than, traditionally, it has been. We understand why public sector controls have been put in place, but, rather than constituting an advantage, they may be standing in the way of a partnership and preventing money from being brought into the system.

I hope that the Minister will be able to leave the debate having told us of his commitment—a commitment that I do not doubt—and with his hand strengthened so that, with our assistance, he can go to the Treasury and get a deal that moves quickly. I hope that, having grasped the nettle this year, we shall be able to come up with a solution. We believe that it is possible. It is a matter of political will. There would be no huge additional financial cost. We are not asking for billions of pounds; we are asking that we be provided with a system which works, and that the Treasury be accommodating.

11.45 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I congratulate the *Evening Standard* on its campaign in favour of Asea Brown Boveri's proposal, which was made in the 14 days since I first gave it the information. It has done an excellent job for Londoners. ABB's proposal is eminently sound and full of common sense. Consequently, it does not appeal to the Treasury. ABB recognises that if the Government will not find the money to upgrade any part of the Northern line—whether the permanent way, the signalling, the escalators or the lifts that do not work—they will not find money for new trains either.

ABB—at least, this part of it—is a maker of trains. It is already making trains for the Central line, and it wants to keep its process going to produce similar trains for the Northern line. That makes eminently good industrial sense to ABB and to the skilled people working in Derby, who, when they complete the order for the Central line trains, will lose their jobs unless more work can be found for them. From an industrial point of view, therefore, it would be perfectly sensible to give them the job of providing new trains for the Northern line. If they do not get that job, it is likely that they will be out of work. Indeed, the production line may close altogether.

If, for some bizarre reason, the Government decide to postpone the purchase of new trains for the Northern line, the works at Derby may go out of business, and when it is eventually decided to order new trains, they may very well have to be procured abroad. That would be economic lunacy, but it would be par for the course for the people currently at the Treasury.

The proposition that ABB has put forward is that, instead of London Underground having to find the money to buy trains, it should lease them from ABB, which would maintain them at its own expense for the next 20 years. There is nothing novel about lease arrangements. I expect that even some Treasury mandarins and Ministers use this means of ensuring that they have up-to-date, working television sets. The proposition that has been put forward is as simple as that. If it is accepted, new trains should be running on the Northern line by about this time next year. All the rotten, stinking, rattling, clapped-out trains currently on the line could be replaced within about a couple of years. That would be good for London passengers, it would be good for ABB, and it would be good for Britain.

We might therefore ask why the Treasury cannot see the sense of the proposal. The answer, apparently, lies in the Treasury rules. I must remind hon. Members that the Treasury rules were laid down, not when Gladstone was First Lord of the Treasury, but when Mrs. Thatcher, as she then was, was First Lord of the Treasury. There is nothing old about the present rules. They are stupid but they are modern. If they could be changed in the early 1980s, we should be able to change them in the early 1990s—indeed, we are approaching the mid-1990s. The rules are stupid and archaic, and they inhibit the development of our country. They need to be changed.

It is worth reminding the House that even before they had the present set of rules the people at the Treasury were a backward-looking lot when it came to anything practical to do with British industry. Churchill once said that they were like inverted Micawbers, waiting for something to turn down. Nothing gives those people greater pleasure than turning down some practical proposition suggested by practical people to bring some practical help and benefit to others.

We understand that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has announced that the plan would not be a good bargain for the taxpayer. Presumably he came to that conclusion as he travelled about in his chauffeur-driven car, paid for by the self-same taxpayer. I should have thought that a perfect example of a bad bargain for the taxpayer was having to fund the transport arrangements of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Certainly the right hon. Gentleman might have a different point of view if he had to travel to work on the clapped-out ruins that presently shuffle along the tunnels of the Northern line. He, like everyone else with a bit of common sense, might see that it should be a bargain to go ahead with the proposition.

The Minister for Transport in London is an eminently talented chap. Before Christmas, in the space of one short winter's day, he told the journalists from the *Evening Standard* that the Government would privatise the underground, but before the afternoon was out he told the House of Commons that they would not. In view of the explanation recently given by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster about the veracity of some of the statements made by Ministers at the Dispatch Box, we can probably assume that what the Minister told the *Evening Standard* was the truth. However, that does not change the position.

The Minister is trying to do the same sort of double shuffle now. As I understand it, there is a sort of general responsibility; people who sit on what is called the Treasury Bench do what the Treasury tells them. In this case, that is to turn down ABB's proposal to get new trains on the Northern line. But apparently all that is being blamed on the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and the Minister is letting it be known that he strongly supports the proposition. He had better sort himself out. He must either go to the Back Benches and support common sense, or stay on the Treasury Bench and stick with the Treasury rules. That is the choice that he must make.

One or two more general points need to be made. The state of the London underground is deplorable. The hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) described the Northern line as though it were a swine among pearls. He implied that the rest of the system was pretty good, and that the Northern line alone was a mess. That is not how large numbers of travellers on the other lines regard their journey to and from work every day. Many of them are discontented. They use stations with lifts or escalators that do not work, suffer from signalling failures and so on.

Just before Christmas we saw the virtual collapse of the whole tube system for a day or two because a 71-year-old cable on the Central line had burnt out. That is unacceptable. The present state of the underground system means that it teeters on the brink of collapse almost every day, and it fell over that brink not long before Christmas.

A vast amount needs to be done to the underground, and one of the problems is that the Government's top priority for investment was not to get the existing system back into good nick so that it could provide a decent service; their topmost priority was to finance the extension of the Jubilee line, largely to bale out the banks which had taken such a caning over Canary wharf, and also because those self-same banks were finding £300 million towards the cost of the extension.

I may add that when these geniuses, presumably presided over again by Treasury Ministers, negotiated the arrangement with the banks, they made no allowance for inflation, so that the famous £300 million is to be paid out by the banks in instalments over a period of 20 years and, on some of the projections that I have seen, it could cost them all of £19 million at the end of the process if inflation reaches certain levels. The reason why the Government decided to invest in that line was that it would help their friends who are now the newly enhanced speculators at Canary wharf and the small contribution that they were prepared to make.

If the Minister had asked Londoners where the money should be invested, they would have told him to invest it in the Northern line and in the other lines which are already not working and which offer a lot of scope for investment. Even if the Government see sense, accept ABB's proposal and get these new trains on to the Northern line, it will not resolve all the Northern line's problems by any means. The track is in a terrible state. The signalling is in a terrible state. In my own constituency the French escalators at Kentish Town station have never worked properly for the past six years, and Mornington Crescent station is now closed indefinitely because they cannot afford to replace the lifts. Similar circumstances apply all the way down the line.

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

This was one way forward, one way in which at least a good part of the investment for improving the Northern line could have been found. The Government could then have been left to find the rest of the money to improve the permanent way, the signalling, the electrics, the lifts, the escalators and the stations. That is what could be done if this is approved.

It ought to be approved. It will be a disgrace if it is not approved. I do not think that in their present humour Londoners will forgive the Government if it is not approved. It makes sense for the travelling public. It ought to make sense for the Treasury. It certainly makes good sense for ABB, which is not some obscure outfit from Derby, after all, but one of Europe's most significant manufacturing companies, with a good track record all over Europe. They are not the sort of people to enter into fly-by-night arrangements with anybody.

The Government ought to accept their proposition, and accept it now, for two reasons. First, the people who travel on the Northern line are entitled to a better deal. Secondly, we cannot allow the rundown of the manufacturing capacity at Derby to proceed much further, or a large number of the skilled work force will disappear to other places and we will never get them back.

11.58 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): We have had a rather good debate. I join the many hon. Members who have congratulated my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on securing it. I want to put it on the record that he is a tremendously assiduous campaigner for the Northern line. His assertion that he has probably asked more questions and instigated more debates on it than any other hon. Member is likely to be proved correct, and I congratulate him on his assiduity.

My hon. Friend is right to say that the *Evening Standard* campaign on the Northern line has been an effective one. I share with him the observation that it illustrates more than anything else the good humour of our right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary who, I think, has dealt with the concentration of the *Evening Standard* on his personal role with his usual aplomb and with considerable panache.

I am also pleased to see the Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) here. I appreciated his speech. He has developed considerable expertise on transport issues. I have admired the work that he has done with the Select Committee. He knows the Northern line extremely well and he has devoted a great deal of attention to it. He is noted for knowing what he is talking about, like the other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, I am delighted to say. I am grateful to him for what he had to say.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), who is the chairman of the London group of Conservative Members of Parliament, made a powerful speech which, I am sure, will be noted in a number of quarters. He articulated sentiments which I know are widely shared across the Benches. I am sure that he was right to ensure that those sentiments were put on the record.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is an habitué of these late-night occasions. I did a brief calculation while he was speaking. As far as I can recall, there are 50 stations on the Northern line if one takes accounts of the bifurcations. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South said, 400,000 journeys are made every day on the line. That shows what a massive enterprise the Northern line is. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was right to say that there has been a refreshing lack of dogma about the debate about rolling stock, about which I hope to say some more in a moment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Before my hon. Friend goes, he ought also to pay a tribute to our hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), who was sitting here silently, and to our right hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir George Young). Those who are not able to speak ought also to get their tributes from the Minister.

Mr. Norris: It is characteristic of my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) that he should be kind enough to draw attention to those of our colleagues who are required to be silent. I entirely endorse his sentiments.

I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) attend upon our proceedings. He is a Northern line Member. I am extraordinarily grateful to him for his advice on my career path. I shall probably be able to resist most of it. He reiterated some of the usual canards. He referred to the Central line failure. I hope that I am not stealing too much of London Transport's thunder, but Sir Wilfrid Newton has now completed the inquiry into that incident with his usual thoroughness and objectivity. He has made it clear and will shortly publish in terms that neither the age of the equipment nor any question of underfunding was related to that regrettable failure.

The length of the failure was caused more than anything by the singularity of the fault. It was the type of fault that occurs literally on one in a thousand occasions. It was extraordinarily difficult to trace. Once it was traced, it was relatively simple to fix. That is worth putting on the record. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman might seek to have some fun with the idea that it was all down to underfunding and the age of the equipment. I know that the fact that that is not true is inconvenient from his point of view, but it happens to be the case.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister confirm that the bit of cable that conked out was 71 years old?

Mr. Norris: No, I will not confirm that the piece of cable that conked out, as the hon. Member so elegantly puts it, was 71 years old. I will simply tell him that the whole report will be available for him to see. He will see that Sir Wilfrid has specifically made it clear in his conclusions that neither the age of the equipment nor any question of funding was related to the failure that he investigated. I hope that that is as clear as it possibly can be. The important thing is that the report will speak for itself.

It is extraordinary that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and his party chided me for months for not abandoning the idea of a private sector contribution to the Jubilee line extension and wanted me to pass the whole cost of the scheme on to the taxpayer. They said to me for months, "Get on with it. There is great regeneration potential south of the river and you must get on with it if you believe in regenerating London." Now the hon. Gentleman says that we did an extraordinarily tough deal with the creditors at Canary wharf.

Incidentally, it is amusing that the hon. Gentleman has just woken up to the fact that the cash sum is to be discounted. If we are talking about Treasury theory and the brain that exists in the Treasury and if the hon. Gentleman hopes to be a member of a Government, I hope that he will be quicker on the mathematical uptake than he appears to be. Now that £400 million in cash has been taken from the group of banks that are creditors of Canary wharf, he has the temerity to suggest that those bankers deeply wanted and approved of the deal. The expression on some of their faces did not show the approbation that he ascribed to them.

It was an extremely good deal for Londoners and an excellent deal for the taxpayer. Thanks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State sticking out for the contribution that he insisted must come from those financial institutions, the taxpayer was saved £400 million in cash over more than 20 years.

We are here tonight to talk about the Northern line, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South will forgive me for diverting slightly to deal with the wide-ranging speech of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. I want to give the context of the proposal. The line has been a favourite butt of jokes—many of which were doubtless deserved.

I completely accept that the line is in need of modernisation. As has been said, most of its trains and signalling need to be replaced. However, such a decision is ultimately for London Underground, which has to balance the books and live within the resources available. The line is next on the list for modernisation once the £750 million Central line project, which is currently under way, is completed next year.

I want to pick up an issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton. It is true that the line has shown great improvements in performance over the past few years, largely through the positive steps taken by the line's management. Indeed, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report of 1991 on London Underground, with which hon. Members are reasonably familiar, singled out the Northern line for special praise. It stated:

"the Northern Line management team has . . . achieved a remarkable improvement in performance, by management action to identify the causes of train cancellations and to tackle them directly. Staff absence has, in particular, been dramatically reduced."

That was the clearest evidence that, if improvements in service are to be attained, investment has a place, but management also has its place. I am sure that the House would wish to place on the record its appreciation for the excellent work that successive managers of the Northern line have done to help transform its performance.

The improvement has continued. In the current financial year, the average figure for scheduled Northern line trains in passenger service stands at about 98.6 per cent., making it one of the best performers on the system. The line is currently performing ahead of its target, in terms of both headways between trains and delays. If a "misery line" tag was once attached to the Northern line, it is not attached to it now.

Having said all that, I am not suggesting that nothing needs to be done. I am as keen as anyone for an early start to be made on the wholesale modernisation of the line, but it is important to remember that there are other measures that London Underground has already taken, or is already planning to take, which are delivering improvements both to trains and stations on the line.

The single most important scheme is the £72 million virtual reconstruction of Angel station. That was one of the biggest projects of its sort ever undertaken by London Underground and involved the replacement of the infamous single island platform, which used to serve both northbound and southbound trains. That platform was replaced by the more conventional arrangement of two separate platforms for northbound and southbound traffic. It meant replacing those four aging lifts, which were the major means of access, with new banks of escalators. It meant constructing a brand new ticket hall. That station is now safer and less congested and provides a cleaner and more comfortable travelling environment. The escalators, after initial teething troubles, have worked extremely well.

It cost £72 million to renovate one station. That is a vivid indication of the scale of costs that are involved when one takes on the tasks of reforming a major piece of infrastructure such as the Northern line.

Other schemes are under way and there are programmes for the near future. They include the much-needed substantial remedial works to the 10 stations on the southern end of the line, to which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey referred. He was right about that. I think that the hon. Member for Streatham knows the need all too well. I pass those stations every day on my way from Camberwell. I do not believe that they look satisfactory; I do not think that they operate satisfactorily. I am glad that London Underground's programme includes urgent remedial works to those stations.

Let us now turn to the ABB proposal. The House knows that London Underground and ABB are pressing hard for a Government announcement on the project. I know that it has the support of many of my hon. Friends. Although the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras appears to be seeking to divide me and my colleagues in the Treasury, I believe that I would not be doing my job as Minister for Transport in London properly were I not an enthusiastic advocate of the idea that we should subject the deal to all the scrutiny necessary to see whether it can be available to the people who use the Northern line. That is straightforward.

I have also said that that does not mean that we abandon financial prudence and throw all the rules of good housekeeping and husbandry out of the window—as I fear the Labour party would do, were it to be confronted with a decision. For the Labour party, "new sources of finance" means abandoning all the rules on expenditure controls. That is a seductive path to go down—there always are jolly good reasons why one should spend public money on all types of desirable schemes—but it is an invitation which I believe it is proper for the Treasury to remind all Governments they must resist unless they have been able to satisfy themselves that the important financial criteria involved have been satisfied.

Simply because we have not yet reached a conclusion, 14 days may seem a long time to the *Evening Standard* between hearing of the proposal and concluding on it. It might appear that we have been sitting still, but I think that hon. Members recognise what an achievement it has been for us to have undertaken the intensive analysis of the financial technicalities of the proposal and several rounds of complex negotiations in the relatively short time in which the Department has been aware of the deal.

[Mr. Norris]

I make it clear to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras that I first became aware that this proposition was on the table in very general terms at around the turn of the year. I think that he knows from his experience of Government that it has been dealt with extraordinarily rapidly and urgently. Incidentally, that is also a reflection of the fact that the deal that we were originally offered was not in any sense a complete deal, as ABB will confirm.

The deal started very much as a back-of-an-envelope suggestion, pretty much as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras outlined it. As I hope that other hon. Members and especially my hon. Friends will appreciate, one cannot do deals of that type involving £0.5 billion on the back of an envelope. They are immensely complex negotiations. They have been undertaken with goodwill and they are continuing.

If I may recap, late last year ABB offered to supply London Underground with 100 seven-car trains similar to those currently being supplied for the Central line. The proposal was a form of sophisticated leasing over 20 years, and obviously it has taken some time for us to establish the exact details of the proposal and to evaluate it in its own right and against other options for the future of the Northern line's rolling stock.

The hon. Member for Streatham referred to some of the available options. He said that he felt that this option was the most attractive; I understand that point of view. He was kind enough to recognise that it is not the only game in town and that we have to satisfy ourselves that it is, on every sensible criterion, the right deal. To try to come to that conclusion, our assessment has focused on two sets of issues: first, whether the deal would satisfy the Government's published criteria for such deals under the terms of the private finance initiative and secondly, whether it would offer value for money.

The proposals are being considered under the terms of the PFI, whose object is to find new ways in which to mobilise the private sector to meet needs that have traditionally been met only by the public sector and to enable the private sector to provide facilities in addition to the existing public sector plans. The whole concept is to encourage a closer partnership between the public and private sectors; an essential plank of the initiative is that the private sector must genuinely assume much of the risk attached to such projects. I say that simply to underline a simple truth.

If the only "advantage" of introducing private finance is that the taxpayer has the dubious privilege of paying finance house rates of interest rather than gilt rates of interest, there is, the House will recognise, little value in the proposition. Too often, leasing is seen simply as a way in which to circumvent inconvenient Treasury spending totals. Yet every Government, of whatever complexion and at whatever time in their life, need to set firm spending totals if they are to control overall Government economic growth. There is no difference between that proposition and the proposition that would be advanced if any other party in the House were sitting on the Government Benches.

The reality is that we have to do a lot more than simply find someone who is prepared to lend the Government money. It is not difficult to find people who are prepared to lend the Government money, because the Government tend to be a fairly good risk. The important point is that, for the taxpayer to get a benefit out of taking on board private sector finance, there must be a genuine transfer of risk to the private sector so that the taxpayer's risk in the matter is defrayed to offset the increased cost of financing the project.

The practical application of that policy to particular schemes is extremely complicated. However, I hasten to say that we endeavour to apply the conditions in a flexible and deal-driven manner. We do not seek to impose unnecessary constraints on private sector ventures by inventing a mechanism of arbitrary rules and we always welcome ideas such as those from private companies that are prepared to bring their enterprising approach to public sector projects.

We have also sought the advice, as the House knows, of the private finance initiative panel, led by Sir Alastair Morton, which was recently formed for the purpose of assisting the Government to promote and appraise initiatives such as these. We are grateful to the panel for its helpful comments.

Crucially, we must not lose sight of the need to ensure that whatever we do for the Northern line offers proper value for money to the fare payers who use the line and to the taxpayers who provide, and will continue to provide, substantial support to LT's services. We should remind ourselves that we do not want to jump into a deal, no matter how attractive it appears on the surface, if it leaves major risks and major costs for the public sector to face, whether this year, or in five, 10 or 20 years' time. That is the substantial obligation, and no Government should lightly undertake it.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister confirm that the Government have come to a leasing deal for the Networker trains for Kent? Will he also confirm that the Treasury is seeking harsher criteria for this new leasing proposition to satisfy—harsher than those that applied to the Networkers? Is that simply because they are obstructive, or is the Minister saying that the Networker leasing deal was a bad deal?

Mr. Norris: The answers to the hon. Gentleman's two questions are yes and no. Yes, the Government are contemplating a leasing deal for Networker trains on Network SouthEast—*[Interruption.]* I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming that we have done that. And no, the Government are not applying more rigid criteria to that proposition.

Mr. Dobson: ABB says that the Government are.

Mr. Norris: It may not understand, and clearly the hon. Gentleman does not understand, that the difference is that, now that the Railways Act 1993 is safely on the statute book, an aftermarket for rolling stock on the heavy railway is in prospect, allowing the Government to take the view that those trains will be hired by train-operating companies for a period and then transferred to new owners. That is the difference between an operating lease and this lease, which is for 20 years to a single lessee with, at this stage, no prospect whatever of an aftermarket—*[Laughter.]*

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras obviously finds all that terribly difficult to come to terms with. The hon. Member for Streatham is a bit brighter about those matters and has already overtaken the hon. Gentleman. He accepts that, if we are to introduce private

sector capital into the system, one of the great advantages of a franchising concept is precisely that it allows us to contemplate the same kind of aftermarket as exists with BR.

I suspect that the mirth of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras masks his embarrassment. Once one goes beyond the first chapter of the most elementary economics manual, the hon. Gentleman's ability to flap around and miss the point is legendary. Although I wish him well in his present position, if he seriously aspires to sit on the Government Benches he must do a lot better than simply laugh to drown out the common sense that he hears from these Benches, which is so massively inconvenient to him.

Clearly, there is a tremendous advantage to the Government having decided to broaden the scope of investment in the railways—

Mr. Dobson: What broadening?

Mr. Norris: It is kind of the hon. Gentleman to ask that, because I was about to tell him. Broadening so that we look beyond merely the taxpayers and fare payers. They are ever the butt of the Opposition's ire and ever the easy target for those like the hon. Gentleman, whose sole answer to these issues is to shout, "Please write bigger cheques on the public purse," and to point to governmental meanness as the reason why those facilities are not available. We must look beyond that.

The last Labour Government were pathetically inadequate in their funding of London Underground. When the hon. Gentleman was in the House, before the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) arrived, he was part of a Government whose annual funding—

Mr. Dobson: I was not.

Mr. Norris: Well, he supported that Government. I admit that, in those days, they had a few people bright enough to occupy their Front Bench, but things have moved on in the Labour party. The hon. Gentleman was here when his party was in office, and its funding of London Transport, at 1993-94 prices, was the princely sum of £120 million a year. If he cares to check the record, as I suspect he has done, he will see damn well that that is the case. He may like to have a bit of a laugh about that, because it contrasts embarrassingly with the £470 million which the hon. Member for Streatham rightly said was the present funding level at 1993-94 prices, and the amount in excess of £1 billion a year this year, next year and the following year, which will be invested in the system as a whole.

Mr. Dobson *rose—*

Mr. Norris: If we are to argue about who is the better funder of the system, I shall take on the hon. Gentleman's arguments any day, as I am about to now.

Mr. Dobson: I invite the House to attach as much credence to what the Minister has said about investment in London Transport as I attach to his recollections of my record as a Member of this House. I have never been a Member when there has been a Labour majority—I was elected in 1979—but I will be.

Mr. Norris: It is a great tribute to the hon. Gentleman that I thought he had been here from the year dot. I readily accept that I was wrong. I hope that he will accept my apologies; I did not mean to misrepresent his length of service. Admittedly, very few people ever want to associate themselves with that Labour Government, but, given the disparity in funding levels under the two Governments, it comes ill from the hon. Gentleman to lecture me or the Government on the subject.

The hon. Gentleman was, however, right about the two conclusions of the Select Committee, which were—in the first paragraph of its report on London—that the Government are spending record amounts on the system, and that they are still not enough. The legacy of half a century of underfunding will now have to be dealt with. This is a serious and good debate about how to augment the funding for the system. The answer of course is to bring in private capital. That does not mean accepting a cheque on any terms, however. We do not accept any deal merely because it is put to us. We have to be rigorous about ensuring that these private finance initiatives fit into a sensible financial matrix.

Mr. John Marshall: It was perhaps too much to hope for that this debate could be conducted in non-partisan terms, given that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras is taking part in it.

Does my hon. Friend agree that the real locust years for LT followed 1981, when the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) was in charge of the GLC and when the investment in London Transport was much lower than it is today?

Mr. Norris: You might chide me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I strayed too far into the locust years. The idea might find more favour if there is a debate on agriculture later tonight.

The House will have noted what my hon. Friend said. If we had a prolonged debate on the impact of the "Fares Fair" policy on London Transport, I would point out that, however well intentioned that proposition was—and it was—it was a disaster for London. The experience pointed up some uncomfortable lessons. I note the arrival of the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Dowd), who I know takes an interest in these matters.

One lesson was that a whole lot of additional journeys were generated, but they did not displace journeys made by private car; they were known as additional opportunity journeys. More costs are created for the system, but the revenues flowing into it are massively reduced. Reductions in ticket prices are not compensated for by increases in ridership—which was never more than 8 or 9 per cent. The result is a huge reduction in the net funding of the system—a gap that then has to be filled by the taxpayer. The gap was usually several hundred million pounds.

A second false premise is that the only way to attract people to public transport is to lower its price. The fact is that we need to use both the carrot and the stick. We certainly have to make public transport more attractive. My own view is that fares are the last thing to look at. Londoners always say that they will regard the system as representing good value only provided that it works. That is the key: above all, we want a reliable system.

Mr. Dobson: Just to get one or two facts straight, will the Minister confirm that the limit on capital investment in London Underground when it was the responsibility of the GLC was set by the Tory Government?

Mr. Norris: So far as it goes, that is an accurate statement. However, I fear that the conclusion that the hon. Gentleman is asking the House to draw may not be what he suggests.

That was not the only source of capital funding available to the GLC at that time. Had it wished to do so, it could have augmented the amount of capital spent. There is no evidence that the GLC wanted to do that. At the time, it thought, as so many Administrations, both Labour and Conservative, had thought over the previous half century, that one could simply postpone the necessary investment to the next year because the system would always last just a little longer.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and I agree that that is no longer acceptable. He and I and others in the House are responsible for dealing with that historic backlog of underinvestment. We have to be creative about how we address it.

Having already spoken about the various strictures that apply to the financing of the deal, we must not neglect to ensure that the proposal represents good value for money when we compare it with other options such as refurbishment, option to which the hon. Member for Streatham referred. There are a variety of subsets of refurbishment from major refurbishment through to essential refurbishment, which provides one-person-operated trains and not much more.

Whatever approach we take, we must always ensure that the proposition is exposed to sufficient competition so that we get the best deal available. I am grateful for the understanding of the hon. Member for Streatham and other hon. Gentlemen.

Bearing in mind the perfectly sensible comments made by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras about employment prospects at ABB in Derby, if we decided that a scheme on the lines of the ABB proposal was worth taking forward, the next step would be for London Underground to invite proposals in open competition. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South said, and the hon. Member for Streatham confirmed, in this day and age we want ultimately to ensure that the taxpayer gets good value for his or her investment in new rolling stock.

As the hon. Gentleman knows from his previous incarnation, ABB, albeit an excellent manufacturer of trains, is not the only manufacturer of trains, and no doubt others in the Community will wish to know that the competition for the supply of trains on the terms ABB has proposed will be made available if the scheme goes ahead.

I understand that a competition advertised in the *Official Journal* will be able to attract interest from the European Community. I also understand that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras is fully signed up to the idea of Community participation, and I am sure that that does not cause him any grief.

We fully recognise that much remains to be done, including rolling stock modernisation on the Northern line. We are considering the ABB proposal entirely on its merits against the criteria established by the private finance initiative and the need to demonstrate good value for money. We must not lose sight of the fact that very substantial amounts of public money are involved.

I assure the House that we are evaluating this complex proposal as a matter of considerable urgency. We have reached the final stages of discussion, and I hope that the Government will announce its conclusions within the next few days.

London (Government)

12.33 am

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): Perhaps it would be appropriate to start by putting the debate in context. We are having the debate shortly after the Secretary of State issued a consultation paper last November with the setting up of London First and the London Forum. Of course, it is roughly 10 years since the abolition of the Greater London council and the loss of any strategic voice for London.

I welcome the Government's belated recognition of the need to have a dialogue with Londoners and the consultation that is taking place. It is regrettable that the Secretary of State has made it clear already that he is not interested in responses that suggest a need for a strategic authority. If he is not prepared to listen to views that conflict with his on the structure of London government or the role of national government in London and the resource needs of London, the exercise that is being undertaken will remain fundamentally flawed.

It is perhaps interesting to look back approximately 10 years to what was said at the time of the abolition of the GLC about what systems of government London would have and compare that with what is happening now, and where we stand. If we look back at the Department of the Environment paper entitled "Streamlining the Cities", we find statements such as:

"The abolition of these upper-tier authorities"—

of course, it was not just the GLC—

"will streamline local government in the metropolitan areas."

The paper goes on to say:

"It will also provide a system which is simpler for the public to understand, in that responsibility for virtually all local services will rest with a single authority."

The Department of the Environment paper entitled "After the GLC" says:

"Local government should be as close as possible to local people if councils are to be properly accountable and to provide services local people want efficiently and economically."

The question was asked in that same paper:

"Will responsibility for GLC services be split up between a range of unaccountable organisations and 'quangos'? Is Whitehall taking over? No."

If we compare that to where we are now in terms of who governs London and makes the critical decisions, the contrast is immediate. London now has a vast number of appointed unaccountable bodies, or bodies made up of representatives from the boroughs, usually one per borough. In many aspects of London services, we have government by appointment.

I have seen estimates recently showing that more than 270 bodies or quangos spend money in London. The rights of people in London to question and to attend the meetings —even to know of the meetings of some of those bodies —are often virtually non-existent, yet huge amounts of public money are spent on services such as health, training, urban regeneration, further education, museums and transport, not all of which are post-GLC.

The variety of services that are covered is growing all the time. I suggest that it would be appropriate to include, for instance, housing action trusts, one of which partly covers my constituency; its budget this year is some £34 million.

On education and grant-maintained schools, a growing number of schools are moving out of local authority control. The list is enormous. It includes the London residuary body, further education colleges, which are

funded directly from the Further Education Funding Council, training and enterprise councils, city challenge, London scientific services and the various bits of what used to be London Transport—London Buses Ltd., London Underground Ltd., LRT Bus Engineering, the London Docklands development corporation and the London pension fund authority. Many of those bodies, but not all, were set up to take over former GLC functions.

There are also joint bodies, such as the London fire and civil defence authority, the organisation involved in the London boroughs grant scheme, the London waste regulation authority and the waste authorities that cover the various parts of London. We are dealing more and more often in those cases with a single-purpose appointed body.

The behaviour of such bodies is governed by rules far less stringent than any applying to local authorities, on a range of issues. Local authorities must hold their meetings in public, for instance, but many quangos do not. How do the public obtain access to information? Again, there are statutory rules governing access to information in the local authority sector, but try to obtain information, as an ordinary member of the public, about what is happening in a hospital trust, on the governing body of a grant-maintained school or on the board of a housing action trust, and it is a very different matter.

The audit arrangements also vary enormously. Can someone who feels aggrieved go to the ombudsman? What are the methods for obtaining redress? Experience in my surgeries tells me that, increasingly, people do not even know to whom they should complain, because it is so unclear who is responsible.

These matters are important. As I said earlier, we are dealing with bodies that are spending public money. Several billion pounds are spent. It approaches the amounts spent by London boroughs. The figures can, of course, be added up in different ways, but, according to a conservative estimate, at least £6 billion was spent in 1992-93. I am trying to avoid double counting—counting regional and district health authorities, family health services authorities and hospital trusts twice. Often, the same money is being spent; money spent by a district health authority ends up with a hospital trust. Without that double counting, we are still looking at more than £6 billion.

It is also interesting to consider the people who are spending that money, and what they are given. Local authority members are entitled to an attendance allowance, but I guess that few members of London authorities receive more than £3,000 or £5,000 a year, and many people receive less than that. Let us consider the position in the quangos. Virtually £1.25 million is spent on annual remunerations for chairs and directors of district health authorities; nearly £1 million is spent on the chairs and directors of NHS trusts in London; £145,000 is spent on the chair and directors of the London residuary body.

By and large, the members of those bodies are appointed. There are no longer any councillors on regional or district health authorities. None is directly appointed to NHS trusts. There are no councillors on London Regional Transport or the London residuary body. On the bodies to which some councillors are appointed, the numbers are small. According to estimates that I have seen, about 1,700 people sit on the boards of the quangos across London whose spending adds up to £6 billion. Of those 1,700, perhaps 2 per cent. are elected councillors; the rest are appointed.

In some areas, it is becoming more difficult to find people to take on such jobs. The grant-maintained schools are moving to virtual independence, but, even in locally managed schools, parent governors in particular are beginning to realise the amount of work involved, and the difficulties entailed in trying to assume financial responsibilities and manage budgets—a task for which they have had no training and been given virtually no support.

It is not simply a question of financial probity and accounts; there is also the major question of public accountability. Regardless of whether a local authority's policies are acceptable to any individual, at least it has open procedures. Local authorities are accountable. Controlling parties can be voted out of office and people can and do take an interest in what their local authorities are doing and in their performance. More local factors are now coming into play in local elections than has happened for some years. It is good for people to take an interest and to use their votes to express that interest.

In much of the system we are seeing fragmentation—fragmentation without accountability. The fragmentation into single-purpose, sometimes quite small, bodies means that there is also fragmentation of decision-making. Decisions that are essentially related are taken in isolation. There is a complete lack of public accountability and public influence. It does not matter how well intentioned the members of the quango boards are, the lack of accountability is an inevitable result of that sort of structure.

The major problem that follows from that is a lack of co-ordination and clear strategy across London as a whole. Whatever arrangements are made for the bodies to co-ordinate their activities, none of them has an overview. None has the authority or the power to develop an overview and there is little incentive for them to do so, because they are responsible for only a single service in perhaps a small area. Contacts occur, often at officer level, but there is little overlapping membership between the various quangos. Therefore, real linkages often do not develop.

The joint boards have one member from each borough and, on paper, they may seem to be accountable. However, I believe that similar problems often arise. I was a leader of a local authority in London before 1990 and we had to find people to go on the joint boards and we had to work through them. From that experience, I know that there are all sorts of problems.

First, there is the problem of finding people to go on the boards. They must be local councillors who have the time to devote to organisations such as the London fire and civil defence authority, the London waste regulation authority or the local waste regulation authority. There are certainly difficulties with local authorities monitoring the activities of the joint boards. There is the problem of local authorities, acting as an authority, rather than as an individual who happens to be on the board, having a clear influence on decision-making.

From all the fragmentation and lack of accountability there is a clear conclusion—there is a democratic deficit in London which can be remedied only by some form of Londonwide strategic authority. That can be seen by looking at service delivery, although I am not suggesting that we want a Londonwide authority that necessarily becomes involved in enormous amounts of service delivery.

[Mr. Neil Gerrard]

We have just had a debate on the Northern line. Transport is a perfect example of what is going wrong in London now. Earlier this afternoon, I happened to come across a diagram showing the organisation of transport in London and the various bodies involved in planning transport in London. I appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you may not be able to see the diagram as you are too far away, but it resembles a tube map. There are so many different organisations and bodies involved in trying to plan transport in London. It is ludicrous.

The 1984 Department of the Environment paper "After the GLC" described what was going to happen:

"The Secretary of State will provide a framework of guidance on traffic matters . . . This, together with his oversight of British Rail, London Regional Transport, and their mutual co-operation of services, will ensure that a comprehensive and balanced approach is adopted towards transport to make it easier for people to move around London and to improve environmental and living conditions."

I doubt whether many people who read the debate on the Northern line will agree that their ability to move around London easily has improved.

London Underground's management have spoken of the lack of investment, yet, despite their protestations, last year's autumn statement cut investment in London transport by more than £200 million. Each of London's major transport infrastructure issues that have been debated frequently in the House in the past year or two —the channel tunnel link, crossrail, the Jubilee line extension and the proposed Hackney to Chelsea line—has been at the planning stage for years. Shifts of policy lead to uncertainties about whether private finance will contribute. Nobody is in control.

Such problems apply equally to quite small matters. Quite a lot of local councils in London, of all political shades, have tried to make cycling a priority and have created cycling lanes to make life easier for cyclists. The London Cycling Campaign says that it is concerned about the confusing array of schemes that are created because of the lack of co-ordination between boroughs and the lack of a London-wide co-ordinating body.

There is a consensus among people who use public transport and the roads that travelling in London is a nightmare and that it is getting worse, yet we have no long-term strategic planning authority to deal with transport in London.

The problem does not apply only to transport. I am sure that no hon. Member can think of another capital city in Europe that must do without an elected citywide authority. Some hon. Members are aware of the difficulties that have arisen in recent years in trying to put together London bids on an individual borough basis for European money through the regional development fund and for assisted area status. Without a citywide authority, London is losing out and will continue to lose out on European initiatives. Some people believe that London would have done rather better in attracting the Olympic or Commonwealth games if it had had a citywide authority to put a bid together.

Why should we have to rely on ad hoc arrangements between boroughs, the Association of London Authorities or the London Boroughs Association to co-ordinate bids for assistance? Why is there no London authority to offer significant assistance to local industry?

There are no structural connections between the training and enterprise councils. Large-scale economic development work cannot be sensibly carried out on a single-borough basis. Why is there no one to take a Londonwide view of what should be done to deal with unemployment?

With the best will in the world, such issues cannot be tackled with maximum efficiency at borough level or by joint bids or work between boroughs, however useful such work may be—and I am not decrying it at all. That is not happening at maximum efficiency. The ALA and the LBA do not have the powers to fill some of the gaps.

We cannot afford to let the present drift continue. We need a new governing body for London—a view shared by the vast majority of Londoners. Recent polls found that four out of five Londoners believe that there should be a new Londonwide authority, one that will not get involved in service delivery on the ground but that will be concerned with the major strategic issues affecting the whole of London, such as economic reconstruction, improvements in public safety and rebuilding the national health service. The recent specialty reviews are a classic example of fragmented decision-making. There was a review of cancer and heart specialties, among others, but no one sat down and tried to co-ordinate what was happening across the board.

We need a Londonwide authority with some responsibility for the fire and emergency services, the type of services that cannot conceivably be most efficiently planned borough by borough. We need a Londonwide authority for policing and for sport and the arts. There is lots of room for local initiative but there is no one to take the overall view.

Apart from vast improvements in planning, the existence of such an authority would mean an increase in public involvement and in public accountability. Individuals could become involved and there could be regular consultation with both sides of industry. We do not need to set up a vast bureaucracy. But what we especially do not need is what we have now—government by quango.

12.56 am

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): I shall not detain the House for long—I am sure that everyone will be pleased to hear that—but I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on securing this debate. It is very significant to Londoners and to the city itself, but I am sure that it also greatly irritates Ministers because it deals with an issue that will not go away, because a glaring injustice has been, and is being, perpetrated on the people of London by the Government. That will remain the case until the transparently obvious solution that the Government have been trying to avoid at all costs—the establishment of a strategic authority responsible for co-ordinating many of the services provided to the people who visit or live and work in London—is accepted.

I believe that, in the fulness of time, this issue will come to resemble the history of the poll tax. Many of those who were enthusiastic about the abolition of the Londonwide authority were also enthusiastic about the poll tax. We were told that all that was required was time for it to settle down and that, once the initial hostility and misunderstandings had been dealt with, the poll tax would be established as what one Minister who represents a London constituency described as a "vote winner". Everyone

knows what happened to the poll tax, and the truth that was staring the Government in the face ultimately overwhelmed them and, more particularly, the previous Prime Minister. If anything was responsible for her enforced and unwilling departure from office, it was the fact that members of the Conservative party realised that they could not win a general election while attempting to defend the poll tax. Therefore, the poll tax had to go.

It is now clear that London and Londoners have lost out since the abolition of Londonwide bodies such as the Greater London council and the Inner London education authority. That is becoming ever more apparent to anyone who lives or works in London. It will be extremely entertaining to see how members of the Government manage to get out of the predicament that they have created for themselves and move back towards a co-ordinated strategic authority for London.

Whenever that is suggested, it is said that we want the return of the Greater London council. People conjure up images of county hall filled again with public servants adjudicating and providing and administering services. Sadly, that is not likely. Indeed, it is not possible. I freely admit that in many cases it is probably not desirable.

In the case of education, it would be fatuous to try to recreate the Inner London education authority. However, great harm was done by the abolition of that body. The figures relating to the education of the under-fives and the post-16s show that Londoners have lost many opportunities as a result.

However, it would not be reasonable to assume that those services could be put back together under a single body. For good or ill, they are with the boroughs for the foreseeable future, if only because anything else would be far too disruptive and far too difficult for the people involved. We all know that some things, once broken, cannot be put back together. Sadly, the excellence that was ILEA has gone.

But there are other issues, and my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow covered them in some detail in his quite compelling case. I refer, for example, to transport, the environment, the emergency services—including the provision, for the first time ever, of a Londonwide body for the police—matters relating to economic regeneration and, in particular, matters relating to health. The subject of health care provision in London is extremely instructive.

In effect, the Tomlinson report represented the substitution of a Londonwide view of health and health requirements. The fact that the Government have drawn the conclusions that have been drawn is a different issue. That some of the finest centres of medical excellence in the world—not just in the country—are now threatened with closure, after centuries of service to the people of the capital, is a national disgrace. But this is in some respects a side issue. The main point is that Tomlinson gave the game away—that what was required was a Londonwide view of health provision.

The Department of Health is now reorganising the regional health authorities. There are to be two instead of four. The existing bodies will be abolished from 1 April this year, and we shall have the South Thames and the North Thames regional authorities. This shows that the move towards a regional view of health provision in London is inexorable. What is being done is to some extent just a shamefaced halfway house to disguise the Government's embarrassment. There is no doubt that London needs health care, amongst other services, at a regional and strategic level.

We have been presented with a consultation paper entitled "Making the Best Better". I wonder how long that slogan was sweated over and which consultancy was used to originate such a striking title. The very publication of that document is proof positive of the fact that even in the benighted ranks of the Department of the Environment there is understanding that the situation in London is untenable and must be addressed.

The Secretary of State started to foam at the mouth, and steam came out of his ears, when, at the press conference, people asked, "Well, what about a Londonwide authority?" I am led to believe that the right hon. Gentleman was almost reduced to chewing the carpet, having said on three occasions that that was the one thing he did not want to consider. He did not want to know about any question of a Londonwide authority, despite the fact that it was quite clear that that was the one thing that almost everyone else did want to know about. Certainly it is what Londoners want to know about.

I should not speak too unkindly about the Secretary of State, because he is a former Member of Parliament for Lewisham, West. He represented the constituency for one term but, without being too unkind, I must tell the House that the good citizens of Forest Hill, Sydenham and Catford decided that that was enough and dispensed with his services in 1974. None the less, the right hon. Gentleman is still remembered in that part of the world with what could be called a curious affection. However, I am not sure that his experience of representing a London constituency has not clouded his judgment, in that he has not forgiven the people of Lewisham, West for what they did in 1974, and now seeks to wreak revenge on them for their temerity.

I hope that when the Minister replies he will mention the result of the consultation, which we await keenly. The last time that a question was asked about it, about 10,000 responses had been garnered from the 750,000 documents circulated, and we believe that the initial findings are due to be published about now. It would be interesting to know what is recommended or suggested.

Some time ago I tabled an early-day motion—I also wrote to the Secretary of State asking for his views on the matter—suggesting a simple way of dealing with the question of a strategic authority for London. The opportunity arises once every four years. It will come round in a couple of months' time, and it would reduce all the arguments between the parties in the House. The solution would be simply to ask Londoners themselves whether they want a strategic authority.

I refer, of course, to the borough council elections, which will take place in the first week in May. It would be the simplest thing in the world to include a single question on a ballot paper for the people who take part in the elections asking them whether they want the return—or rather, the establishment—of a strategic co-ordinated authority for London. I have no doubt that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow said, that would produce an overwhelming result in favour—and that is why the Government would not even attempt to carry it out. That exercise would dispense with all the questions.

I notice that the Government Benches are conspicuously empty, but that is hardly surprising; the House is hardly brimful at the moment.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): There are more Members on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Dowd: Indeed, but one would expect that; it is a matter of course when topics of great import are being discussed. I had half expected to see the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) in his place—although I realise that he had the previous debate. Clearly he put a lot of time and effort into that and has now gone to seek some deserved rest and solace.

Whenever the idea of a Londonwide authority is mentioned, the hon. Member for Hendon, South usually jumps up to tell us about a zebra crossing in Ealing that was the cause of a tremendous dispute between Ealing borough council and the Greater London council in the late 1970s or early 1980s. That incident was such a formative experience in the hon. Gentleman's life, and provided him with such a scientific analysis of the dichotomy affecting the government of London, that he was persuaded that the abolition of the GLC was the only way to deal with the problem and to prevent any repetition of the trouble.

People may often form their views as result of a strange array of reasons and experiences, but I have always felt that that story provides an extremely thin argument for abolishing the authority and doing away with a voice for London and Londoners. Of course there will be a problem of overlap between authorities, but that problem is happily faced elsewhere, not only in Britain but throughout Europe and the rest of the western world.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow has already said, London is the only city in the western world that does not have a citywide authority, or a single voice to speak on behalf of the capital. London is being sold short, and Londoners know it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow gave what he said was a conservative estimate of £6 billion being spent through quangos in London. I did some calculations on this. I asked parliamentary questions, I asked questions through the Library and I put them to the various organisations involved. The figure we came to was something like £8.5 billion, rather higher than the £6 billion that my hon. Friend mentioned—and we had not even totted them all up at that stage. The money is public money, it is spent in London, and it is spent on behalf of Londoners, yet no one has any say in how it is spent.

It is perfectly proper that public funds should always be subject to scrutiny and questioning. What accountability really means is not just that those who spend the money are called to account for what they do and are forced to explain how they are deploying public funds, to whose benefit and for what reasons. The ultimate value of accountability is that it can and does exact the highest price and the most sacred element of a democracy: if we are unhappy with the explanations that we receive, we can remove people from office, from the place where the decisions are taken, and we can replace them with others.

That is what democracy, at its highest, is about. That is what the quangocracy that has grown up, not just in London but throughout the country, more and more deprives us of the ability to do. Faceless, often nameless, people decide how billions of pounds of public money are spent on crucial public services. The people of London have no say in the decisions and no influence on them, and as often as not they do not even know who make them.

The case for a Londonwide authority is compelling. It will continue to be compelling until such time as it is addressed and a Londonwide authority is re-established. My preference—and I will be perfectly frank about it, as I am something of a traditionalist—is for the return of the London county council. London enjoyed its greatest advances under the enlightened policies of the LCC, certainly after the war and until reorganisation in the 1960s. None the less, I must probably reconcile myself to the fact that it will not come to pass.

There is a need for London to speak with one voice. London is far more than the sum of its individual parts. However hard the boroughs work in their own way to meet the needs of their communities—and, regardless of the political persuasion of any particular borough, the needs are met in a way that accords with the wishes of the local people—they will never be able to present London as an entity, projecting its full weight or focus on the value and potential that is currently wasted.

I look forward to hearing what the Minister says. I imagine that we shall be given the customary response, that everything is so much better than it was, and we shall probably hear a raft of statistics to support it. The one thing that the Government cannot run away from is the fact that Londoners do not believe them.

1.12 am

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on his good fortune in securing the debate and his good judgment in choosing this important subject. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd) on his contribution. He made the extremely important point that London alone, of all the major western capital cities, has no citywide government. That observation of itself ought to give us pause for thought.

Whatever one may think about the democratic implications, it ought to raise the question whether London is well served by the structure that has now been in place for eight years, with no democratic body responsible for citywide government. At the very least, we ought to compare London in that context with other cities that have the advantage of a citywide authority. When we make such a comparison, I regret to say that the results are not flattering to London.

We have just had a debate about London transport, specifically on the Northern line. It is symptomatic of the decline of London transport, once the envy of Europe and the most efficient system for conveying people around a major capital city, that it is now sadly lagging in the slow lane in comparison with other European cities. Their rapid transport systems and modern metros make our system look more and more what it is—rundown, neglected, unreliable, uncomfortable and overcrowded. The Minister tried to get away from the name that the *Evening Standard* has rightly tagged to the Northern line—the misery line.

That experience applies not only to the Northern line. It is one with which anyone who uses the other London Underground lines will be familiar, to his or her cost. People who use and depend on Network SouthEast and London's buses are also familiar with the problems stemming from under-investment and the failure to maintain an adequate transport system.

Of course, it is not just a problem of transport. Across a range of services the same sad story repeats itself. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd)

rightly highlighted some health issues. One sees the problems associated with a lack of coherent government, fragmentation, delegation of power to unelected quangos and the failure of our Government to run the services for which they have assumed responsibility.

We have seen the tragic disaster that has befallen the London ambulance service in the past two years. It routinely fails on two out of five calls to meet its performance target of reaching the scene within 14 minutes of call-out. That disgraceful and shameful record is the consequence of taking away responsibility for that service from a democratically body and giving it to an unelected quango, supposedly answerable to Ministers.

The right hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who will wind up this debate, is responsible for housing. Sadly, we have to recognise that the symbol of housing in London in the 1990s has become the cardboard box. London still has the worst homelessness problem of any city in Britain. It still suffers a chronic shortage of affordable homes and is failing lamentably to generate the necessary supply of affordable rented homes for people in need.

The most important service of all has to be the London economy. When we look at what has happened to the London economy, we see the sad truth. The city that was once the most prosperous in the world, the powerhouse of the whole United Kingdom economy, has become a city that boasts the dubious distinction of having the second highest unemployment rate of any of the regions in Britain and the city that is rapidly becoming the country's dole capital.

All that hardly supports the case that London has benefited from not having a citywide government. I am sure that the Minister will tell us that it is not the Government's fault. Someone else is always to blame. I have no doubt that we shall be given excuses. The Minister will say that the problems are nothing to do with the abolition of the Greater London council, the burgeoning quangos or the Government's assuming responsibility for various services that used to be in the remit of democratically local authorities.

I am sure that we shall also be told that other European cities have their problems, too. They certainly have. But with purposeful and, in many cases, powerful city governments to represent them, they are far better placed to respond to those problems and act to promote their interests. In an increasingly competitive world, where big cities increasingly compete against each other, I do not need to remind the House of the importance of London being able to fight for its interests and secure its advantage. We have to think only about the sad saga of London's failure to secure the European central bank to realise the risks that we run in this increasingly competitive world, if London is not able to pursue and promote its interests effectively.

The document which the Government published a few months ago, and to which my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West referred, begins with some splendid rhetoric about how wonderful London is. It describes London as a

"world class financial capital"

and the

"foremost European financial centre, way ahead of Paris and Frankfurt."

Would that that were the case. But if it were, would there be any doubt that the European central bank would be coming to London rather than to Frankfurt? If such a service is supposed to be central to London's economy and we are supposed to lead the world in it, why did we fail to secure the European central bank?

We must consider why London is failing to compete effectively in the European and international arena. Another example of where we failed was the Olympics. The city of Barcelona certainly has its problems, but it was able to host the Olympic games recently in a highly imaginative and succesful way.

We can compare its success with London's sad failure even to become the British contender for the Commonwealth games. We could not even manage to achieve that. Despite Manchester's failure in the Olympics and despite the view that Manchester had had its chance, London was unable to mount a bid to make it the British contender for the Commonwealth games. That is a sad reflection on the ability of our capital city to fight for its interests and to secure a rightful role on the world stage.

Let us consider what happened when London looked for funding from the European regional development fund under the objective 2 programme. Decisions were being made around Christmas, and there was no citywide authority in London to put together London's bid. There was no citywide authority to promote London in Brussels. Instead, it was left to the Minister for Industry to represent London's case in Brussels. There were problems because, inevitably, with no citywide authority to put the case, each individual local authority pushed for its maximum advantage. Therefore, the bid for London was far larger than was realistically feasible. Every borough rightly and properly pushed its own interests.

There was no citywide authority to take the interests of London as a whole, to consider the competing claims and to reach a decision on an appropriate-sized bid for London, within the framework set by the European Union, that was likely to succeed. Instead, all the London borough bids were packaged together and the package was submitted to Brussels, which was told to make a decision. Of course, it did so—it was good news for part of London, the Lea valley, but extremely bad news for many other parts.

I am thinking particularly of the east Thames corridor, a district that has suffered massively from the loss of manufacturing industry and from serious industrial decline and unemployment. It certainly qualified for objective 2 support, but failed to receive any. That is a further example of London's being unable to secure its best interests in the European context.

That is one part of what has happened to London since the Greater London council was abolished. Central Government not only have taken over functions that should have been discharged by a democratically elected local authority but carry them out badly. The other side of the picture shows a proliferation of quangos, rightly referred to by my hon. Friends the Members for Lewisham, West and for Walthamstow.

Wherever one looks around London one sees evidence of the growing power and influence of the unelected, unaccountable and profoundly unloved quango. The health service is overrun with quangos—there are managers, public relations staff, accountants, administrators, bureaucrats, the people who thrive under the new health service and buy cars for themselves when they are closing hospitals. That is evidence of the quangocracy of the health service in London.

[Mr. Nick Raynsford]

Quangos affect not just the health service but education, housing, training and urban development. In all services there are quangos: funding councils, training and enterprise councils, housing action trusts, urban development corporations, city challenge boards and many others that were named by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow. I see from a report by Professor John Stewart that it is estimated that there are about 272 such organisations in London, combining annual budgets estimated at between £6 billion and £8.5 billion of public expenditure. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West suggested that £8.5 billion might even be an underestimate, because he had lost count at that point of how many quangos had been taken into account and there remained others that had not been considered.

Let us contrast that with the prospectus when the Greater London council was abolished—when the Government proposed the abolition of the GLC and when they carried it out. My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow has quoted, rightly, from "Streamlining the Cities", the White Paper that was issued to justify the GLC's abolition. He quoted, with appropriate irony, those comments about streamlining local government, removing sources of conflict and tension and providing systems that were simpler for the public to understand. They have a hollow ring.

It is also worth remembering what Ministers said when they moved the Second Reading of the Local Government Bill which abolished the Greater London council. Moving the Second Reading of the Bill on 3 December 1984, the right hon. Lord Jenkin, formerly the Secretary of State for the Environment, said:

"They say"—

referring to us, the Opposition—

"that, after abolition, Whitehall will take over. Wrong again. Only 5 per cent. of service spending in London, and virtually none outside London, will go outside local government."

It gets better:

"They say"—

that is us—

"that the abolition councils will be replaced by quangos. Wrong again. Only two permanent new appointed bodies will be created —the advisory London planning commission and the Merseyside museums trustee body."—[*Official Report*, 3 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. 36.]

I suppose that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster would say, "You can't expect Ministers to tell the truth to Parliament all the time, can you?"

The truth is that the Government were profoundly wrong when they used their majority in the House to force through the abolition of the Greater London council. They were wrong in their forecasts of what would happen. They were profoundly wrong to take away from the people of London their democratic right to choose who should govern them. It was a profoundly wrong decision and it has had disastrous consequences for London.

The Government have been wrong in trying to hide themselves from the consequences of those actions. The most pathetic recent example has been the Government's glossy document "London: Making the Best Better", masquerading as a consultation paper, which, in 43 pages containing 53 glossy photographs and 63 itemised features on which Londoners were asked to comment, does not once mention the way in which the government of London is best organised—as though, by not being mentioned, that issue will miraculously go away.

I have to ask the Minister, how many respondents who sent in their views on that consultation paper raised the issue that did not dare to speak its name? How many respondents, without prompting, without being invited to do so, told the Government that they believed that London should have a democratically elected organisation? Indeed, of those who referred to that issue, what proportion said that they supported a democratically elected body for London, and what proportion said that they opposed it? It would be interesting to have responses to those questions and I hope that the Minister will give them to us.

The Government may try to run away from the issue, but they cannot hide from the electorate. The London electorate are poised to deliver a crushing verdict on the Government, not only in the forthcoming London borough elections but in the general election that will follow. When a Labour Government are returned to power—as they will be—we will restore to Londoners the basic democratic right to elect their own citywide government.

Our commitment to London is to establish a democratically elected organisation, taking responsibility for strategic functions. It will be a streamlined body looking at matters such as planning, transportation, economic development and other London-wide functions, such as fire and civil defence. It will be a body able to speak for London and to represent it in the European and international arena. It will be able to represent London's interests and to secure London's advantage in a way that London has missed so badly in the past eight years.

Our commitment to London is to give back to our capital city its self-respect and its own democratic institutions. In place of quangos, in place of Tory placemen and in place of Government mismanagement, we shall give back to Londoners a Greater London authority that will look after London's interests.

1.29 am

The Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction (Sir George Young): I join other hon. Members in commending the good fortune of the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) in being selected to initiate a debate on this topic. If I were being courteous, I would say that he made a thoughtful, if rather nostalgic, speech. If I were being more critical, I would say that it was resolutely backward-looking, devoid of new ideas, firmly committed to living in the past and refusing to recognise the reality of London today.

I give one example of the hon. Gentleman's misguided analysis. He said quite a lot about quangos, and one of the quangos on which he touched was the housing action trust in the borough that he represents. He sought to portray the HAT as an undemocratic and unaccountable body. I point out to the hon. Gentleman that his constituents, the tenants of those estates, were given a choice in a ballot. They chose to leave the local authority and to move to a housing action trust. Some 75 per cent. of them turned out, and 81 per cent. of them voted to move to the housing action trust.

Against that background, for the hon. Gentleman to say that there is something undemocratic and unaccountable about the decision to move to the housing action trust is to deceive the House. Once the housing action trust was set up, the tenants elected some of their fellows to represent

them. The hon. Gentleman said that quangos involved no public accountability or public interest. Having visited one of the estates last week, I tell him that I saw much more interest in what happens to the estates on the part of the people who live there than there would ever have been if they had remained tenants of the local authority.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman was not suggesting that if, by any chance, his party was returned to office the tenants who voted to come under a HAT would, against their wishes, be sent back to the London borough of Waltham Forest from which they had voluntarily decided to secede.

Mr. Gerrard: The Minister knows well that the tenants voted to go for the HAT because that was the only thing that was on offer. It was the only conceivable way in which the work could have been done. If the local authority had been allowed the means to do the work—it was the local authority that developed the schemes and involved the tenants—it would have been far further down the road than it is now. When the HAT finishes, the tenants will, I hope, have the choice of where they go.

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Of course the tenants had a choice. They could have voted no, as a number of tenants did when they were given precisely the choice that was given to the tenants of Waltham Forest. The hon. Gentleman's constituents voted for the HAT by a majority more substantial, I suspect, than that by which they voted for him. Against that background, for him to say that the system is undemocratic, unaccountable and run by a quango is to let down his constituents who are deeply committed to the concept of a housing action trust. When they read his speech, will they think that he is really representing their views?

Mr. Raynsford: The Minister said that the tenants in Waltham Forest had voted to leave the local authority and to go for the HAT. Does not he recall the fairly length negotiations that took place before the tenants were prepared to consider the proposition? They insisted that they had the right to return to the local authority after the HAT period, if they so wished. It was only when they were given that undertaking that they were prepared to vote in favour of the HAT.

Sir George Young: That is indeed the case. However, that in no way demolishes my point. The tenants voluntarily decided to leave a locally elected local authority and to come under a quango. They have that right. Not only does the hon. Member for Walthamstow criticise the Government but he criticises his constituents for exercising their choice. He will regret his comment.

I have seen estimates from the London Boroughs Association showing that, had the Greater London council continued in being for a further six years, it would have cost Londoners £1.3 billion. That money could be better spent than by continuing the GLC. The hon. Gentleman mentioned cycling. I am deeply committed to cycling. We had the GLC for 20 years, but what did it do for cyclists? More has happened for cyclists since the GLC was abolished than it achieved in 20 years.

As for a referendum on the GLC, the hon. Gentleman knows how decisions are taken in this country. We said in our 1983 election manifesto that we would abolish the GLC, and we had one of the best results in London that we have ever had. We subsequently introduced the legislation and got it through both Houses. That is now the law and will remain the law until a Government say in their manifesto that they will bring back the GLC.

At the last general election, restoration of the GLC simply was not an issue in my constituency. I spent a lot of time banging on doors but met few people who said, "I would vote for you and your party, Sir George, if you were committed to bringing back the GLC, but because you are not, I shall vote Labour." The issue simply did not emerge in my constituency or anywhere else.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, West made a touching remark about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He said that my right hon. Friend was remembered with curious affection in his constituency. My right hon. Friend is deeply committed to the well-being of London and has a soft spot for Lewisham. He now lives in my constituency and, as chairman of the Cabinet Sub-committee responsible for London, is deeply committed to improving the well-being of Londoners.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow added up all the money that was spent through what he called quangos and suggested that it should be spent through local authorities. I wonder whether the housing associations, for example, would welcome the proposition that, instead of getting funds from the Housing Corporation, they should in future depend on funds from local authorities. I think that the hon. Gentleman would find a lot of resistance to that proposition.

The main argument against the case put by hon. Members is their own document, the "London Policy Forum". They criticise the Government for quangos when the number of quangos that they would set up is legion: a Greater London authority; a national park to cover the Thames; a police authority; a strategic health authority for Greater London; an independent public arbitration and advocacy service; a national standards body for education; a development agency; a transport authority; an environmental protection agency; a cultural education commission; a cultural education partnership; a human rights commission; an urban design partnership; and a London film commission.

Opposition Members have a nerve to criticise the Government for having quangos in London when they have recently produced a London Policy Forum, to which the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) gave evidence. Has this document no connection with London Members of Parliament? Is it of no relevance? Will the hon. Gentleman disown it?

Mr. Raynsford: Yes, I will. It has no relevance to any London Member of Parliament, it is not an approved document, it has not been endorsed by the national executive committee, and it has no basis whatever.

Sir George Young: That will come as an enormous disappointment to Mr. Terry Ashton, general secretary of the Labour party, who wrote on 16 September to a number of Labour Members:

"The London Policy Forum is being used as a model for regional policy forums in other parts of the country. With its detailed analysis of the problems and challenges facing London, and its many innovative ideas, I am sure that this document will be of major benefit to Labour's campaign to win over voters in the capital."

The hon. Gentleman has just implied that Mr. Terry Ashton was totally wrong and that the document is of no benefit whatever to Labour's campaign. All those hon. Members

[Sir George Young]

listed at the back, who gave evidence to the London Policy Forum, have now heard from the hon. Gentleman that they laboured totally in vain.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow mentioned transport. My constituency now has the benefit of new rolling stock on the Great Western line from Ealing Broadway into Paddington. The Paddington to Heathrow extension is being constructed; and £750 million is being spent on modernising the Central line. It would be wrong to depict transport in London as being represented by the Northern line, which we debated earlier.

As for housing, a subject in which the hon. Member for Greenwich and I have a shared interest, we published figures a few days ago showing that acceptances for homelessness in London in the past year were 13 per cent. fewer than in 1992—the seventh successive quarter in which the numbers have fallen by comparison with the previous 12 months. The figures are now at their lowest for six years, and there has been a big reduction in the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation too. Only 7 per cent. of all households are in temporary accommodation, down from 10 per cent. in December 1992.

The Opposition spokesman knows perfectly well that there has been a decline of about two thirds in the number of those sleeping rough in cardboard boxes in the centre of London.

To bring back the GLC would be a step backwards: back to swarms of bureaucrats in county hall checking and double-guessing what might happen elsewhere in the capital; back to the inefficiency, muddle, profligacy and waste that typified the GLC; and back to high local taxation to pay for it all. That is not our way; we are forward looking, creative and low taxing.

The crucial fact, which no Opposition Member mentioned, was that London has strong local authorities: the boroughs. That is the key difference between London and the other major capitals of Europe. Our form of strong, unitary local government is not replicated in other capitals. I see no point in bringing back an over-arching structure, as proposed by the Opposition.

It is much better to find out what London needs, the approach adopted in some of our initiatives, none of which was mentioned by Opposition Members this morning. They did not mention the development corporations, or city challenge, or London pride, or any of the other things that we are doing in London.

Last November we published "London: Making the Best Better", a document that was unashamedly positive about London, unlike Opposition Members this morning. It covers many aspects of London, ranging from the economy to visitors and shopping. It lists the achievements of local government, the private and voluntary sectors, and the Government. The document has been widely distributed and has been extremely successful. It was also an exercise in listening. It contained a questionnaire inviting those who live and work in London, and visitors to it, to tell us what they appreciate and to make suggestions for possible improvements.

We were extremely encouraged by the response—10,800 replies by the middle of February. We shall publish a digest of those responses later this month; the House will forgive me if I avoid giving away any secrets today. It was noticeable how much Londoners like this city and how proud they are of it. Of course they have suggestions on how to improve it, but they also see a great deal to be proud of. In the autumn we announced city pride for London, Manchester and Birmingham, an initiative to produce a prospectus setting out a vision for the future of the capital and the practical steps needed to bring that about.

We have set up a partnership involving local authorities, the ALA, the private sector, and voluntary sector bodies, and they are on course to produce the prospectus by the end of the year.

We are also on the verge of another exciting development for London, creating a single Government office for London by bringing together officials from my Department, the DTI, the Department of Transport and the Department of Employment in a single office with a single senior regional director. The new office will provide a single point of entry to the government of London and will ensure that Departments' programmes are co-ordinated —a much more user-friendly service.

City challenge in London has utterly transformed attitudes in some of the capitals most intractably deprived areas. In Deptford, for instance, much has already been achieved. The initiative was greeted with scepticism, but it is now recognised as having broken the mould and changed how we all think about urban regeneration. It has enabled some players to see at first hand the power of competition to maximise resources for the good of those in need. It has created partnerships where there had been a tradition of non-co-operation between sectors. It has brought together participants whose paths otherwise rarely crossed: bankers, industrialists, church leaders, the police, councillors, tenants, educators, voluntary organisations and private individuals.

As a targeted, measured and time-limited policy, it has asked all partners to be strategic in their approach and to deliver hard, measurable outputs within a fixed term. There is no bottomless pit of funding; it is a five-year programme with £7.5 million of city challenge money per year. The rest is up to the partners to secure, underpin and deliver. That contrasts with the vague, rather uncosted proposals about which we heard this evening.

The results of city challenge are already impressive by any standards. Seven of the 13 urban priority authorities in London were successful in their bids, working in partnership with local businesses and local people.

Over the five-year programmes, my Department's investment of some £260 million in the targeted areas will attract more than £450 million from other Government programmes and £800 million from the private sector. As a result, we will preserve 12,000 jobs that might otherwise have been at risk and open up 20,000 new job opportunities. We shall reclaim more than 450 acres of valuable inner city land currently lying derelict or contaminated. We shall improve or build 13,300 homes, help to start 2,600 new business and bring into use 500,000 sq ft of business and commercial floor space.

City challenge has already created a new impetus to urban regeneration. It has brought together all the stakeholders in urban regeneration to form new partnerships and to work towards achieving visions for key deprived neighbourhoods. The areas include Park Royal in Harlesden, a major industrial subcentre in west London; Stratford in Newham, already benefiting from enhanced transport facilities and likely to become a keen regenerative force; Bethnal Green in Tower Hamlets,

which has the largest growing young population in the country; and four other city challenge areas: Dalston, Deptford, Brixton and north Kensington.

That is not the only example of partnership in London. In east London we have the East London partnership, a highly dynamic private-public sector organisation based in Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham. It has a key role in Stratford city challenge and continues to contribute to strategic thinking in the pivotal area right at the head of the east Thames corridor.

On the other side of London there is the West London Leadership and the associated Park Royal partnership—powerful sponsors of revitalisation in that key area. Park Royal, part of which is in my constituency, and once a highly prosperous industrial enclave ensconced on the right side of London, has seen decline, but its potential, aided by city challenge, is enormous. The partnership is a key agent in realising that potential to the full.

In Greenwich, the Waterfront Development partnership has developed a strategy for the future of 7.5 miles of Thames waterside, linking major sites of the Greenwich peninsula, the historic town centre, Woolwich Arsenal and Thamesmead.

The newest area-based partnership was launched only last week. On 9 March, my right hon. Friend attended a gathering of 200 people at Haringey Technopark to launch the Lea Valley partnership involving six boroughs—Enfield, Haringey, Waltham Forest, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Newham—with members from all other key sectors. It covers one of London's oldest industrial areas, tracing a corridor reaching from the M25 to the terminus.

The partnership has the huge task of promoting the Lea valley and east London—an area with the capacity to develop into London's truly modern industrial zone reclaimed, opened up, greener and fully geared to the technical and commercial trends of the next century. It was clear that all the partners present were committed to that vital task.

City challenge, the area-based London partnerships, and the extended objective 2 partnerships for the Lea valley and east London do not end the story. There are other moves afoot in south and outer west London. There are many partners in London. The 33 boroughs, the nine TECs, the four task forces, English Partnerships, local business groups, the voluntary sector and the Faith communities are participants in many groupings. The networking of those groups is one of the most creative aspects of partnership development.

We have had a substantial debate on transport, so I do not plan to go over that ground again, but I believe that the flexible approach that we have adopted in targeting those parts of London that need help, bringing together the existing players—the private sector, local authorities, the Government and the voluntary sector—is much better than the recreation of a body which I have to say was unloved by Londoners, for which I do not believe there is any substantial demand.

Londoners had a choice in the 1983 general election. We fought on a manifesto stating that we would abolish the GLC. We had one of the best results ever in London. It was a vote winner on the doorstep in 1983. Successful packages will be driven by local as well as national policy objectives—package bids from local authorities focusing on a balanced approach to reducing congestion, for example, and in improving public transport.

Partnership is a powerful idea whose time has come. The people of London know what they want. They do not want a son of GLC. They want their great city to remain powerful, prosperous, attractive, convenient to live and work in and a joy to visit. They do not want top-heavy bureaucracy pretending, at vast expense, to provide those things. They want to see things happen; they live here. That is exactly what partnership is about. That is what Conservative borough-led local government is all about.

South-east Turkey

1.50 am

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): I asked for this debate because of my concern and that of many Opposition Members about the current political situation in Turkey and the treatment of the Kurdish minority there by the Government forces.

The Kurds are a people who, since 1926, in the words of my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Ennals, have been a people of minority in five different sovereign nations, most of which have scant regard for human rights. The human rights record of Syria, Iran and Iraq is well known and publicised, but far less is said about the human rights record of the Government of Turkey. Turkey is a member of the Council of Europe and NATO. One may read something into the fact that less criticism is made of a country that is an ally of the United Kingdom than those that are perceived to be its enemies.

The situation of the Kurds in other parts of the area has been well documented and seen on our television screens, particularly since the run-up to the Gulf war, and subsequently. The Prime Minister expressed concern about the persecution of the Kurds in Iraq by the brutal oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein. At the time of the Gulf war, the Prime Minister called for safe havens for the Kurds in that country, yet the Government appear to have been relatively silent when similar policies of genocide against the Kurds have been practised by the Government of Tansu Ciller.

I visited north-west Kurdistan and south-east Turkey last October with Lord Avebury, on behalf of the parliamentary human rights group. We visited a number of villages, talked to the local population and interviewed the regional governor. I commend the bravery of the witnesses who gave evidence to us. That evidence is well documented in the publication that has been produced by the parliamentary human rights group. The evidence that Lord Avebury and I collected adds to that which has already been published by Helsinki Watch and Amnesty International, which has been supported by resolutions from the Inter-Parliamentary Union and confirmed by the visit of the representative of His Eminence Cardinal Basil Hume and several members of the other place.

When I visited south-east Turkey last October, it was one month after the assassination of Mehmet Sincar, the democratic Member of Parliament for Mardin, who was assassinated along with the chairman of the Democracy party for the Batman region. Shortly after that assassination and just prior to our visit, a bomb attack was made on Mr. Sincar's father's house, when Leyla Zana, another Democracy party Member of Parliament, was visiting to offer her condolences. Leyla Zana accompanied the human rights delegation on its recent visit. She is now under arrest by the Turkish Government for having used constitutional means to express Kurdish aspirations.

On our visit last October, we saw brutal evidence of the destruction and depopulation of villages. I understand that, according to the current estimate, some 900 villages have been destroyed by the Turkish authorities since 1993. The policy of the Turkish Government, in terms of their attacks on the villages, has been well documented, both in our report and by Amnesty International.

Let me read the evidence that was given to us by one of the witnesses. Hurshit Diri, a 54-year-old farmer in the village of Kele, near Yuksekova, told us:

"On October 11 at about 1.30 pm we heard firing and saw a large column of armoured vehicles . . . entering the village. The troops first searched all the houses, then the mountains outside. The soldiers opened fire on the village, and we believed it was because we had refused to join the village guards. Four people were injured"—

and, indeed, a young child was killed. The farmer went on to tell us:

"The army gave us until Thursday to join the military guards, or we would be bombarded. We didn't join and the village was attacked, killing two people."

Another witness said to us, in Karabag village:

"On October 11 the military called all residents to the station and told them they had to accept weapons and fight the PKK, or they would be evicted and their houses burned. Tanks are waiting outside the village now. Last night they opened fire and killed some sheep. Yesterday also they went to Dadaba, a next door village, and arrested some residents who refused to join the village guards".

That is typical of the action of the Turkish authorities. As I have said, I understand that, to date, some 900 villages have been depopulated or destroyed.

On our visit, we saw evidence that those who have become victims of the Turkish authorities had been refused treatment in hospitals and that doctors had been put under pressure not to treat them. We saw evidence that attacks had been made on the freedom of lawyers and, indeed, that lawyers who had defended those accused of political crimes had been arrested. We saw evidence of mass murder and other killings; we received evidence of extra-judicial executions. We certainly saw evidence of attacks on journalists, and on the newspaper *Ozgur Gundem*.

As hon. Members may know, since my return the Turkish authorities have closed down that newspaper—on international human rights day, 10 December 1993, when its front page highlighted the violation of human rights in Turkey. Several of the journalists working for the paper have been murdered; others have been arrested and tortured, and the lawyers defending them have been intimidated and arrested.

The pretext for the arrests was that the lawyers were acting as couriers for the Workers party of Kurdistan; the reality is that lawyers defending political prisoners were targeted by the Turkish authorities. Those arrests of lawyers in Turkey violate the basic principle that lawyers are entitled to defend their clients without interference from the state.

Earlier, I mentioned that a number of Democracy party Members of Parliament had been arrested. A few weeks ago, in answer to a parliamentary question, the Minister suggested that the Kurdish people of Turkey were entitled to pursue their Kurdish aspirations, but must do so through constitutional means. Eight Members of the Turkish Parliament who have been pursuing their aspirations through democratic and constitutional means now find themselves under arrest. Yesterday, I understand, the Turkish state prosecutor filed a case with the state security court, under article 125 of the Turkish penal code, which carries a maximum death penalty. What crime have those people committed? They have asserted the rights of the Kurdish people, as a people.

Turkey is a member of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and an adherent to the declaration of Copenhagen. My understanding is that that declaration asserts the rights of minorities

"freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will."

Turkey is clearly in breach of its commitments under the Copenhagen declaration of the CSCE. There is a responsibility on all the other participating states to protect those rights and I hope that Her Majesty's Government will do that with force within the CSCE.

The Kurds who have been denied statehood are a distinctive people with their own history, language and culture. The Kurds in Turkey played a significant role in the establishment of the Turkish Republic in exchange for promised equal rights and local self rule. Once the republic was founded, their language, their culture and their political organisations were banned. We have seen a regime of oppression on the part of the Turkish Government that has been matched only by the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq in his brutal oppression of the Kurdish minority there.

I believe that this country has specific responsibilities to take some action. Apart from the fact that we had some responsibility for the delineation of the boundaries in that area at the beginning of the century, Germany, the United States and Britain are supplying Turkey with the military means to wage the conflict against the Kurdish people.

Turkey is a member of the Council of Europe. Presumably, it is therefore bound by the human rights conventions of the Council of Europe. As I said earlier, it is also a member of the CSCE. I believe that this country has a responsibility to ensure that Turkey fulfils its rights under the Geneva conventions. Not only does Turkey have a responsibility to carry out its duties under the Geneva conventions, but there is a responsibility on all the high contracting parties to the Geneva conventions to "ensure respect" for their terms. I believe that that places a responsibility on Her Majesty's Government to ensure that Turkey adheres to the conventions. I urge the Minister to argue with his colleagues in the Council of Europe to submit an inter-state application against Turkey under article 24 of the European convention on human rights.

The problem is inherent in the Turkish constitution. The constitution effectively denies the rights of any minority. A person who asserts the rights of a minority in Turkey is in contradiction of the constitution. Article 125 of the penal code states that the penalty for even arguing for independence, devolution or a degree of self-government for the Kurdish people is death. As I said earlier, eight democratically elected members of the Turkish Parliament, elected through constitutional means to carry out Kurdish aspirations, find themselves facing the prospect of the death penalty.

Lest what I say sounds extreme, I shall quote the chief prosecutor of the republic. In one of his statements in a case against the Democracy party, the chief prosecutor's assessment is:

"The Democracy party claims that there is a distinct Kurdish nation and a Kurdish question in Turkey. It demands a political solution which can be found in a democratic context in which Kurdish identity is recognised with all its implications, and freedom of thought and organisation are recognised."

He goes on to say:

"This question is determined by the Lucerne agreement. There is a single nation in Turkey, the Turkish nation. Our citizens with Kurdish origin constitute the national unity by fusing with other ethnic groups and this unity forms the Turkish nation. By calls for a solution implying that there is a distinct nation, people or minority is aimed at dividing the nation. Only Greeks, Armenians, Jews and Bulgarians are minorities in Turkey."

The Turks' insistence that the Kurds do not exist is enshrined in the Turkish constitution, which is not only undemocratic but contravenes the articles on human rights, to which Turkey is an adherent.

The killing, the destruction of villages and the depopulation go on unabated. The abuse of human rights in Turkey is no different from that in Iran or Iraq. If the Government can call for safe havens and for sanctions against Iraq for its brutal oppression and murder of the Kurdish people, why are they not doing the same when those actions are carried out by the Government of Turkey?

2.5 am

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) has had the opportunity to raise this matter. I wish that he had been even more fortunate in the ballot and had been able to raise the matter at a time when it would have attracted wider attention. The issue is important and it increasingly concerns British people.

My hon. Friend's concern and his knowledge of the matter is well known. He is well briefed, particularly following his visit to the area last year with the noble Lord Avebury, as a result of which a report was written that has been influential in informing people in Westminster and beyond of the situation in south-east Turkey. A good debate was held in the other place last November, in which many took part.

I hope that the Minister will respond to some of the specific points that my hon. Friend made. The situation of the Kurds in Iraq enjoyed considerable publicity and became the focus of widespread international concern, but that of the Kurdish minority in Turkey has been less well reported, although the extent of repression is alarming.

Although I have nothing like the experience of my hon. Friend, in the past two months I have met representatives of the Kurdish minority in Turkey, who, I understand, held discussions with Foreign Office officials. As a result of what I heard, I felt that, if only half of what I had been told were true, it was still enough to make me deeply alarmed about what was happening and the repression that seems to have taken place. A huge number of innocent people certainly seem to have been caught up in a drastic situation.

There have been reports of terrorist activities perpetrated by the PKK, which were referred to in the debate in the other place. We must remember that the vast majority of the Kurdish population in Turkey are entirely innocent of any acts of violence, yet they are, on a great scale, the victims of state violence.

Labour strongly believes that if Turkey is to claim to be part of the democratic group of nations and a civilised country, it must give proper respect to minority rights. A range of policies must be introduced, such as allowing the Kurdish minority proper freedom of expression and freedom to organise and express their views in the country. Such forms of expression seem to be denied at the moment, as evidenced by the lack of a free press and free media in general. That form of repression needs to be considered alongside the instances of extreme brutality to which my hon. Friend referred when he mentioned the destruction of

[Ms Joyce Quin]

hundreds of villages and the expulsion of villagers from their homes. Many of the villagers were abandoned in freezing conditions, with no shelter.

The accounts of torture detailed in the report by Amnesty International make very frightening reading. They mention brutality against thousands of people and many instances of arrest and torture. How does the Minister respond to the specific recommendations in the report, with which I am sure that he is familiar? If he agrees with them, how does he propose to pursue them with his counterparts in international organisations, such as the European Union, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and the United Nations?

There have been reports in several newspapers about the Government's role and their attitude towards the Turkish Government. Indeed, the Government seem to be portrayed as one of Turkey's friends within the European Union, together with the German Government. To what extent does the Minister accept the reports, especially that which appeared in the *Financial Times* in February, as accurate portrayals of Government policy? It would be interesting if he were able to elucidate the Government's view.

We believe that Turkey cannot make any progress towards full membership of the European Union unless there is a complete sea change in its attitude to human rights. The plight of the Kurds will be the real test of the Turkish Government's willingness to adopt more civilised behaviour and respect for human rights.

In the past, Turkey's geographical position has given it a pivotal role, especially in the cold war era when it was regarded as an important part of NATO. It is less pivotal these days, although it is still important strategically for access to the middle east and the Balkans. Nevertheless, even though we need friends in strategic positions, we cannot have friends who do not behave in a civilised manner or respect human rights. There will be even more widespread alarm for the Kurds in Turkey unless Turkey mends its ways very soon and very dramatically.

For those reasons, and in view of all the issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich, I hope that the Minister will respond with care to the debate.

2.13 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): There is no doubt that this is a serious issue, and I make no criticism of the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) for raising it at just before 2 am. I am bound to say that it is a very odd procedure whereby such important issues are discussed at this time, but the hon. Gentleman is making use of the facilities available to him and that is a perfectly right thing to do.

This is also a perfectly sensible matter to debate. I shall not enter into a debate of the ordinary type, because I have learnt from long experience that those who try to do so at 2.13 am are asking for trouble. I shall not, therefore, respond to all the questions asked by the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin)—I mean no discourtesy to them, but I have a feeling that that would not be wise thing to do. I have a text that I propose to read.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Woolwich on raising this issue. It is a difficult matter for the Turkish Government, and one that is followed with considerable interest and some concern in the United Kingdom and other western countries. The late President of Turkey was arguably right to describe it as going beyond the simple dimensions of terrorism and as perhaps the most significant problem in the history of the republic. It is good that this problem is now being increasingly and openly discussed in Turkey.

About half of Turkey's 12 million Kurds live in the south-east. That is one of the poorer areas of the country. Since 1984, the Marxist-Leninist Kurdistan Workers party —the PKK—has been fighting a terrorist campaign for an independent, autonomous Kurdistan, and there is a state of emergency. The escalating conflict between the PKK and the Turkish security forces has seen thousands of deaths since the troubles began. PKK tactics include attacks on Turkish military and Government installations, ambushes of security patrols, brutal attacks on villages believed to be pro-Government and the murder of teachers and electoral officials in the area.

As hon. Members will know, the PKK has also attacked tourist targets in western and south-western Turkey, seeking to undermine the income going into that country, which the people of the south-east need as much as anybody in terms of investment. In addition, it has kidnapped foreign tourists in south-eastern Turkey, and PKK supporters have carried out fire-bombings of Turkish properties in London and other European cities.

There are, in addition, in the south-east in particular, unexplained killings of many civilians, including local politicians and journalists, and detainees have been tortured in police cells. That is why there is widespread international concern about the Kurdish problem in Turkey.

It is, of course, for the Turkish Government to decide how to resolve their problems in the south-east. We unreservedly condemn terrorism. We understand and sympathise with the difficulties faced by the Turkish Government in the south-east. We support their efforts to remove the PKK terrorist threat. But they must do so in conformity with the norms of governmental behaviour, which they have accepted in subscribing to various international conventions. The clear evidence of human rights abuses by both sides is cause for justifiable concern by the international community. A Government must, above all, act with full respect for human rights, even in facing an opponent that shows no such respect.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: I am afraid not.

It is important that all societies fully respect human rights. Turkey has signed the European convention on human rights. We have urged Turkey to ratify the two main United Nations covenants—the international covenant on civil and political rights and the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights.

Foreign Office Ministers and senior officials continue to stress these points when they meet their Turkish colleagues. Other western countries do the same. In Ankara, at the end of January, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made clear to the Turkish Prime Minister and Foreign Minister that terrorism has to be tackled within the rule of law and with full respect for

human rights. Only last week, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs made the same point, in London, to the Turkish Minister for human rights.

Britain and other European countries have also pressed for remedial action in international forums. At the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe human dimension implementation review meeting in Warsaw last September, the Turkish Government were criticised for the actions of their security forces against civilians in the south-east, their failure to investigate properly the murders of pro-Kurdish activists, including journalists and politicians, restrictions on the freedom of speech and systematic torture. The United Kingdom, on behalf of the European Community, delivered the statement on freedom of expression and free media. We cited Turkey as one of the participating states whose performance in that respect gave cause for concern. Our statement referred to the harassment of journalists, the murder of 16 journalists since February 1992 and the banning of journals and publications.

Her Majesty's Government are aware that, on several occasions, the International Committee of the Red Cross has requested access to Turkish prisons, in co-operation with the Turkish authorities. Regrettably, the Turkish response has so far been a negative one. Following the recent statement about that matter by the European Union at the human rights conference in Geneva, I urge the Turkish Government to engage in talks with the ICRC about ICRC access to prisons in Turkey.

The Turkish Government have made efforts to improve matters. We recognise that a new law passed over a year ago improves human rights provisions under domestic law. But the task remains to ensure that Turkish police abide by that code and that the fight against terrorism is conducted within the framework of proper respect for domestic and international human rights obligations. Moreover, officials who commit abuses must be, and be seen to be, brought to book.

The United Kingdom, along with our European partners, is concerned about the lifting of the parliamentary immunity of deputies from the pro-Kurdish Democracy party earlier this month. Our ambassador in Ankara made our concerns plain to the Turkish Government, stressing that such action was very damaging for Turkey's international image. Other European ambassadors in Ankara have done the same. We await the decision of the constitutional court on the appeal by the deputies before considering further action with the Turkish Government.

The debate has underlined the difficulty of any moderate Kurdish view being expressed in Turkey. That is because, under the existing constitution, such expression is considered to be advancing separatist opinion and as such, even if non-violent, is a criminal offence. We believe strongly that the people of Turkey, including elected representatives, should be able to give non-violent expression to their beliefs even when they do not agree —as clearly they will not—with some members of the Turkish Government. That is the meaning of democracy.

We have seen promises from the Turkish Government on reforms aimed at greater democracy. They have undertaken to reform the constitution and certain terms that restrict freedom of expression. I believe that the House would urge the Turkish Government to make early progress to achieve all that, because if the moderate Kurdish view is allowed to be expressed peaceably in Turkey, the terrorists of the PKK will be isolated, and that is what will protect the civilians more than anything else.

I have listened carefully to the various concerns expressed during this timely debate. Once again, the hon. Member for Woolwich has given us the opportunity to discuss the matter. The debate will also serve to remind the Turkish authorities of the entirely legitimate concerns in the United Kingdom and other western countries about human rights in Turkey. It is appalling that large numbers of innocent civilians find themselves caught up in the conflict—often threatened by the PKK on one side and by the actions of the security forces on the other.

As I have said, and as we in the United Kingdom well know, dealing with ruthless terrorists is far from easy. But police and security forces engaged in the conflict must not sink to the level of their opponents. They must stand above them, and they must abide by the international standards of human rights.

We must also make it clear that moderate Kurdish views should be allowed to find expression within Turkey. That would strengthen the hand of the Turkish Government in dealing with ruthless terrorists. A functioning democracy cuts the ground from under them.

We continue to hope that the problem in south-east Turkey will be solved through peaceful and democratic means. That will bring lasting peace to the region, help to deliver the region's economic prosperity and encourage the Kurdish people of the south-east to feel that they are fully a part of a democratic Turkish state.

Local Government

2.21 am

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Local government in this country is operating on a scale probably never envisaged when it first took on its present structure, and when the legislation that determined that structure was brought into being. It now costs about £80 billion in capital and revenue terms each year. That is an enormous sum, and the council tax that we all pay covers only about 10 per cent. of that £80 billion. The Government and business pay 90 per cent. of it.

If we include teachers, there are about 2 million employees of local councils throughout the United Kingdom—that is, nearly 50 per cent. of all workers in the public sector. That is a vast number of employees, and the total cost is considerable. It is therefore important that we should always try to raise standards in local authorities, as we should try to do everywhere in the public sector. It is important that value for money be set as an objective, and strong efforts be made to achieve it. We must always strive for the utmost efficiency, the highest levels of effectiveness and the highest attainable quality of service from our local authorities.

Sadly, that is not always the case. In recent years we have seen much abuse involving the way in which local authorities are run. The fact has recently been published that the debt of many Labour councils now exceeds that of many third world countries, and the 13 Labour councils with the largest debts all have debts of more than £500 million.

Manchester tops the list with a debt of £1,326 million. Then there is Birmingham, with a debt of £1,233 million, Islington, with £946 million, Lambeth, with £878 million, Southwark, with £856 million, Liverpool, with £765 million, Hackney, with £757 million, Camden, with £743 million, Leeds, with £737 million, Sheffield, with £730 million, Haringey, with £549 million, and Newham, with £547 million. Lewisham, 13th in the list, has a debt of £506 million.

Many people will wonder who is to repay this debt. Many people will also wonder whether they will be told the truth in the coming council elections. Will they really know who they are voting for? Are these figures widely available? Are they understood by the electorate? Does the electorate even know about them? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will bear in mind that the figures ought to be publicised in the national interest so that taxpayers and council tax payers throughout the country can see which councils have the largest debt and be made aware of the figures that I have mentioned.

The cost of servicing the debt ought to be recognised and understood more widely. Not only are there Labour councils in the top 13 councils for debt but also those top 13 Labour councils must raise some £600 million a year in taxation just to pay the interest charges on the debt. It is a phenomenal amount of money, equivalent to nearly 10 per cent. of the total council tax raised.

What emerges from all this is that Conservative councils have a much better record. In many cases, they are role models for the rest to follow. In my own constituency we had a Conservative council for many years, and although at present a Lib-Lab pact rules the council, it is worth looking at what a number of years of Conservative rule have brought to Dover. Dover has a debt of only £34 million after many years of Conservative control. It manages, with just 500 employees, to provide an excellent service to its residents. It has also had a report just published by the audit service that is one of the best that I have ever seen.

The housing department in Dover—a particular interest of mine and one that I shall return to later—earned the following accolade from the auditor:

"My review of the council's housing strategy was based on a national study by the Audit Commission which identified a number of good practices against which authorities could be compared. We found that the council in Dover is performing well in many respects and has adopted a variety of methods for addressing housing needs."

The report went on to say:

"The process for allocating council houses via the waiting list works well."

The housing department received a well-earned credit from the audit service. Judging from the correspondence that I have about housing matters in Dover, it does very well indeed.

The community charge benefit system and the housing benefit system operated by the finance department in Dover also earned plus points in the audit report, which said:

"Our review showed that the council had already introduced many of the elements of good practice identified by the Audit Commission."

The report went on to say that

"the council's workload has increased by some 9 per cent. in the three years to 1992-93, while at the same time the number of staff employed in the benefits section has decreased. As a result, the workload per person is above the Kent average and the cost of the council's service compares favourably with other Kent authorities."

By definition, it must compare favourably with that of other authorities in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Dover's senior officers have been on performance-related pay, something that the Government have encouraged, for some six years. The staff of Dover district council have been on performance-related pay for some three years. They are performing and delivering a better service for my constituents. Dover district council is a well-run Conservative council.

Another council that earns the accolade of being a well-run Conservative council is Redbridge. I was impressed by the speed with which Redbridge council noted that I had a debate today on local government and immediately sent me a fax with some statistics about how efficient it is. There is no doubt that Redbridge council must come high on the list of successful Conservative councils. I was impressed with the facts and the details that it sent me.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister, who has kindly come along to reply to the debate, will be delighted by what he, I hope, saw in the *Evening Standard* last night —or should I say tonight? Brent council, formerly under Labour control, has announced its council tax for the next year. It has announced that for the fourth year in a row it will reduce its council tax. That is what Conservative councils mean—four years of reducing the council tax below the level set by Labour. That is a major achievement and a great improvement.

We compare that news with the sad news yesterday from Islington council. It is £878 million in debt and the child care division of its social services department has collapsed. In the newspaper tonight we discovered that there had been 14 years of failure and neglect in the child care division of the social services department. We also discovered that the council attempted to hide the report that

would have disclosed the problem. The council is £878 million in debt and it still cannot finance, structure and make work a proper social services department.

Lewisham council is of particular interest in Dover at present because the leader of the council was brought down to Dover by the Labour group to teach Dover Labour party how to run a council. Lewisham council is not a good example, and we in Dover certainly do not want to have what goes on in Lewisham down in Dover. I understand that Lewisham council attempted to ban Christmas. It did not consult the Pope or the Archbishop of Canterbury. It just decided that a Christmas party was the wrong sort of party because it identified with religion, so it changed the name to a winter party. Lewisham council has also failed to collect £25 million in rent, rate and council tax arrears. That is an appalling state of affairs. We in Dover certainly do not want Lewisham to teach us anything.

In Tameside the position is even worse. The council has set up a company to look after the elderly. The company did not so much look after the elderly as look after Labour party supporters. A number of shares in that company are apparently owned by the local Labour party through the nominee of its chairman. That is an appalling state of affairs and a scandal in which much money has been lost. The BBC has carried out an in-depth investigation and discovered much wrongdoing. Local newspapers have written articles of many column inches identifying corruption, fraud and wasteful expenditure.

Another council also identifies badly from Labour's point of view. It is Monklands council, where the Leader of the Opposition has his base. It has a debt of more than £130 million. It has more than 1,400 employees. It is one of the most inefficient, nepotistic and corrupt councils in the country. It has the sixth highest council tax in Scotland. The audit report by its auditor is completely the opposite to the one I have just read out about Dover. The Monklands audit report, just released, announces that the council is operating at the limits of its financial capacity. The evidence of wrongdoing in Monklands does not come from Conservative politicians—apart from the fact that I have got hold of many papers and have started to bring Monklands council into the public arena.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): As someone who was born in Monklands and has a record in local government, I understand the audit reports very well. Would the hon. Gentleman like to alter his statement in the light of the fact that the auditor said that Monklands council had not been at all compromised in its report? No qualification was entered by the auditor in this year's, or any other year's, audit report.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman's comments on the audit report that has been issued may change as he listens to what I have to say. He may change his view when he hears about the police who are currently investigating something that happened only a week after the audit report was concluded. He may change his view when he hears about some of the fraud and fiddles that I shall identify in the remainder of my speech.

I want to give some of the evidence and quote Catherine Miller, the branch secretary of the Holehills and Raywards branch of the Labour party. In 1992 she said:

"This branch . . . unreservedly condemns the nature of Cllr Brooks's highly personalised and derogatory statements, believing these are grossly insulting to the four councillors and deliberately designed to divert attention away from the main issues that have been raised."

The four councillors to whom she referred are four Labour councillors who have attempted to identify and expose the corruption and wrongdoing. Councillor Brooks is the Labour leader of the council that the Leader of the Opposition has supported for a position on a local health board at a salary of £5,000 a year. Fortunately, the Government had the good sense not to appoint Councillor Brooks.

An anonymous spokesman for the Plains and Caldercruix branch of the Labour party wrote to the local newspaper, saying:

"In addition to other branches within the local Labour Party, Plains and Caldercruix also calls for a full, detailed investigation by the National Executive into the way in which the 'inner circle' of the Labour Group run the affairs of this local authority."

Such entrenchment of power in so few hands is bad for local democracy. It also called upon the national executive of the Labour party to investigate fully the present dictatorial set up of council committees and subcommittees. A democratisation process is called for so that the council fully represents the entire electorate. There are real worries in the local Labour party in Monklands about the democracy, or lack of it, that exists there.

Mr. P. Drummond, the branch secretary of Gartlea branch of the Labour party, wrote that

"Councillor Brady"—

a Labour rebel councillor—

"as far as we are concerned can hold his head up. He has no relatives employed by the council, has never sought to get friends into such posts, does not use crude language in public pronouncements, is a relatively low claimant of expenses and an infrequent attender at available buffets and junkets."

It seems that that is a model by which some people in the Labour party locally measure the other people in the Labour party, and many people in the Labour party do not fit that model.

James Turner, branch secretary of the Rochsoles and Glenmavis branch in Airdrie, wrote:

"If left as it is, this situation will only deteriorate. The subject of 'Democracy à la Monklands' is surely questionable at best; divisions in the Labour Party here grow even wider."

Labour councillors are also concerned. Councillor Murphy, a regional councillor for Coatbridge, North and Glenboig, and a shop steward in the National Union of Public Employees, stated:

"I have got good proof about jobs not being advertised . . . employees who are members of the Labour Party have been given temporary promotion and the jobs 'get lost in the system.'"

Councillor Morgan, a Labour councillor, said:

"I know of cases where candidates have been selected for jobs without even the bare minimum qualifications required."

That was reported in *The Herald* of Glasgow on 21 May 1993.

The Labour party was so worried that it was forced to hold an inquiry into the way in which the council was operated. Unfortunately, that inquiry has ended up as a cover-up. The Leader of the Opposition has never answered questions about it, even though it led to the suspension of his constituency Labour party. Nevertheless, the Scottish Labour party had to admit in its report:

"Involvement of Councillors in the appointment procedures . . . was a practice which has left the Labour Group open to criticism."

That is fairly mild language, but it is fairly serious when one realises what has gone on in that council.

Public records are also now established about the wrongdoing. A recent ombudsman's report recorded maladministration. I give as an example the ombudsman's report in August 1993, on the son of Councillor Gilson

[Mr. Shaw]

—Councillor Gilson being a leading Monklands councillor —being allowed to buy his council house when neighbours in similar houses were not allowed to buy theirs. The ombudsman said:

"My investigation of how this application was processed has been hampered because the authority have been unable to provide my investigating officer with information which might have revealed the reasons for the apparent inconsistency."

Earlier we heard about Islington council trying to keep secret a report on child care. Now we find that Monklands council managed to keep secret the way in which Councillor Gilson's son bought his council house for himself whereas other residents could not buy theirs.

The decision-making process on Monklands council is determined by who controls the local Labour party. In Monklands, control rests firmly with the small group known as the local Labour mafia. In Monklands, East, the Leader of the Opposition's constituency, the Labour party is bankrupt and in debt to the tune of £2,500. It is devoid of active members. Only about 100 people are active in the local Labour party.

Mr. Connarty: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have put up with this drivel for so long. Has this peroration on some local Labour party branch or constituency any relevance to the debate that the hon. Member is supposed to be speaking to?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): The hon. Member chose local government as a subject and what he is saying is clearly connected with local government.

Mr. Shaw: I am trying to show the way in which it is possible to control a local council with only 100 people in the local Labour party.

Mr. Connarty: I respect the Deputy Speaker's position, but I wonder whether a debate about a constituency Labour party which has absolutely no relevance to local government law in Scotland has any relevance.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I shall listen further.

Mr. Shaw: The local Labour party has but 100 people effectively working in it.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Tell us about the power.

Mr. Shaw: The power is controlled, as I was coming on to say, by a small trade union vote, which largely consists of council employees active in the trade unions. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Shaw: Those council employees attend the local party meetings, where they elect into power people who then become councillors.

Mr. Connarty: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Shaw: I have just used the word "councillors".

Mr. Connarty: I think it is relevant, because I have been on a course on that subject, Madam Deputy Speaker, that a district Labour party which is responsible for controlling any policy matter relating to a district council in Scotland does not consist of members of a constituency Labour party. The hon. Gentleman is speaking about a constituency Labour party and who attended a constituency Labour party general committee. It has been ruled already in law that it is not a relevant matter on a district council. He was speaking about local government.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for an intervention rather than a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Shaw: I am only too happy for the hon. Gentleman either to intervene in my speech or, if he so wishes, to make his own speech afterwards. If he wants to attempt to alter or amend anything that I have said, I am sure that the House and the world will be very grateful. If he would have a word with the leader of his party and ask him to make a statement to the press correcting anything that I have said about Monklands, I am sure that the press and the world would be grateful if the Leader of the Opposition were to make a statement.

Mr. McMaster: Has not the Leader of the Opposition made it clear that the Secretary of State for Scotland has powers to investigate Monklands district council? To date, the Secretary of State has chosen not to use those powers.

Mr. Shaw: The Secretary of State for Scotland has challenged the Leader of the Opposition to produce the internal Labour documents for the inquiry that I have just mentioned. The fact is that John Smith will not produce the papers.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has forgotten that in this House we do not refer to hon. Members by name.

Mr. Shaw: I apologise, of course, Madam Deputy Speaker. I meant to say that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) had not produced the background papers for the Labour party report.

Mr. McMaster: Has not the Minister with responsibility for Scottish local government, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), appeared on BBC television's excellent "Scottish Lobby" programme and said that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East has nothing to answer?

Mr. Shaw: I have spoken to my hon. Friend the Minister. I have heard no suggestion that the Leader of the Opposition has nothing to answer. I have frequently heard my hon. Friend say that he believes that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East should stop being silent and behaving like a Trappist monk, and that he should make a statement about what is going on in his own constituency. I have heard that said at the Dispatch Box and more widely.

The Monklands, East Labour party is in a very bad state. It is controlled by no more than about 100 people. There is a heavy trade union vote.

Mr. Connarty: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is supposed to be talking about local government. In fact, he is talking about Monklands, East constituency Labour party. It is clearly established that constituency Labour parties, under the local government law of Scotland, of which I have some knowledge, have nothing to do with district Labour parties or district councils.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must understand that that is a matter on which he may wish to intervene. It is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Shaw: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As I have tried to say on a number of occasions—I wish to repeat the point—I am concerned about how the councillors become councillors. How do they remain as councillors? How do they get access to the council gravy train? The fact is that they get access to the council gravy train in Monklands by getting control of the local Labour party. They get control of the local Labour party because it is bankrupt and in debt to the tune of £2,500, and it has only about 100 members. As a result, it is quite easy to get control of a council with a turnover of £80 million simply by paying the subscriptions for about 100 members of the local Labour party in Monklands.

Mr. McMaster: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Would you clarify this point? Did you hear the hon. Member for Dover accuse the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East of paying for Labour party membership subscriptions in his constituency to ensure that he was the Member of Parliament for that constituency?

Madam Deputy Speaker: No, I did not hear that.

Mr. Shaw: That was not what I said at all. The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) is clearly trying to distort the facts. All I said was that it was possible to control the whole of Monklands district council and some £80 million of council expenditure by paying for the subscriptions for 100 people. I did not say who was paying for the subscriptions for the 100 people. I leave it to the public to work that out.

Mr. Connarty: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shaw: I have given way very generously. I have also had to cope with many points of order, which hon. Gentlemen have raised to try to stop the flow of my speech.

On employment practices in Monklands, 40 close relatives of councillors have been appointed at secret meetings of the council. That has been achieved by a chairman, the convenor of the manpower services committee, or his representative, attending every interview for a job on the council. That practice has existed since the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) started it in the 1970s when he was the council's provost.

The House has also heard of the green and pink forms used by Monklands district council to ensure that councillors and their friends could distribute the green forms while the pink forms were left for the rest of the unemployed in Monklands. Consequently, many councillors' relatives and senior local Labour party members have jobs on the council.

Mr. McMaster: Will the hon. Gentleman answer two specific questions? First, despite what he said earlier, did not the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) appear in the excellent "Scottish Lobby" programme about five or six weeks ago and say that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East had nothing to answer? Secondly, in the past year the hon. Gentleman has asked several questions about Monklands, which I accept is his right as an hon. Member. How many questions has he asked in the past year about his own constituency of Dover, and how many has he asked about Monklands?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman must realise that Dover has assisted area status as a result of my efforts. It has much more going for it than Monklands, and Dover council is much more efficient. My constituents are extremely worried about the cost that they are paying for Labour-controlled councils like Monklands, where the Labour party is seriously abusing expenditure.

Mr. Connarty: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shaw: No. I wish to make some headway now.

There has been a tremendous abuse of employment practices in Monklands. They have been purloined for the benefit of councillors and their families. A case has even been reported recently in which Councillor Fitzpatrick chaired an appeal committee of the council against an unfair dismissal involving three employees in which he upheld the dismissal. Having dismissed the three employees, he arranged for his brother-in-law to fill one of the jobs. The only problem was that the three men were later found to have been unfairly dismissed.

When the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East wrote to the council saying that that seemed to be wrong practice and unfair, he was told to go jump. The council was not interested in his views. The councillors in Monklands district council are more powerful than the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Connarty: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shaw: Not for the moment.

The other concern about employment practices which I want to bring to the attention of the House is that some 16 senior district Labour party members are employed by the council: Joe Barrett has family members employed. Celia Conwell, Des O'Neill, Joy Scott, Jay Brown, Matt Costello, Andy Burns, Stephen Fagan and Martin Dempsey are all senior Labour party officials employed by the council. According to the local newspaper, those do not include other Labour party members, whose numbers in some council departments are understood to be high. The *Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser* said on 25 September 1992:

"Two members of the District Labour party executive were among those promoted into highly-paid jobs in the Housing department.

Others also include the election agent of a high-ranking Labour councillor, who also received a housing promotion, and the son of another senior member.

A council spokesman admitted the posts had not been advertised or interviews conducted . . . a leading Labour party member said, 'Monklands has become the Tammany hall of Scotland.'"

This week's edition of the paper has discovered that a district Labour party member, Alex Brown, a deputy house maintenance manager—why a deputy is needed I do not know; when I was on Kingston council 20 years ago we abolished deputy posts, but there seems to be a plethora of them in Monklands—and his four sons are all employed by the council. There is more too: a daughter-in-law, a brother-in-law and possibly one more family member. It is believed that at least seven members of the family are employed by the council. They enjoy the knowledge that the senior member of the family is also a senior member of the party.

Let us examine the planning process in Monklands and how the council operates its planning policies. Is the agenda under the control of the councillors, or under the control of a small clique of them? There have been breaches of local plans. In 1981 Monklands district council

[Mr. Shaw]

passed a local plan, but when Councillor Brooks, the leader of the council, wanted planning permission, the Labour group gave him it, even though it breached seven of the—

Mr. McMaster: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has just said that the Labour group on a Scottish council gave a member of that council planning permission for a development. Under Scottish law, planning permission is a quasi-judicial function and Labour groups are not allowed to participate in group decisions on planning permission. Is the hon. Gentleman allowed to say such things in the Chamber.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. An hon. Member might want to refute the point in a speech, but it is not one for the Chair.

Mr. Connarty: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have just said that it was not a point of order.

Mr. Connarty: On a point of order of my own, then. The Chair in this Chamber is supposed to protect the rights of the citizens of this country. Surely such defamation should not be allowed in the name of this Chamber?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Members of this House have certain privileges that enable them to make statements. The only proviso is that we expect them to advance their views with circumspection and with due regard to the fact that they enjoy these privileges. The privileges exist nevertheless.

Mr. Shaw: The fact remains that seven of Monklands' planning policies were breached. That is not a point of contention; it is admitted by everyone. Councillor Brooks correctly declared his interest at the official council meeting when the breach was effected, but I understand that the vote was taken at a Labour group meeting before the council meeting at which it was agreed to back Councillor Brooks' development. He received that backing even though the director of planning was not in agreement, and even though seven policies under the local plan were breached: policies H15, IND16, IND17, IND20, IND21, COM2(2), COM13 and COM15. But the leader of the council got his planning permission anyway, and he implemented it.

Mr. McMaster: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the year 1981 and made the scurrilous accusation that there was a breach of planning policy. As I recall, the director of planning in Monklands district council that year was Mr. Andrew Cowe, who later became the managing director of Renfrew district council. He still holds that post and is a former leader of Renfrew district council. I worked closely with him and hold him in the highest regard. Is the hon. Gentleman making any specific allegation against Mr. Andrew Cowe?

Mr. Shaw: I understand that that particular planning officer left Monklands and went to Renfrew district council because of his disgust at the fact that the local plan in Monklands had been breached.

Mr. McMaster: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know the person whose name is being called into question very well indeed on a professional level. Mr. Andrew Cowe chose to leave Monklands district council because he sought promotion to a larger council—Renfrew district council. That was a scurrilous remark against an individual who cannot defend himself here.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I must make clear to hon. Members the difference between disagreements and points of order. Of course the hon. Member may disagree strongly. I hope that he will have the opportunity to speak later, but that is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. McMaster: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already said that it is not a point of order.

Mr. Shaw: I have made it clear I am not in any way criticising the gentleman who has just been named. He did very well to make it clear that he was not in agreement with what the Labour party was doing in Monklands district council. He did not like what the Labour party was up to and he went on record saying that the way in which the Labour party was operating in Monklands district council was totally corrupt and wrong. He did it in the most obvious way possible, yet still they voted through the planning permission that breached seven areas of the local plan to give considerable financial benefit to the leader of the council.

Many people may well ask who gets the planning permission that counts in Monklands. I have already spoken of the leader of the council who got his planning permission for Dundyvan road. He built some flats, some offices and a nursing home. He took a Scottish Development Agency loan of £45,000 and got the agency to write it off, without repaying the loan. His company still owns the land and the building despite the fact that it went into liquidation, the creditors were not paid and the taxpayer lost some £45,000.

More significant is the planning permission that S. L. Homes Ltd. has managed to achieve. The company's last filed accounts in 1991 showed assets of £7 million and liabilities of nearly £7 million. The company was in financial difficulties, and it is supported by Scottish Legal Life Assurance, a company that has many policyholders and investors. The company had appointed directors to the board of S. L. Homes Ltd., but did the assurance company's directors know about the loan of £35,000?

Mr. Connarty: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has raised the discussions of constituency Labour parties. Unfortunately, he does not realise that they have nothing at all to do with district Labour parties or councils in Scotland. Now he is talking about a company—not a local authority but a company in the house building business.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that is a point of order for the Chair. I am sure that the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) will relate his remarks to local government.

Mr. Shaw: I am about to talk about how a company got planning permission in the Monklands district council area.

Mr. McMaster: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am grateful to you for allowing me to raise this

matter. Will you confirm that your ruling on my previous intervention correctly made it clear that, although Conservative Members have the right to say what they say, that does not necessarily mean it is true?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Chair, happily, has no responsibility for the accuracy or otherwise of hon. Members' points made in speeches. My only concern is whether matters are points of order for the Chair. I have tried to make a distinction between those that are and those that are not. Of course, all hon. Members are free, through an intervention or their speech, to refute matters that are put forward by other hon. Members.

Mr. Shaw: If the hon. Members for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) and for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) have any doubts about the truth of this, I commend to them the information from Scottish Companies House, which shows clearly that S. L. Homes Ltd. lent £35,000 to a family company owned and controlled by the leader of Monklands district council. It lent money in exchange for planning permissions given by Monklands district council. The fact is that the council leader, through his family, is connected to Commercial and Industrial Maintenance Ltd. S. L. Homes Ltd. has received planning permissions in connection with two property developments in the Monklands area. S. L. Homes Ltd. is owned and controlled by Mr. Brian Dempsey, the son of the former Labour Member of Parliament for Monklands, West, who is currently trying to get control of Glasgow Celtic football club.

Mr. McMaster: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Connarty: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shaw: I give way to the hon. Member for Paisley, South.

Mr. McMaster: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, but he is a little behind the times. Mr. Brian Dempsey and Mr. Fergus McCann now have control of Glasgow Celtic football club.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman may not have checked the corporate returns correctly. Mr. Dempsey has not joined the board of directors and does not exercise control from that point of view, perhaps because he is concerned about the fact that five directors of his company all resigned on 23 December last year, according to information that I have today and that has just been filed at Companies House. Those five directors were appointed by Scottish Legal Life Assurance. Clearly, there is real concern that they had a conflict between their interest in looking after the interests of depositors in Scottish Legal Life Assurance and their interests as directors of S. L. Homes Ltd., a company lending £35,000 to a company owned and controlled by the family of the council leader of Monklands district council.

Mr. Connarty: Obviously, once again the hon. Gentleman is not up to date with what is going on. I understand that the company that was owned by Mr. Brian Dempsey was bought by a major construction company for more than £20 million. The company to which he refers is now in the hands of yet another company, which might explain why a relationship between Scottish Legal Life Assurance and Mr. Dempsey's company may no longer exist.

It might be advisable for the hon. Gentleman to step outside the Chamber if he wishes to make accusations against someone whom I know to be a very honourable member of the building profession and who is highly respected in Scotland, not just for his interest in a football team but for the profitable work that he has done for many people in the building industry. The hon. Gentleman should perhaps get back to the drivel that he was talking a few minutes ago.

Mr. Shaw: If the hon. Gentleman is correct, he is admitting on behalf of Mr. Dempsey that the returns at Companies House are false and fraudulent. He should, therefore, be careful about what he is admitting on behalf of Mr. Dempsey, with whom I believe he has no personal financial connection. If the hon. Gentleman is declaring an interest, financial or otherwise, with Mr. Dempsey, I should be interested in hearing the interest that he wishes to disclose.

Mr. Connarty: Let me make it quite plain. I have no financial interest or any other interest in the business of Mr. Brian Dempsey. In fact, I have even less interest in the football team in which he has an interest than most hon. Members in Scotland. I have no connection at all. I am suggesting to the hon. Gentleman that if he wants to throw mud at limited targets—because of the political process, the limited targets that he has chosen at the moment have little redress—he should be willing to step outside the House when he talks about someone who is respected in the business community in Scotland. As the gentleman's father was a Member of the House—James Dempsey was my Member of Parliament for a number of years and is a very honourable man—the hon. Gentleman should really restrain himself in the vilification in which he participates in the House. It does not do him any credit. If he steps outside the House, it may do him a great financial disservice.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman seems to be keen to defend Mr. Dempsey. Perhaps he would like to explain why, when Mr. Dempsey was on the board of directors of S. L. Homes—he is still recorded at Companies House as being on the board of directors—the company, having obtained planning permissions in the Monklands area, then paid the leader of the district council's family company £35,000. Why did Mr. Dempsey authorise that payment? There is no mud, and no distortion; it is on record at Companies House in Edinburgh. The hon. Gentleman can look it up for himself in the records of Commercial and Industrial Maintenance Ltd.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Get on with it.

Mr. Shaw: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am trying to get on with it, but there have been a good many interruptions from his colleagues, which he could stop if he wanted to.

Mr. Vaz: The hon. Gentleman is talking rubbish.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman knows that I am not. He and I have discussed fraud in other debates, and have listened to each other's speeches with great interest. This is a matter of fact.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot allow a conversation between the hon. Member who has the Floor and another hon. Member sitting on the Front Bench—or anywhere else, for that matter.

Mr. Connarty: The hon. Gentleman said earlier that he had debated questions of fraud. Is he now accusing Mr. Brian Dempsey and any member of Monklands district council of fraud?

Mr. Shaw: Certainly I should like an answer to my question. I think that many people will take different views on how family members come to be employed by the council, how people who pay their subscription to the Labour party get jobs on the council, how planning permissions are obtained on the council and how money changes hands around the time planning permissions are granted. People are going to ask, "How has this happened? Why do all these transactions seem to coincide, involving jobs, money and membership of the Labour party? How is it that money has gone from S. L. Homes to a company owned by the family of the leader of Monklands district council at the same time as the granting of planning permissions to the property development company?" The position is less than satisfactory.

Mr. McMaster: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am no more here to defend the integrity of Brian Dempsey —although I think he has a lot of integrity—than he is here to defend that of Pamella Bordes, or some *Daily Star* photographer who was badly beaten up outside his house. Let me ask him a question, however, when will he stop misrepresenting Monklands, and start.

Mr. Shaw: That shows the desperate lengths to which Labour will go to cover up the matter. The hon. Gentleman knows that I am taking facts straight from Companies House, and that I have researched the information. As I said earlier, it comes from Labour's own statements; even its own report contained a mild criticism of Monklands district council. The hon. Gentleman is becoming very desperate. He is getting things out of proportion.

The losses in four council companies in Monklands—the Quadrant shopping centre, MDC Windows, the Time Capsule (Monklands) Ltd. and Summerlee Heritage Trust —amount to £6 million in three years. We are all paying for those losses; every man, woman and child in the country is paying for them, through taxation. Mysteriously, several of those companies have managed to win tenders from the council. It has been suggested to me that that is because the tenders from competing companies are always opened in advance, and the council companies are told what to bid. It is strange that loss-making companies always manage to win tenders in Monklands when they are controlled by the council.

Earlier I paid tribute to Dover district council's housing department. I should now like to deal with some of the problems in Monklands district council's housing department so that a proper contrast can be drawn between a good council and a bad council. Monklands is a very bad council.

Labour's policy in Monklands has been against council house sales, except where those sales are to councillors and their families. The council policy has been extended to allow sales to councillor's sons as well. Mrs. Willamina Wylie, a 63-year-old widow, was not allowed to buy her council home at 36 Newlands street. However, Councillor Gilson's son at 28 Newlands street was allowed to buy his home. Two other council tenants in Newlands street were refused. The council could not explain the position to the ombudsman and, for that reason alone, Monklands district council was found guilty of maladministration in its housing department.

When Martin Dempsey, a Labour party member, ex-councillor and now a council employee—the Labour party looks after its ex-councillors in Monklands—needed a council house, he was put ahead of 300 homeless people. He beat Mr. Lenny Miles and his fiancee who had been waiting for a council house for four years. Of course, Mr. Lenny Miles and his fiancee are not paid up members of the Labour party, so they have to go to the back of the queue when Mr. Martin Dempsey is involved.

Other abuses of the housing department are numerous. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that an independent housing department is essential if the housing is to be managed fairly between all applicants and repairs are to be carried out fairly, without preference to individual tenants. Transfers can be abused to the extent that councillors and their families receive preferential treatment unless there is proper independence.

Additionally, decisions about which homes are improved can be made fairly and properly only in an independently run operation. Much council money is spent on housing repairs and improvements. Decisions about the allocation of that money mean that considerable power can be exercised over the lives of ordinary people. Allegations of preferential treatment for councillors and their families are commonplace in Monklands.

Factors that give rise to a lack of independence in housing decision-making in Monklands include the fact that the wife of the director of housing is employed in the council's Time Capsule leisure centre. It compromises his independence and he must ask whether he can make independent decisions when his wife's employment is controlled by councillors who can cause him personal financial loss if he does not go along with the decisions that they want him to make.

The provost of the council, Councillor Gilson, is a former convenor of the housing committee. He has a daughter working in the housing department. The convenor of the general purposes committee, Councillor Fitzpatrick, has a wife who is a senior housing officer and a nephew who is a rent officer. The convenor of the housing committee, Councillor Betty Leitch, is also compromised by the fact that she has a daughter employed in the library service. All that has led to a number of problems involving housing decision-making.

Some years ago, Councillor Gilson moved from his council-owned property in Henderson street, which is regarded as a fairly poor area, to a better council house in upmarket Blairpark ward, which is not the ward that he represents. He proceeded to buy that house using his full discount for the years in his previous house. There is a feeling locally that the move was arranged by Labour councillors in order to provide him with a virtual gift of a comparatively upmarket house. Councillor Gilson bought his home at a time when he publicly supported Labour party policy against the sale of council houses.

Councillor Smith obtained a council tenancy amid much controversy last year in an upmarket area, which is not the ward that he represents. I have mentioned Martin Dempsey, the ex-councillor who managed to get a council house. Councillor Cairns has managed to get a house that

was bought by the local regional council. Also, Christopher Barrett, the son of ex-councillor, Joe Barrett, now a local Labour party treasurer, who unfortunately had to resign as a councillor because of a little problem connected with a fiddle involving his expenses, obtained his grandfather's council house at 15 Dunothar avenue. No one locally ever saw Christopher Barrett sleep a night in that house, yet the grandson's name suddenly appeared on the electoral register and he suddenly became eligible for a tenancy in a house with which he had no connection other than the fact that his grandfather lived there. Meanwhile, many homeless people in Monklands were denied council houses.

I now move on to the finance department, where a £1,000 cheque made out to a local builder recently went missing. It was discovered two months later to have been paid into the leader of the council's personal bank account, despite the fact that it was made payable to a local builder. The finance department altered the records of the council to pretend that the cheque was a payment to the council leader for his expenses. It did not tell the auditor, who discovered it only when a Scottish Television programme identified that this had happened last year. The council had kept this secret to itself.

Mr. Connarty: I am sure that with his deep knowledge of Scottish local government, from the perspective of Dover, the hon. Gentleman will realise that any misappropriation of funds or expenditure outwith the financial remits of the council would bring a qualification by the auditor on the council's accounts. I read its accounts because the hon. Member has given us such a reason to be interested in Scotland, but I could find no such qualification. In fact, I found a clear statement that there was no qualification on the accounts of Monklands district council. Can he explain why that should be so, as he appears to be accusing the finance department of losing a cheque for £1,000, misappropriating it and putting in a different account under a different title?

Mr. Shaw: I am not responsible for the district auditor's report, but the leader of the council does not deny that the cheque was made out to a local builder. Nor does he deny that it ended up in his bank account and that he had signed it on the back and endorsed it. If the district auditor did not feel that he had to refer to that in his report, that is a matter for him, but it does not say much for audit standards if the auditor felt that he could not refer to the fact that the council's finance department had altered its records to make that cheque, made payable to a local builder, an advance on expenses.

The law and administration department has recently had a problem—after the audit date to which the hon. Member for Falkirk, East referred. A taxi licensing fraud has been discovered; some £45,000 is estimated to have gone astray. The police are investigating; an employee has resigned.

I shall conclude by saying that the standards of local government in many areas of the country are quite high—in areas under Conservative administration and control. In Monklands, the country is being let down. Matters are serious and are getting worse in Monklands. Serious matters are being brought to people's attention week in and week out in Monklands. The fact is that there is nepotism, corruption and wrongdoing in Monklands. That has been established in the local newspapers and accepted widely, yet we still have silence from the Leader of the Opposition. We still hear nothing from him.

3.23 am

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on being selected to propose a motion on the subject of local government. The nation is fortunate that the debate has taken place so early in the morning and that so few people have had to endure the rantings and sheer nonsense that purport to be his speech.

Perhaps one should look into the individual psyche of the hon. Member to find out why he has not used the debate to raise important issues of concern to his constituents. We have heard about Redbridge, Islington, Lewisham and even Tameside but there was no mention of Pineham ward and the events of 25 November 1993 which, I am sure, are etched on the hon. Gentleman's heart.

This is no ordinary man; this is a man obsessed, a man in need of help. Monklands has become a means by which the hon. Gentleman obtains self-gratification. There is another word for it but I understand from the Clerks that it is unparliamentary so I shall not use it. I can only repeat the advice given to him by his mother many years ago: if he keeps going on about it, there is a real danger that he will go blind.

It is time that Tory scaremongering and petty politicking was blown open. The Conservative party and the hon. Gentleman are attempting to use diversionary scare tactics to cover their sordid footsteps but it will not work. Where there is so much as an insinuation of incorrectness in local authorities, we as a party insist that it is investigated, not behind closed doors with Members of Parliament manoeuvring and interfering in due process but out in the open where public scrutiny ensures that it is properly dealt with.

However, in a recent interview, the hon. Member for Dover revealed the Conservative party's true view of how local authorities should be run—not democratically by councillors but by certain Members of Parliament, such as the hon. Member for Dover, interfering. He told the *Local Government Chronicle*:

"MPs have to be tough. If there are any suspicions about a councillor and his actions, whatever party he may belong to, then that party has to question whether he should be readopted."

The report continues:

"Mr. Shaw said he had taken such action in his constituency."

In the light of the comments of the leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups on Dover council, Councillor Sansum wrote to the hon. Gentleman asking him to clarify which councillors he had removed in his democratic selection process.

There was a great deal of correspondence between the hon. Gentleman and Councillor Sansum, ending with a letter dated 8 July 1993 and signed by the hon. Gentleman. I have a copy of it and I should like to remind the hon. Gentleman of its contents. He wrote:

"I am far too busy on constituency matters to worry about the press being 100 per cent. correct."

That is his view on accuracy and the way in which he is quoted.

Mr. McMaster: The admission of the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) that he is too busy to worry about

[Mr. McMaster]

whether the press is 100 per cent. correct is similar to the comment that I believe he made to a female photographer of the *Daily Star* at about the same time.

Mr. Vaz: That may be so, but I do not know whether it has anything to do with local government. I am, however, grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing that out.

The hon. Member for Dover is not so keen to intervene when his constituents face ruin and hardship because of the closure of mines. Labour follows the law, which is why my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition has twice written to the Secretary of State for Scotland stating that, if there is any evidence of impropriety, an investigation must be instigated. That has not happened. Allegations should be made through the channels of evidence and proof, not in behind-the-hand whispers.

I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber earlier today when the Prime Minister said:

"If the hon. Gentleman has any firm charges to make, perhaps he should make them other than by innuendo and under privilege of the House."

They are not my words, but those of the Prime Minister. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Dover has the guts to go outside and make the allegations that he has made tonight.

Over the past year, the Labour party has continued to grow at local level. We are now the largest single party in local government with 9,129 councillors compared to the Conservatives' 7,846 and the Liberal Democrats' 4,088. To the lists of councils that we control we now add Derby city council. I wish the new Labour authority there all success.

The reason for our success in local government is simple and irrefutable. It is that people have seen that Labour councils offer the best services at the most reasonable rates. Labour is proud of its achievements in local government. There is a plethora of examples of excellence in local government. For example, Labour leaders such as Teresa Stewart in Birmingham, Grahame Stringer in Manchester, Phil Homer in The Wrekin, Margaret Moran in Lewisham, Jeremy Beecham in Newcastle, Brian Flood in North Tyneside, John Ingham in Plymouth, John Taylor in Nottingham and many more continue to struggle to provide the best services possible under a Conservative regime that has made Britain the most centralised country in Europe.

The Government have set themselves the task of destroying local authorities and, with them, the democracy that has acted to restrain the corruption with which the hon. Member for Dover is so infatuated. Since 1979 the Conservatives have introduced 155 separate Acts of Parliament interfering with and undermining local government. Not one of those Acts has improved, or really attempted to improve, local democracy. Local individuals are now more remote from the decision-making process than at any time in living memory. People's taxes are no longer spent locally to improve conditions and services. Instead, they are directly controlled by Westminster, where absurd equations are used to calculate what percentage of money raised locally may be spent locally.

The Government have adopted a cynical chain of blame, which ensures that local authorities are held responsible for decisions that are made by Ministers and their henchmen. If ever it seems that Ministers are to be held responsible for their despicable decisions the truth is quickly shielded or the blame passed on more quickly than bad news. The three local government Ministers—the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), the Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) and the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), who is here tonight—adopt the "Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil" stance when the blame comes round, or use the Prime Minister's favourite phrase, "It's not a matter for me."

The Conservative party has presided over the destruction of all that British democracy had to be proud of —the destruction of open and democratic government, once seen as a tenet central to Conservative ideals. Lord Salisbury, one of the Conservative party's greatest leaders, praised and respected local government and insisted on increasing the powers of local authorities. As he said in 1885—119 years ago—at a rally in Newport:

"Large reforms in our local government are necessary and in the direction of increasing powers to local government. You must provide local government with sufficient power and add to this power by diminishing the excessive and exaggerated powers which have been heaped upon central authorities in London."

The Government are guided by self-interest and they fear open, just and democratic local government. They should return to Salisbury's ideals, and not the questionable basics to which some Ministers have been happy to return.

Yesterday, during Department of the Environment questions, we had yet another example of a Conservative Minister changing his tune to suit the situation. The hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon, in reply to a question on the council tax, went into a long and—may I say?—flawed explanation as to why it is incorrect to use average council tax rates to compare different councils. Three questions later the same Minister was merrily comparing authorities, using—yes—average council tax rates. The confusion is understandable because, no matter how the Conservatives have tried to hide it and Ministers have tried to wriggle, as the Prime Minister did earlier today, the fact remains that, in the financial year 1994-95, average council tax bills per household will be £40 lower in Labour areas than in Conservative areas and £26 lower than in Liberal Democrat areas—and this at a time when Conservative-led authorities are receiving massive funding, poured into them at the cost of the most needy.

Wandsworth council receives 11.6 per cent. of the non-needs-related grant for the whole of Britain, even though its population constitutes only 0.5 per cent. of England's. If, however, the Conservatives wish to talk about tax, should not we scrutinise their record nationally? Before the last election the Conservatives, in their do-anything, say-anything panic to win power, promised that there would be no new taxes and that they would cut taxes year on year.

Mr. McMaster: I realise that I am asking my hon. Friend a question that it may be difficult for him to answer, but can he imagine why the hon. Member for Dover is the only Member to record in the Register of Members' Interests the fact that his companies are "dormant"? Is there any tax advantage in doing that?

Mr. Vaz: I do not know, but I am sure that we shall be down at Companies house tomorrow checking the records, as the hon. Member for Dover spends more time there than he appears to spend in the Chamber—or in Dover.

The Government's promises were made not on a wet night in Dudley, but at every press conference and public

meeting that the Conservatives held before the general election. Now, less than two years later, we are faced with tax increases and new taxes. Most people—those earning less than £60,000 a year—are now paying more than they were when Denis Healey was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and promised to tax the rich until the pips squeaked. Under the Conservative Government, not only have the pips squeaked, but the juice has run dry.

The revenue has been wilfully squandered on toadying up to Conservative supporters and attempting to cover up the economic bankruptcy and failure of Conservative dogma. Under Conservative party rule not only have people had to endure spiralling tax, uncontrollable unemployment rates, mounting crime, decaying infrastructure and a breakdown in social standards, but the means of correcting those unacceptable changes have been placed beyond the reach of the people most affected.

The growth in influence of that much-loved Tory master, the quango, has reached the stage where quangos' budgets rival those of local authorities. If they continue to increase in influence, it is calculated that by 1996 quangos will control £54 billion of public money—almost a quarter of all Government expenditure.

The most worrying aspect of that development is that quangos can spend their money as they please, with no checks whatever, whereas the way in which local authorities run by democratically elected councillors allocate their budgets is under the direct control of the Conservative party—most notably through the draconian capping legislation so adored in Marsham street. Quite rightly, if a councillor is found to have committed fraud or wasted council money, he or she will be surcharged, or will be subject to criminal proceedings. Yet when questions are asked, members of quango boards are carefully and gracefully allowed to retire from their positions with a golden handshake and a gong.

Quangos are not only undemocratic and unprincipled but inefficient. For every £60 lost by central Government and quangos in fraud, mismanagement and waste, only £1 is lost by local government. The Property Services Agency lost £65.6 million, and Wessex health authority wasted £20 million on a computer that did not work. West Midlands health authority squandered £10 million on botched privatisation; the chairman resigned and was given a golden handshake.

If those standards were repeated in local authorities, there would rightly be public outcry, and the events would have to be fully investigated. The hon. Member for Dover would no doubt have booked his air ticket or rail ticket just to have a look at the area, like a grand inquisitor. But with the quangos everything is done to conceal the true situation of the Tory placemen and placewomen.

Mr. McMaster: One of the other allowances that Members of Parliament are fortunate enough to obtain—it is absolutely legitimate—is an office costs allowance. We all try to spend that to our satisfaction. At one time the hon. Member for Dover derived great satisfaction from his office costs allowance.

Mr. Vaz: I am grateful for that information from my hon. Friend.

Probably because the successes are Labour run, the hon. Member for Dover is insistent that we concentrate not on the successes of local councils in continuing to provide efficient services to local people, but on alleged impropriety.

There are a few home truths that the Conservative party has tried to keep hidden from scrutiny. The hon. Gentleman mentioned Conservative Brent. Brent has the worst record on arrears. It is also difficult to know who is in control of Brent on any given day. Councillor Blackman's Tory group, if one may call it a group, splits amoeba-like every few months. Tory councillors move resolutions on a range of bizarre subjects, including female circumcision. What a shambles. Nationally the Government have failed to collect £1.7 billion of tax owed for 1992-93. The eight highest council rent chargers in London are Conservative, with the local authority of the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction having the worst record. Westminster and Wandsworth combined owe £552 million. The three London boroughs with the largest debt per head are all Conservative.

In contrast, Labour councils not only have lower council taxes but have won national awards for efficiency and quality of service at a greater rate than those controlled by any other party. That is the true result of Labour control. Which councils did the Secretary of State choose to launch City Pride? Manchester and Birmingham, two excellent Labour councils. It must also be realised that where Labour authorities have got themselves into financial difficulties it is because they have tried to provide for local people and invest in their future, not cynically squander resources in attempts to influence the political balance of a borough.

Local government needs to be supported, not ridiculed. There is a new breed of civic entrepreneur who, if given the opportunity, can lead the country forward bravely into the next millennium. Such people have to be free to do so, free from the shackles of central Government and openly responsible and accountable to their electorate. I have seen for myself the abundant talent in local government during the progress of the City 2020 inquiry, of which I am chair, as it has travelled the length and breadth of the country. Unless we return to a time when local government provided a tool of municipal pride, we will continue to see our cities and society dragged down through the mire of corruption and dirty dealing.

This is not a private vision held by the Labour party. It is echoed by the private sector over and over again, most recently by the director general of the Confederation of British Industry, when he demanded on Monday that central Government allow councils greater flexibility over their own functions, particularly through greater control of their own money.

Local government, through democratic and accountable control, is the most efficient means of providing services for local people. Local councils need to be freed from central Government intervention so that once again people receive what they want and need most efficiently instead of suffering the present system which provides only for Conservative supporters on the boards of various unrepresentative bodies.

As the hon. Member for Dover mentioned the debt of Labour councils, I shall end by pointing out to him and to the House that the Government have borrowed twice as much in a single financial year as the net total that Labour councils have borrowed over 60 years. The Government's public sector borrowing requirement for this year alone is £49.8 billion. The total external debt of all Labour local councils, built up over decades, is £22.7 billion. The

[Mr. Vaz]

Government's borrowing for 1993-94 is more than communist China's over 50 years—China's external debt at the end of 1992 was £45.8 billion. Westminster and Wandsworth each have a bigger debt than Mongolia. Conservative Croydon has a bigger debt than the Seychelles.

Those are debts that are currently owed. We need no lectures on debt from the Conservative party, and we expect to receive none. It is time the Government understood that local government needs to be able to carry out its functions in the best way it can. It is time that a real civic vision was realised.

3.43 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I am responsible for local government in England, and it is perhaps not surprising that at this time of the night the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) had to have recourse to that sort of knockabout speech. Local government is, of course, very important. I would certainly be prepared to make a prediction here and now at the Dispatch Box that after the local government elections in May there will be more Conservative councillors in England and fewer Labour councillors. The hon. Gentleman knows that people in the Labour party are worried that it will lose control of councils such as Birmingham, Kirklees and others. One of the reasons why it will lose is that people know that Conservative councils cost less.

Let me try to help the hon. Member for Leicester, East with his problem on averages. It is simple. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) wishes to pretend that the way to assess council tax payments fairly is by an average council tax. But, of course, no one pays an average council tax. People pay a particular band. If one compares band A with band A and band B with band B, Conservative councils cost less.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: No, let me explain this to the hon. Gentleman. If one takes the average of Conservative councils at band A and the average of Labour councils at band A across the country, Conservative councils cost £99 less than Labour councils at band A. If one takes each and every separate band, Conservative councils cost less. People understand and appreciate that. They can see it in their own council tax bill. They can compare it with neighbouring authorities. They are not stupid. They appreciate that to take an average of the totality of the housing stock of an area is to produce a statistically meaningless figure. The hon. Gentleman knows that, too.

Mr. Vaz: Is the Minister saying that the Conservative party and the Government have never compared the average figures?

Mr. Baldry: I have just explained to the hon. Gentleman that the only average is the average of all the Conservative band A council taxes compared with the average of all Labour band A council taxes. Whatever band one chooses to take, band for band—

Mr. McMaster: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman has been up and down like a yo-yo all evening. He has ants in his pants.

Of the 10 highest council taxes announced, seven are from Labour authorities and none has been set by a Conservative council. Of the 10 lowest council taxes announced, none has been set by a Labour council. Let us take the highest 10 councils taxes at band C, although one could take any band. The highest is Liverpool, where two different factions of the Labour party are busily disputing who should run Liverpool.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East thought that the Labour party might gain seats in Manchester. I should be surprised at that, as Manchester Labour group has set the second highest council tax in the country at £691 for band C. Newcastle upon Tyne, Coventry, Langbaurgh, Salford, Bristol, Cleethorpes, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool, all Labour controlled, are in the top 10.

When one looks at the lowest 10 council taxes, one sees not one Labour name among them.

Mr. McMaster: Does the Minister accept that we need no lessons in arithmetic from him? Did he not come to a European Standing Committee yesterday morning which eight Conservatives and seven Opposition Members had the right to attend and yet he managed to lose? Is that some sort of record?

Mr. Baldry: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman can add up to 15. If that is the best that the Labour party can do, even at 3.48 in the morning, it may well explain why I am perfectly content to rest with my prediction that after the local government elections there will be more Conservative councillors in England and fewer Labour councillors.

Mr. Connarty: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: No, I will not give way again as I have very little time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dover raised some sensible issues about local authority debt. Again, there is no way in which the Opposition can disguise the fact that Birmingham—the largest local authority in the country—has a debt higher than that of Albania. It took 40 years of communist rule to achieve that debt in Albania—*[Interruption.]*—but it has taken only 10 years of Conservative control in Birmingham.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) that repeated seated interventions are not helpful, particularly when they make it difficult for the Chair to hear the remarks of the hon. Member who has the Floor.

Mr. Vaz *rose—*

Mr. Baldry: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman as I have given way before.

What the people of Birmingham understand, and why I am perfectly confident that Labour will lose control of Birmingham in May, is that the amount that Birmingham city council collects by way of council tax is sufficient to pay only the interest on the council's outstanding debt. The amount that council taxpayers pay in Birmingham merely pays the interest on the outstanding debt of that local authority. People in Birmingham understand and appreciate that, and that fact will be reflected in the May elections. I have absolutely no doubt that we shall win seats and take control in Birmingham in May.

Much of the debate has been about local authority corruption, which must be a matter for the auditors of the local authority involved. That is why in England we have a system involving the district auditor, the Audit Commission and the local government ombudsman. Local authorities are independent corporate organisations with powers and duties set out in statute—

In accordance with Mr. Speaker's Ruling—[Official Report, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19]—*the debate was concluded.*

World Bank

3.51 am

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of the World bank, even in the middle of the night. I hope that the debate will be about how the World bank and its operations can be improved. I hope that we will consider how improved accountability to this Parliament and to Parliaments and peoples in other northern countries can play a role in improving the World bank's effectiveness.

I want to outline why the role of the World bank in the world today is so important, much more important than the time spent discussing it in the House would suggest. I want to show why the United Kingdom is important to the operation of the World bank and why what that bank does is of direct importance to the UK, in terms of its development policy, our foreign policy and our international economic policy. I shall argue that the secrecy, and the lack of openness and scrutiny that characterise the UK's involvement in the World bank, must be challenged.

I am not speaking against the existence of the World bank, but we must recognise that the background to the debate is one of growing demands and criticisms from popular organisations in the south and many of their allies in the north about the bank's role. Increasingly, popular and representative organisations in the south say that they have suffered too much at the hands of that institution, from failed projects that have harmed them, not helped the poorest and left them with unpayable debts. They have suffered too much from structural adjustment programmes that have failed to deliver what was promised and, in many cases, left the poorest people worse off than they were before. They have suffered too much from the bank's promotion of micro and macro-economic policies which do not take into account the problems of poor people in poor countries.

It is not surprising that, around the world, increasing numbers of people are arguing that we would all be better off without the World bank. That is not the best starting point for the debate. The world needs a mechanism for transferring capital from richer countries to poorer ones. There is a need beyond bilateral assistance for a multilateral organisation that is able to raise, organise and co-ordinate the transfer of funds from the north to the south, whether in the form of aid loans, highly concessional loans through the International Development Association of the World bank or in the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, through raising funds from money markets at low margins that would not be available from developing countries. That function needs to be carried out in the global economy. There is also a case for an agency that can pool and bring together the best knowledge of the best development practice and propagate that knowledge. In other words, if no institution similar to the World bank existed, many people, including many of its fiercest critics, would be calling for something like it to be established. The problem is not the idea of the World bank but the way in which it fulfils its role, and its freedom from adequate scrutiny and adequate accountability for its activities. The question is not whether we need the bank but how it can be changed.

I hope to outline some of the major concerns about the activities and the role of the World bank, but I would say

[Mr. John Denham]

at this point that it is central to my belief that the bank cannot be successful in its role unless it is an open, transparent, intellectually honest and accountable institution. Today, although some improvements have been made, it still lacks those characteristics. Above all, the bank should be open, transparent, honest and accountable to the people, the civil organisations and the Governments of borrowing countries.

Although much of what I shall say will be about the accountability of the World bank to this Parliament in a northern country, the major impact of the World bank's activities is in the developing countries, which are borrowing countries, and a much bigger—indeed, more important in many ways—debate would be about the way in which the bank's operations in developing countries should be held genuinely accountable to the peoples and Governments of those countries. I want to put that point on the record.

I believe, however, that a significant part in changing the bank can be achieved by improving its accountability to northern Governments, which in effect control the voting power of the bank. Although the bank has more than 100 member countries, a relatively small number of northern countries hold the vast majority of the shares in the World bank and, therefore, the vast majority of the voting power. I believe that improving accountability of the bank to its member Governments, and of those Governments to their Parliaments, could play an important role in improving the effectiveness of the bank and its operation.

The United Kingdom has an especially significant role in the World bank. It is the fifth largest shareholder in the World bank group and, as such, is one of only five countries entitled to appoint its own executive director of the bank representing that country alone, rather than, as is the normal practice for the vast majority of member Governments of the World bank, having an executive director who is required to represent a large and sometimes bizarre coalition of member Governments. So this country is still one of the most significant players in the World bank group. The scrutiny of the role played by the United Kingdom in the World bank group is therefore of special importance.

Our role is also important financially and should be of concern to taxpayers in this country. Christian Aid calculates that about 10 per cent. of aid spending in this country goes to the World bank group. Contributions to the International Development Association, the soft loan arm of the World bank, totalled £1.6 billion between 1982 and 1991. Since then, a further increase in payments into the IDA has been agreed by the House. That is a very substantial contribution to the IDA.

Over a similar 10-year period, another £120 million was paid by this country into the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the main market-lending window of the World bank. The total capital committed by this country to the IBRD is $3.67 billion, of which more than $110 million has been paid in. A further $30 million has been paid into the International Finance Corporation and we have committed about $50 million to the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency. That is a heavy financial commitment by this country to the operations of the World bank group. One striking point is that the scrutiny of the use of that money and of whether it is being used to achieve the aims and objectives set by the Overseas Development Administration is very poor.

Before touching on the main concerns about the activities of the World bank, I shall set out the outlines of my argument that the accountability of our Government's role in the World bank to this Parliament is far too weak. Both in practice and in theory, the accountability to this House of the British Government's role in the World bank is strictly limited. We do not know, for example, how the United Kingdom executive director in the World bank votes. It is true—we are always told this—that often there are no votes among executive directors, but there are votes on occasion. On only one occasion have the Government ever revealed the position taken in a vote by the UK executive director. That is utterly unjustifiable. Certainly after the event, there would appear to be no reason not to disclose the position taken by the UK executive director.

As votes are a relatively rare occurrence in the World bank, we also need to know what positions are taken by the UK executive director on individual projects, on individual structural adjustment loans or in the major debates that take place within the World bank about development strategy and about the role of the bank. We have little information in the House about the role played by the UK executive director.

It is almost impossible to find out when, if ever, the United Kingdom, takes a policy initiative within the World bank. There is rarely an announcement that the United Kingdom would like this or that change in policy within the World bank group, and there is rarely an evaluation of whether our Government have been successful in achieving such a change of policy. That is another sector in which we should have information.

There have been major reports, to which I shall refer in due course, which have highlighted failures of the management of the bank and failures of the practice of the bank—failures to appraise, evaluate and implement projects effectively. We know from the press that there are major internal debates within the bank about how to address those shortcomings. The House has no information about any initiatives taken by the executive director or the British Government to address those shortcomings.

Members of Parliament have no access to the key internal discussion documents in which the debates take place. We do not have those documents, even though they are freely available to any citizen of other Governments within the World bank who have executive directors. The ludicrous position in which I have found myself several times in the past year is that I have been unable to obtain a document by tabling a question for the Minister, yet I have been able to obtain the same document by ringing up a two-man non-governmental organisation based in Washington which will send it to me by return post. There can be no justification for obstructing Members of Parliament trying to follow an interest.

Scrutiny of our financial contributions to the World bank is highly limited, despite the fact that nearly £2 billion has been paid out of our aid budget to the World bank group in recent years. The National Audit Office has hardly looked at the effectiveness of the money that we contribute to the World bank group or whether it is achieving the objectives of the British aid programme.

In a letter that I received on 16 March 1993, Sir John Bourn, the Comptroller and Auditor General, referred to a number of sujects of interest to the National Audit Office, but said that any examination would be

"to the extent, of course, that our examination of Overseas Development Administration projects allows."

The mechanisms for scrutinising where our money goes and how effectively it is used are extremely limited and circumscribed to the areas of operation where the Overseas Development Administration is directly involved.

The scrutiny of the World bank group by the Select Committee system has also been extremely limited. No Select Committee has ever made a comprehensive assessment of the bank's performance or the United Kingdom's role within the World bank group. Clearly, that is fundamentally a matter for the House rather than the Government, but if the Government were open, forthcoming and encouraging in promoting scrutiny of the World bank, the Select Committees would have taken a greater interest.

Weaknesses in the structural relationship between the Government and administration here and the United Kingdom's executive director's office in Washington also hamper scrutiny. Replying to a written question asking what plans he had to improve the World bank's accountability to national Parliaments, the Minister said:

"The World bank and the IMF are accountable to their shareholders, including the United Kingdom. The Government are accountable to Parliament for payments made to these institutions. These arrangements work and we therefore have no current plans to change them."—[*Official Report*, 17 January 1994; Vol. 235, c. *384*.]

I question whether the arrangements do work and whether the line of accountability is as clear and straightforward as suggested.

There is a difficulty about the position of the executive director. It is not created by the Government exclusively but arises from the constitutional position of the bank's executive directors. As a letter from the noble Baroness Chalker to me last year pointed out:

"Executive directors . . . perform a dual function: as an official of the Bank, and as a representative of the countries which appointed or elected them. Directors are expected to act in the best interests of the Bank and its members as a whole, while reflecting the views of the country they represent."

As one of the British non-governmental organisations said, that dual responsibility—partly a member of the bank's staff and partly a Government representative—does not make for clear lines of responsibility and decision making. On many occasions in recent years, it has been unclear whether the UK executive director has felt that he is primarily a staff member of the World bank with loyalty to the staff and operations of the bank or a representative of the Government within the bank.

The mechanisms of accountability are very poor. Christian Aid has sent me a briefing on this subject. It says:

"In practice in decisions on funding for the World Bank and the resulting financial subscriptions to the United Kingdom the line of accountability set out by the Minister does not work. The United Kingdom is represented at such discussions by the executive director, who makes his decisions without recourse to the UK Government. On such occasions there needs to be clarification of the executive director's accountability to Parliament and exactly whose interests he represents—the Government's or the Bank's. In addition, the absence of any provision by the Government for meaningful parliamentary debate on the United Kingdom's contribution to the World bank and for regular reviews of the work of such institutions ensure that Parliament is unable to hold the Government truly accountable for any funding decisions taken."

There are also weaknesses in the evaluation of the work of the bank. Only two types of World bank decision are ver investigated in detail by the United Kingdom Government, through the Overseas Development Administration. These are, routinely, when the ODA is itself to be directly involved in the evaluation of co-financed projects and of structural adjustment loans. There are also occasions, not routinely made public, when the UK executive director seeks guidance from the ODA on a project or loan. However, with the vast majority of loans approved by the bank, the executive director relies entirely on the assessments of the bank staff. We should seriously question whether that reliance is satisfactory, given the bank staff's poor record over the years in the appraisal, implementation and evaluation of World bank projects and structural adjustment loans.

About the only small insight into this problem that we have comes from the National Audit Office study—about the only one of its kind ever done, as far as I could establish in correspondence with the NAO. The study, published in 1992, was on overseas aid in respect of water and the environment. It states that on four of the six occasions when the ODA relied on World bank appraisals, they were less satisfactory than appraisals that the ODA would have done for its own projects. That suggests that we should seriously question claims that although the World bank staff have got it wrong in the past, they are getting it right now.

The NAO gives but scant attention to the effectiveness of the use of UK resources in the World bank group. The Public Accounts Committee is therefore rarely invited to consider the effectiveness of the use of aid money by the group. I hope that the Minister will commit himself to publishing ODA evaluations of co-financed World bank projects and to publishing any other appraisals that the ODA is, from time to time, asked to make of World bank projects by the United Kingdom executive director.

There are also weaknesses in the implementation of World bank projects, and in the extent to which the Government monitor whether the bank is effectively pursuing the policies that it has set itself. In recent years, the bank has given much greater rhetorical emphasis to involving NGOs in developing countries in discussion of its projects and adjustment loans. It became clear to me through parliamentary answers over the past year that the Government make no independent evaluation of whether the World bank is effectively involving non-governmental organisations in the south. They do not know which non-governmental organisations are involved in any particular project or whether the involvement of those non-governmental organisations has been effective.

The Government make great play of the esteem in which they hold non-governmental organisations and the value that they place on them, but when it comes to whether the World bank is carrying out its stated policies of involving non-governmental organisations, the Government's position appears to be one of disinterest.

Having dealt with the agenda and the problems of accountability, I shall now outline some of the major concerns about the past and present performance of the bank. Where I can, I shall highlight problems with the current system of accountability which I believe prevent hon. Members and our constituents from influencing both the United Kingdom's role in the institution and the bank itself.

[Mr. John Denham]

The first concern is obviously the widespread failure of the bank to achieve its self-proclaimed over-arching priority of eliminating poverty. The bank has two main types of lending: lending for projects and structural adjustment lending.

The overall investment record of the bank is important, not just because it is a bank, but because, under the World bank system, the cost of failure of projects falls exclusively on recipient countries in the form of the destruction of lives, livelihoods and the environment that so often follows failed projects, and also in the form of a debt burden, on which payments have to be made although the borrowing country has no useful asset to generate funds.

In normal commercial banking, the lender shares the risk with the borrower. In practice, the World bank designs programmes and projects that fail, without its staff or its shareholders being accountable for their role in that failure.

The Wapenhans report, published last year on the effective implementation of World bank projects, revealed an alarming and rising rate of project and loan failures rising from 15 per cent. in 1981 to 37.5 per cent. in 1991. The record of the World bank was worsening throughout that critical decade, often referred to as the lost decade of development. Now that we are in the 1990s, we are into the lost two decades of development. The bank is now considering its response to the Wapenhans report, but we have no idea what stance the United Kingdom will take. There is never a statement or any idea of what the Government's priorities are.

It could be argued that the Wapenhans report probably took a too narrowly economic view of loan performance. The valuation of a loan should also embrace the social, environmental and anti-poverty criteria, but I do not know whether that view is shared by the United Kingdom Government. I do not know what submissions they have made to the crucial debate about the appraisal of projects by the World bank and how it judges returns on investment. It is all shrouded in mystery.

If we examine the performance of structural adjustment loans, a similar dismal picture emerges. The bank has just published a report entitled, "Adjustment in Africa: Reforms, Results and the Road Ahead". It has been described by Oxfam as

"a blend of half-truths over simplifications and institutional propaganda . . . what was needed was an open acknowledgement of the scale of Africa's development failure—including the failure of adjustment policies to generate sustainable growth and poverty reduction."

That is in tune with what other NGOs have stated.

In a report on Zimbabwe, produced last year, Christian Aid said:

"Zimbabwe has only recently started to implement a World Bank package, but already the evidence is clear. The immediate costs are devastating and unacceptable. Moreover, as in so many other African states, there is very little evidence of the economic recovery promised under the programme. The hope and determination of the post-independence years are rapidly turning to confusion and despair".

Christian Aid highlighted the fact that one of the great triumphs of Zimbabwe after an investment—a 30 per cent. increase in the rate of investment in education—had been reversed under the structural adjustment programme. For all the rhetoric of the World bank—that it wished to concentrate resources on the important sectors of the economy and that primary education is the motive for development in economic growth—the reality in Zimbabwe was that the structural adjustment programme led to a slashing of education spending on the young people of that country.

Oxfam highlighted glaring failures in the World bank report. It highlighted the fact that Ghana, the star performer for the World bank, is many decades away from seeing its people come out of poverty, and after quite an exceptional level of external assistance. Other countries, such as the Gambia, which have been highlighted as a success, have had their success generated by a boom in the tourist industry, which has generated few economic linkages into the rest of the economy.

Earlier this week, *The Guardian* pointed out that Mozambique has improved its apparent economic growth per head—the most of 26 African countries in the survey from the World bank—but the poverty there has increased for the majority on a massive scale. It said:

"The rich who have got rich enough to pull the average income up are a tiny and deeply resented class."

Another star performer, Sierra Leone, was described recently by Robert Kaplan, who generalised the situation in many west African countries. He spoke of

"The withering away of central governments, the rise of tribal and regional domains, the unchecked spread of disease, and the growing pervasiveness of war."

In other words, the World bank has produced a travesty of an assessment of the real situation. What perhaps is most relevant to the debate is the way in which the bank seeks in public to hide the sharp differences of opinion within the organisation and to sanitise every report before it is published.

One of the documents that the Minister, in response to parliamentary questions, refused to give me earlier this year was the report of the operation and evaluations department of the World bank, entitled "Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa". It had a very different tone about the success of World bank adjustment policies. It said:

"The results of this effort . . . in Africa, have been decidedly mixed."

Under macro-economic policies, investment fell in all but four countries out of the 36 that had adjustment policies "and less than half experienced higher real GDP growth."

Reform of public enterprise has been slow.

On the social impact of adjustment, the area where the World bank says that it has made most changes, the report concluded:

"In five of the eight countries for which data were available, the social expenditure to GDP ratio fell with the onset of structural adjustment. In only one of these did social expenditure increase in the medium term."

There are very different views within the bank. I am sure that we will hear something later of the new moves by the World bank towards information and openness. I have to say that I am not encouraged, because instead of that report, what I got from the Minister was the official summary of it, produced by the World bank. None of the quotes that I have just given appear in the official, sanitised summary produced by the World bank. The tone of the summary is entirely different. There is a debate in the World bank about where adjustment goes from here. We do not know what position the Government are taking in the debate.

I could get the document, not from the Minister, who said that it was confidential, but from an American non-governmental organisation, which obtained it, as any US citizen could, under the US Freedom of Information Act. That is nonsense.

Let us turn to World bank projects. One area of concern has been the impact of major dams on the environment and the displacement of indigenous people. According to "The Ecologist", again using unpublished bank information, £1 in £7 of World bank expenditure is devoted to projects that displace people. It estimates that, in the next year alone, some 600,000 people—approximately the population of Guyana—will be resettled as a result of World bank projects, yet the bank's own assessments show that it cannot point to a single project where forcibly resettled communities have been fully rehabilitated in accordance with its own resettlement policies. In other words, those projects are creating poverty, not alleviating it.

The aim of our aid programme is to help the poorest people in the countries, yet we have no proper accountability to show whether that is happening. All the evidence is that it is not.

Those brief examples highlight some fundamental problems of the accountability to Parliament of the UK's role in the bank. There is grossly inadequate financial scrutiny of the effectiveness and adherence to the stated aims of the aid programme; Parliament and its Members are denied information about the activities of the United Kingdom executive director, about projects and other loans, about policy debates and about management initiatives. As a result, Parliament is excluded from such debates.

Many other Government activities are not subject to effective scrutiny, so what is it about the World bank that makes it a topic of particular concern? The answer is that the bank is central to our relationship with the developing world. It dominates our bilateral aid programme. It must be appreciated that, when a country is under the tutelage of one of the bank's structural adjustment programmes, often in conjunction with an IMF programme, the programme and priorities of the bank determine the entire social, economic and often political context of development.

The bank is in the business not just of funding projects but of changing the style of government, determining the role of the state and the private sector, governing the external economic relations of the country and determining its macro-economic programmes. It is an enormously influential institution. Indeed, I think that it has a dominating influence on our own aid programme.

According to a parliamentary reply that I was given in July, 57 per cent. of the UK's bilateral aid programme goes to countries implementing IMF and World bank-supported adjustment programmes. If we add to that a fair estimate of the UK's contribution that goes to the same countries through the European Community, the figure rises to around 80 per cent. In other words, where this country is funding development programmes, the likelihood of their success or failure will be determined by the success or failure of the World bank's influence on the countries concerned.

In theory, adjustment programmes are the property of the sovereign borrowing Government; in practice, as the bank now openly admits, many Governments feel little or no sense of ownership of those programmes, which is why so many fail. The bank is a transmission belt for the priorities of northern Governments.

There is no serious intellectual argument against adjustment per se: any Government must adjust to changing external economic circumstances, just as this country must adjust to, for instance, a single market or the liberalisation of financial markets. The bank's role in all this, however, is to require each developing country to respond to external pressures determined by northern priorities—determined by our reluctance to finance adequate debt relief on a debt that, certainly in sub-Saharan Africa, is increasingly owed to the bank itself and other international financial institutions.

The bank requires individual developing countries to respond to our reluctance to provide sufficient external finance for development. It requires individual countries to respond and to adjust to the reluctance of the north to tackle seriously the problem of export dumping by northern agriculture, while requiring the dismantling of developing-country tariff barriers. It requires those countries to respond to our failure to address in any serious way the fall in the earning power of commodity-dependent countries.

The bank is also now part of the north's agenda for good governance. This is, admittedly, a difficult issue, because the promotion of human rights, democracy and good government involves legitimate issues of foreign policy. The use of external economic pressure to achieve those aims is a tricky and unpredictable mechanism, particularly when that pressure is used without the consent or participation of the people of the ocuntry concerned. In many cases, far from promoting better government, the bank has reduced the local capacity to govern independently at all.

The bank influences regional policies around the developing world. By transmitting the north's preference for seeing developing countries compete individually in world markets, in sharp contrast to the way in which the north itself is forming regional blocs, the bank acts as an obstacle to regional co-operation and economic integration.

All those factors mean that the bank is now far more than simply a development institution. It is a major tool of northern economic and foreign policy around the rest of the world. It is for those reasons, as well as its narrower development success, that the accountability of the United Kingdom Government's role in the World bank should be given much greater prominence within the House and the Government should encourage the House to take that interest.

Having said all that, my list of proposals is modest. It is an agenda to which I hope that the Government could reasonably respond. I do not think that there is anything that I am putting forward that is not the practice in at least one of the other northern countries that are major shareholders of the World bank. These points would be a major improvement in the level of accountability of the operation of the bank.

I hope that the Minister will consider some further points. Could we have an annual report on the United Kingdom's role within the World bank and the other international financial institutions which would show, at least after the event, the voting record of our executive director on major issues and the instructions given to our executive director by the United Kingdom Government? It would record the policy initiatives taken by the United Kingdom executive director and the positions that he takes in response to policy initiatives from others.

Could we have a report that would establish the strategic aims of the United Kingdom within the World bank, to be achieved over time, and an evaluation of our success in so doing? Could we see an improvement in the scrutiny of our role in the World bank by the Overseas Development Administration and greater openness about

[Mr. John Denham]

the projects that it examines and—this is more a matter for the House—an improvement in the scrutiny by the National Audit Office?

It would be helpful to see encouragement from the Government for the establishment of a system of regular scrutiny of our role in the World bank by the Select Committees. It would be helpful to have parliamentary statements and debates around key events, but particularly around the annual and semi-annual meetings of the bank.

Could we also have the release of technical documents, project documents and policy documents? As I have said, they can be obtained, but not through our Government. They illustrate the likely impact of major projects, the debates around structural adjustment loans and the debates about the bank's wider policies. The release of those documents would make informed debate about the bank a less furtive and more open process than it is today.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have this debate. I hope that I have put the importance of the World bank on the record. I believe that the proposals that I have put to the Minister are modest, but they would make an important contribution towards making the World bank a more effective institution.

4.32 am

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) has done a great service to the House and to development in what I thought was an extremely comprehensive, well-informed and welcome speech. It was worthy of an hour other than this one. I am sure that it will be, rightly, widely read and studied.

In his excellent speech, my hon. Friend referred to non-governmental organisations such as Christian Aid. I know of its interest in our debate and in these matters and of its view on the accountability of the World bank in particular and other financial institutions, and about the fact that British taxpayers are entitled to know that debate takes place in this House on these important matters.

My hon. Friend almost made the relatively short speech that I am about to make somewhat redundant, because his speech was so beautifully well informed. He referred, for example, to the World bank's recent report, "Adjustment in Africa, Reforms, Results and the Road Ahead." It is interesting that on page 8 we have a public confession, which I welcome and which I hope that the Minister's views will reflect. It says:

"Policies are not good—yet".

On something as important as that, we should be striving to get the policies right. Perhaps the best way to do that is to involve ourselves in the sort of accountability to which the main thrust of my hon. Friend's speech addressed itself.

A Foreign and Commonwealth Office report was published last week, the cover of which refers to the

"Foreign and Commonwealth Office including Overseas Development Administration."

I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that that shows how the ODA has been demoted in the Government's thinking to less than an arm of the Foreign Office. We certainly want to reassert the role that the noble Baroness Barbara Castle described at a meeting in the House a few weeks ago and which is crucial to genuine development.

The document will be well known to the Minister. It says that one of the main reasons for British aid is

"to help poorer countries and their peoples improve their standard of living."

In the absence of the accountability that my hon. Friend rightly demands, those people are entitled to ask how far we have gone in achieving that objective. On page 9 of its report, the World bank says:

"Nor is there much evidence that public spending within those sectors—health and education—is being relocated away from costly tertiary programmes and towards the basic services likely to reach the poor."

That was a refreshing, if unwelcome, comment. Even the bank admits that its funds essentially are not, as the objective suggests, reaching the poorest countries. I am sure that the Minister will share not only that objective but our disappointment.

Any discussion of the role of the World bank, the International Monetary Fund and accountability raises fundamental questions. I understand that 10 per cent. of aid spending goes to the World bank. In 1992-93, nearly 15 per cent. went to the World bank and the IMF. There should, therefore, be some transparency to our bilateral aid and our multilateral contribution, which might be obvious in other Departments but is not evident here.

I shall not extend the debate to Malaysia, which I am sure will come as a relief to the Minister.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I am not worried.

Mr. Clarke: The Minister should wait for the various reports to be published.

In the absence of accountability, there is clear evidence of projects that are environmentally undesirable or even anti-social. As my hon. Friend so rightly said, there is evidence of the displacement of indigenous populations. If our development policy is about anything, it is about recognising the needs of individual communities wherever they live and their right to have a say in the kind of community in which they live. I am sure that the Minister will not disagree with that view.

My hon. Friend and the various reports available to the House show that structural adjustment programmes, far from improving poverty, actually deepen it.

Last week, I and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) were privileged to visit Uganda, sponsored by Oxfam. Our visit was part of the all-party caucus on Africa. We saw that poverty is deepening in Uganda, but, in spite of its difficult recent history, it is seeking to respond to the demands of the World bank and the IMF. I admit that I would find it difficult to agree with some of the conditions being set, were I an elected Member of Parliament in Uganda and should such a Parliament exist. Uganda finds that the spirit of its approach is hardly being met by the World bank or the IMF.

The case for accountability has been well made. It has been said that there was a 150 per cent. increase in the failure rate of World bank projects since 1981. I do not know whether the figure is correct, but there have undoubtedly been some failures. I am not saying that all World bank projects have ended dismally, but such matters should be openly debated. Had there been an open debate on, for example, the Naramada project in India, I think my hon. Friend would agree that we should not have had to hear the well-informed comment that it was

"flawed, that resettlement and rehabilitation of all those displaced . . . is not possible under prevailing circumstances and that

environmental impacts . . . have not been properly considered or properly addressed".

That is a profound comment and I hope that the bank will be modest enough to accept that it is not even in the bank's interests—although it is more important to consider those of the millions of people whom it seeks to serve—that such a situation should prevail where there is not the slightest attempt to justify pluralism or a democratic input into the discussion of projects that are crucial to specific communities.

As my hon. Friend said, local people are entitled to much more information than the World bank is willing to provide. He gave a most interesting account of how he, as an elected Member of Parliament, has tried to obtain information but finds it easier to telephone Washington than to place a question in the Table Office. That cannot be right, and he is 100 per cent. right to draw it to the House's attention and suggest that there should be a better way of providing information on such important matters. Without access to information, the participation that the World bank itself says is important becomes meaningless.

However inadequately, we recently discussed the World bank and the 10th International Development Association replenishment which led to much criticism from non-governmental organisations including, I think, Christian Aid, not least because £620 million, it must be conceded, is a sizeable amount. Again, we need more open, crisp and well-informed debate, based on all the information that is available to the bank and all that is in the public domain.

My hon. Friend acknowledged that the bank is undertaking poverty assessments, but they hardly go far enough. We need to be assured that the bank will act on the information provided, will genuinely consult and take on board the views of those who, like the people we met in Uganda, are involved daily in trying to solve some very serious problems.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition made a very important speech on these matters in Geneva just a few weeks ago, showing that although my hon. Friend the Member for Itchen has been able only to obtain a debate in the middle of the night, many people share his interest in this important subject. My right hon. and learned Friend said:

"It would be sensible to establish a clear line of accountability for the World bank and the IMF."

That is certainly the undiluted position of the Labour party. Surely after 50 years there is a case for such accountability and for a review.

It is becoming clear that the House does not have enough time for debates of this kind. I do not know whether the Minister agrees, but it seems to me evident that the other place gives much more time to these matters. My hon. Friend will probably agree that in view of the huge importance of the issues, this is a matter for very considerable regret. Perhaps, as my hon. Friend suggested, the only scrutiny of the World bank, the IMF, IDA, and similar bodies is undertaken on their own initiative through, say, the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs or some Committee dealing with statutory instruments. That is hardly enough. My hon. Friend made the compelling point—I hope that the Minister will find time to address himself to the specific issue—that even the Government seem to have very little influence over the executive director and his role in all this. I realise that we have lots of debates about quangos—hon. Members on both sides of the House have views on these matters—but the role of such a person is crucial and the need for accountability well established.

As my hon. Friend said, the World bank is very reluctant to reveal documents and information. That is a matter for very considerable regret. It would certainly be churlish not to welcome the appeals commission and the new information disclosure procedure, but it hardly goes far enough in terms of the matters that hon. Members, especially those as well informed as my hon. Friend, would like to debate. The expressions "commercial confidentiality" and "politically sensitive" can be abused. Indeed, there is evidence that they are being abused. We want to see more openness. The absence of openness has led to some of the problems that we face.

I join my hon. Friend in saying that the House of Commons is entitled to know what is going on in these international banking organisation to which, as shareholders, we have a contribution to make. We are entitled to know what pressure the ODA has exerted on the World bank genuinely to help the poorest people in the poorest countries. As my hon. Friend has said, we are entitled to know how Her Majesty's Government's representative on the board votes. We are entitled to know whether the Government consider that taxpayers' money is being spent really effectively and that we are securing value for money. We are entitled to ask what efforts are being made to involve the non-governmental organisations which, as I have said, are very interested in this debate. They told me so throughout yesterday and during the week. We are entitled to know whether communities at every level have an opportunity to be involved, not just at the design stage of projects but at every stage in their development right through to implementation. Those are reasonable questions, which would inevitably arise if such affairs were given the kind of scrutiny that rightly applies to other Departments of Government, national and international.

My hon. Friend concluded by asking for an annual report to Parliament. In that request, he was absolutely right. We are entitled to know about investment, development and the environmental and social consequences of World bank and IMF decisions. If my hon. Friend's debate, and his excellent initiative in drawing such matters to the attention of the House, means that at least the Government are invited to focus on those important, democratic and compelling issues, my hon. Friend can again congratulate himself on the excellent service that he has done in connection with those crucial issues.

4.49 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I am sure that it is appropriate for me to congratulate the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) on his contribution. The subject of the debate is certainly one in which he has made himself a considerable expert. He may not appreciate the fact until I tell him, but he has in great measure been responsible for my understanding of the subject—I do not claim that it is as great as his—not because he has been my tutor, but because he has tabled many parliamentary questions that I have had to answer, and the answers have briefing attached to them that I have to try to understand.

On 8 February last year, the hon. Gentleman tabled a question, and I suggested in my answer that he initiate a

[Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd]

debate on the subject in the House. That has taken him only a year; perhaps in some measure the debate tonight is taking place because of that answer.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the World bank, so it is appropriate that we should now review its affairs. Even if the whole of our nation is not listening to the debate at this moment, I know that what the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) have said will be carefully scrutinised, and I hope that it will have some effect in the direction of which they spoke.

Before I start the main part of my speech, I must alert the hon. Member for Itchen that the main tenor of my remarks will be to pick up a theme that the hon. Member for Monklands, West emphasised. He welcomed a public confession that he had read on page 8 of a report that he had brought to the House. I shall tell the House that we should recognise that there has been an improvement in self-examination by the World bank, and a considerable improvement in the conduct of its affairs.

The World bank is the largest single source of multilateral development assistance for developing countries. In recent years, it has begun to assist countries in transition in the former Soviet Union and in central and eastern Europe. As hon. Members have pointed out, a £620 million contribution is a great deal of money. That alone is certainly a good reason why we should debate the subject tonight.

The World bank group consists of four main entities: the bank itself, the International Development Association or IDA, the International Finance Corporation or IFC and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency or MIGA. The bank is the institution which makes loans to member countries on terms related to its own cost of borrowing on international capital markets. The IDA provides the soft loans on highly concessional terms to the poorest countries, which are generally unable to service debts on the harder bank terms. The IFC promotes private sector development by investing in private sector entities in developing countries and economies in transition. The MIGA also aims to promote private sector growth by insuring foreign investors against losses that might arise from political risks.

Tonight, we are speaking principally of the development role. The World bank plays a key role in the development process. Its central objectives are poverty reduction, economic reform and sustainable development —aims which complement and are mutually supportive of the priority objectives of the British aid programme. The bank has, therefore, always received strong support from the United Kingdom.

The bank has an important leadership role in policy dialogue with developing countries and in promoting economic reform measures. It has also responded swiftly to the major challenges of assisting the countries of central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in their transition to market-based economies. In the year ended June 1993, new lending reached a record of almost $24 billion and membership rose to a total of 176 countries.

I should like to say a word or two about how the structure of decision making in the World bank is organised. It operates under the authority of a board of governors and each member country is represented by a governor. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is the governor for the United Kingdom, assisted by the alternate governor, my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development. The board of governors delegates authority on most matters to a board of executive directors which is based full time at the bank's headquarters in Washington. The board of directors is responsible for decisions on policies affecting the bank's operations and for approval of all lending proposals.

The hon. Member for Itchen has referred to the executive directors. As he said, the board consists of 22. The five members having the largest number of shares in the bank, of which the United Kingdom is one, have the right to appoint their own executive director. The rest are elected by the governors representing the other member countries. The World bank's president is chairman of the board and is responsible for the management and day-to-day operations of the bank.

I should also say something about our executive director. The United Kingdom is represented at the World bank and the International Monetary Fund by one executive director, who is a senior Treasury official appointed by the Government. He is supported by an alternate executive director for each institution and by a team of technical assistants. Something has been made by the hon. Member for Itchen of a conflict of loyalty under which this gentleman must operate—a conflict between his loyalty to the British Government and his loyalty to the institution where he works. The director and his team take instructions from, liaise closely with, and report fully to Whitehall Departments on bank policies and lending proposals. Our executive director is accountable to the Government for his actions. The Government likewise are accountable to Parliament for payments made to the bank as part of our aid programme. The hon. Member will know that my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development takes a close personal interest in the bank's activities and will certainly read and note the contributions that have been made tonight.

Mr. Denham: I thank the Minister for that statement. Does he agree that, in practice, one of the difficulties for those of us who want to follow our role in the bank is that it is very difficult to know when, in the consideration of a project or a structural adjustment loan, the executive director and the small staff—I believe that it is only six people in Washington—work independently, without reference to the United Kingdom Government, and when the executive director refers back here to Whitehall? Clearly, it happens in some cases and not in others. Whatever the constitutional position, I would argue that the role of the executive director is very different when he is simply acting with his Washington team and World bank staff and when he feels it necessary to seek guidance from here. Does the Minister agree that if we knew when the executive director was seeking the British Government's advice, and if we knew what advice the Government were giving him, it would be a helpful illumination of the process?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: When the executive director operates, he is answerable to, and under the control of, the Government, but there are occasions when he must act on his own initiative because matters are not of such moment that they must be reported to the Government. That would certainly be the case. However, the hon. Gentleman is

entitled to table questions and we will answer them. I cannot do more than that. That is the only way in which I can give him the information that he wants.

I must say something about the instructions that we give to our director and our position on the board. I shall repeat, and perhaps clarify, what I have said before. As the hon. Gentleman would expect, under the rules of procedure, board proceedings are confidential. There is no consensus within the board to change those arrangements. Therefore, that places limits on what we can say about the position of our executive director in board discussions of individual project proposals and policies. We abide by the rules that have been set. We do not impose on ourselves a greater burden than has been agreed. If others bend the rules or do not follow them as closely as we do, we do not regard that as a reason for breaking the rules but as a reason for pressing to have the rules changed. I shall make some remarks later about the Government's policy on disclosure.

The bank's board aims to operate on the basis of consensus. Formal votes are rare. Our executive director works closely with fellow directors and management to achieve this. Decisions, once reached, are collective decisions of the board. Certain matters covered in board documents or discussions are, and must be, sensitive. The important point that all hon. Members must accept—it is a matter of reasonable logic—is that a balance has to be struck between openness and the need to preserve the integrity of the bank's decision-making processes. Within those constraints, however, we have encouraged the bank to be more open and transparent about its operations. I shall outline some of the measures that the bank has taken in that regard in a moment.

The hon. Member for Itchen referred specifically to scrutiny of bank spending. There are opportunities for scrutiny. Parliament approves our contributions to the International Development Association every three years and capital subscriptions to the bank and the International Finance Corporation. The Foreign Affairs Select Committee scrutinises the Overseas Development Administration's budget annually. There are general debates on aid. A plethora of parliamentary questions are tabled by the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues. In my experience, parliamentary questions are effective tools of scrutiny available to Members of Parliament. They lead civil servants and Ministers to come together and make decisions on matters of concern to hon. Members. That is my experience as a Minister.

The hon. Member for Itchen raised the Oxfam criticisms of the report on the adjustment for Africa. Oxfam has criticised adjustment efforts in Africa, but it has not made clear what alternative approach it proposes. We are convinced that good economic policies are essential to lay the foundations for growth and poverty reduction. The operations evaluation department study on adjustment in Africa complements the recent bank report. The record is mixed, but strong adjustment pays off and the bank's latest report emphasises that there is a long way to go, even for good reformers.

The full operations evaluation department report is confidential, but we made available to the hon. Gentleman a summary of the study that the bank published. It is wrong to suspect that summaries hide essential matters on which criticism could be made. Publishing summaries is not a business of whitewashing. It is a business of keeping confidential that which has to be kept confidential.

Mr. Tom Clarke: The Minister has been uncharacteristically unfair to Oxfam. If he reads the papers that it has made available on adjustment, and the views of the House all-party caucus on Africa, which is an effective body, he will see that positive suggestions to improve accountability have been made, not least by Oxfam, and those suggestions have been endorsed by hon. Members of all political parties, including the Minister's party.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his contribution, but I must make some progress now as I have only 17 minutes left and quite a bit of ground to cover.

I want to say something about the measures that the bank has taken to be more open and transparent. Let us consider the bank's environmental performance. There has been much criticism today about the adverse impact of some of the bank's actions in that sphere. Some of those criticisms are well founded; others are misplaced.

The bank would be the first to admit that its performance on environmental issues has been mixed, but we believe that its approach has improved over time as lessons have been learnt. We are all still learning about the complex economic and social pressures and linkages that lead to environmental degradation. In many ways, the bank has been at the forefront in devising policies to take account of environmental concerns in its operations.

The bank has produced operational guidelines on environmental assessments, involuntary resettlement and protection of indigenous peoples. Those guidelines are currently being revised—not, as some critics allege, to dilute them, but to make clearer which provisions are mandatory and which elements reflect best practice. The aim is to make the operational guidelines a more effective management tool. Environmental screening of projects is routinely carried out, and environmental assessments are undertaken where necessary at an early stage in project design. The bank's guidelines require that affected groups and local non-governmental organisations be consulted.

In 1992, the bank carried out a frank and self-critical review of why the success rate of bank-funded projects had been declining over the past decade. The hon. Member for Itchen referred to the Wapenhans report. It found that among the factors explaining the deterioration in performance were the difficult economic environment faced by many borrowers in the late 1980s—oil price rises, high interest rates and the debt crisis—and the worsening domestic conditions in many developing countries. But the team noted that aspects of bank performance also played a part. There was undue emphasis on new loan commitments and inadequate attention to supervision of continuing projects. That was part of the self-examination, for which we must give the bank credit.

The hon. Member for Itchen mentioned the investigation of bank projects by the Overseas Development Administration. He is right to say that the ODA should not double guess all activities undertaken by the bank.

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose—*

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I shall give way once more, and then I must make progress.

Mr. Tom Clarke: I am grateful to the Minister, but he will appreciate that we do not often have the opportunity to have exchanges on such matters. He was generous to the World bank, both about consultations and about taking on

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

board the views expressed in them but last week, when the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale and I, together with others from Oxfam, were in Uganda we met the World bank representative. I am sorry to have to say this in his absence, and when he does not have the right of reply, but the representative clearly gave the impression—which all of us shared—that he regarded our meeting as a bit of a waste of time. What he did with his time for the rest of the day and the rest of the week, I do not know, but he hardly gave the impression that he regarded the views of the community—which has been devastated by AIDS and has a problem in protecting its water—as terribly important.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No doubt the representative will read the reports of the debate, but I cannot give way any more because in the last 12 minutes that I have left I must pursue some other matters.

It is right that the ODA should not double guess all the activities undertaken by the bank. The emphasis must be on ensuring that systems and procedures are in place. Development always entails risks, so it is obvious that not all projects will succeed, but the Wapenhans report has made definite recommendations for improving project quality.

The hon. Gentleman asked me for a specific undertaking to disclose evaluations made by the ODA. I hope that I can give him some comfort because I thought that I had already given him that undertaking last November, when I said in reply to a question:

"The ODA has produced a number of evaluations which we have co-financed with the bank. Details of how reports or summaries can be obtained are set out in the ODA's catalogue of evaluation studies, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House."—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. *310*.]

The answer to his question is yes, and I had already given him the undertaking that he sought. Now I must proceed.

After extensive discussions, the bank's board endorsed an action plan on the Wapenhans report last July to strengthen management of the bank's portfolio. That places greater emphasis on supervision and evaluation of loans, better project design, and changes in the bank staff's skills mix and incentives structure. We considered the action plan a comprehensive response to the report's finding—a positive reaction. We were impressed by the determination with which bank management followed up those issues. We also welcomed the fact that the bank publicised the findings of the task force as well as the measures being taken in response to its recommendations. We shall monitor the follow-up and implementation of that action plan closely.

We also welcome the further measures that the board adopted last year to make the bank's operations more open and transparent. In August, the bank's board of directors approved measures substantially to increase the amount of information publicly available about the bank's operations. The main features are a new project information document to provide factual information about all projects in the pipeline, the release of project appraisal reports after the board's approval of projects, the routine release of country economic reports and environmental assessments, and publication of sector policy papers and evaluation summaries. A public information centre has been set up at headquarters to process requests for information. The bank's London office is one of several regional offices which will distribute material and it has an on-line link to Washington for immediate access to information and to facilitate the processing of requests for information.

Those measures should help to improve understanding of the bank's role. The new policy should also encourage more dialogue and interaction between bank staff and interested outsiders, including NGOs and local groups, and thus help to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of projects that the bank finances. We certainly want that to happen and that is an undertaking which I can give.

The board has already taken steps to set up an independent inspection panel, which will examine allegations of failure to adhere to bank policies under bank-funded projects. The results of all investigations will be made public and an annual report will be published detailing investigations undertaken. We hope that the panel will prove a useful addition to the existing systems of control provided through the board of directors and by management. Those measures should greatly increase the transparency of the bank's operation.

The measures that the bank management and its shareholders have introduced in the past two years are already having an impact on the way in which the bank operates. Two examples may serve to illustrate that—the bank's review of resettlement policy and the consideration currently being given to a proposed project for the construction of a dam in Nepal. I will say something about the first—the Narmada valley project, to which the hon. Member for Monklands, West referred.

In response to criticisms in 1992, the management initiated a bank-wide review of all projects involving involuntary resettlement of population. We strongly supported the bank's decision to set up that review and we are pleased that it has invited contributions from informed NGOs and others outside the bank. We have also encouraged bank staff to share the review's findings and recommendations with the people who have contributed to the review, before the report goes to the board, which may be within the next couple of months or so. Management are considering our suggestion. In the meantime, the bank has published information outlining the purpose and scope of the review and some of its preliminary findings.

With regard to the Arun-3 dam in Nepal. The process that the bank is following in its appraisal of this project also illustrates a rather more interactive approach. The bank began appraising the project last May and has had meetings with local and international NGOs to hear their concerns about its potential environmental and social impact. It has undertaken to disseminate updated information to NGOs and other interested parties once the appraisal is completed so as to facilitate informed discussion of the options. We have encouraged the bank to ensure that there is a full dialogue on the issues before the project is submitted to the board for approval. I hope that that shows the hon. Members for Itchen and for Monklands, West that things are changing and improving in the World bank.

It is as well to have comments about these matters at this stage because this is the 50th anniversary of the bank and the IMF. It is an important opportunity for shareholders to step back and to reflect on its current and future role, and how it should adapt to the challenges ahead. One of the bank's great strengths is its capacity to adapt. The action that it has taken in recent years shows that it listens and that it is prepared to be responsive to constructive criticism

about its role. As a major shareholder, we will continue to support measures that will enhance the effectiveness of all its operations.

Fenchurch Street Station

5.15 am

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I begin the debate which I have initiated on the impact on the commuters of the closure of Fenchurch Street station and Limehouse station for seven weeks this summer by apologising to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the House, its servants and its officers for detaining them at this unearthly hour. I extend that apology to the Minister and to his colleague, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick), who, on a personal level, are always courteous. Nevertheless, I shall not hesitate to criticise the Government and their stewardship of our railway network as it affects east London and Essex, despite the fact that the Minister has always been courteous and helpful to me about constituency matters.

The fact that Back-Benchers have to raise important issues at ridiculous hours of the day and night reflects the imbalance of the way in which we do things in this House. Before I depart from the House, my ambition is that the balance between Government business and Back-Benchers' debates will have been altered. Government business should be held in the middle of the night and Back-Benchers' initiatives should be held during the day. I have already been in the Palace for 21 hours, working on parliamentary business. It is absurd that we hold these debate so late when the Minister, like me, has a full diary for the day ahead.

Having got that point off my chest, I state clearly that I do not question the urgent need for the resignalling works on the line that goes from Fenchurch Street to Southend, via my constituency of Thurrock and the constituency of Basildon; nor do I minimise the urgent need for Fenchurch Street station and other stations along that line to be refurbished and for the track to be renewed. Indeed, that work is long overdue, but I question whether, to complete those works, it is necessary to close Fenchurch Street and Limehouse stations for seven weeks from 22 July. Had the Government and managers of Network SouthEast been alive to the decay of the London-Tilbury-Southend and Great Eastern lines and their stations, those closures would not have been necessary. They are a direct consequence of years of neglect and indifference by the Secretary of State and his predecessors under this Administration.

My constituents will suffer enormous additional delay and inconvenience as a result of that neglect. The impact will be quite awful for the thousands of commuters who travel from East Tilbury, Tilbury, Grays and, to a lesser extent, South Ockendon stations. They would wish me to place on record their considerable irritation at the inconvenience that they face this summer. The problem is not exclusive to my constituency but will affect thousands of commuters from Essex and east London, Southend, Shoeburyness, Basildon, Pitsea, Upminster, Dagenham Dock and particularly Barking. Some 19,000 commuters a day use Barking station and there is already considerable congestion and problems for commuters interlining from that station on their way to work in London.

When Fenchurch Street and Limehouse stations close this summer, Network SouthEast intends that the bulk of commuters travelling from Essex will disembark at Barking and join the already heavily used, if not overloaded, District and Metropolitan underground lines from Barking. Commuters who normally interline with the

[Mr. Andrew Mackinlay]

docklands light railway at Limehouse station will have an additional problem to get to their place of work in the new docklands development area.

The closures will affect not only travellers to Barking but commuters living in Barking. Had my late colleague Jo Richardson still been with us, I am sure that she would have participated in this debate because of the enormous impact that the closure of Fenchurch Street station will have on the Barking and Dagenham constituents. I regret that no other hon. Members whose constituents will be affected by the closures are in the Chamber. In fairness, the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) is indisposed. He takes a keen interest in transport matters, having been a former Transport Secretary, and is also my chairman on the Transport Select Committee. I am sure that, had it been possible, he would have been here tonight. The inescapable fact remains, however, that there are Essex Conservative Members who should have been here tonight to speak up for their commuters, who will be greatly disadvantaged by the closures.

I have been a consistent and unashamed critic, not just of the Government and their transport policy, but of the managers of Network SouthEast, who do not respond as they should to the interests of commuters. They make cosmetic efforts to recognise those interests, but I am not satisfied that they properly champion consumers' interests in their dealings with the Government. Were they to fulfil the spirit of their duties as line managers they would join me in criticising the Government for their chronic underfunding of the lines, which in turn has led to the chaos of one of London's oldest mainline stations being closed for seven weeks in the summer.

The managers make some attempt to acknowledge the interests of commuters. Just this morning, they issued commuters with a glossy brochure entitled, "LTS Newsline: Customer Newsletter". The banner headline reads:

"Station to shut for seven weeks".

The second page of the document is headed:

"LTS moves towards shadow franchise".

It goes on:

"The senior management team headed by Chris Kinchin-Smith, divisional director of LTS, has already expressed its initial willingness to mount a bid for the line, providing the terms of the franchise are acceptable."

I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that during the tortuous debates on rail privatisation, in the House and in the Select Committee, we were assured both by the Minister and by the chairman of British Rail that line managers who might be contemplating putting in a bid for a franchise should keep that interest separate from their operational role. Mr. Kinchin-Smith and his colleagues, in a document paid for by commuters through their fares, are flagging up an interest in bidding for a franchise—that clearly runs contrary to the spirit of those undertakings. I hope that the Minister will accept that, and that his Department will tick off people who are mixing up their responsibilities in this way.

Another sign that the legitimate interests of commuters are being ignored is the lack of facilities for the travelling public. The document also tells commuters that no toilets will be available for their use at Barking station, the main inter-line station, which is due to accommodate a great many more travellers this summer. That is symptomatic of the decay of the line and its understaffing by Network SouthEast and it is wholly unacceptable. It is not unreasonable to say that the line and its passengers must be properly looked after. It is a very bad state of affairs if they cannot provide WCs for commuters.

I move to the central issue of the debate—the closure of the Fenchurch Street main line station. Mr. Chris Kinchin-Smith says:

"We know this work will cause severe disruption for many of our customers".

My word, he can say that again; it is the understatement of the year. He then argues that the temporary closure of Fenchurch Street station is essential.

As I have said, I have no way of testing whether it is essential or unavoidable now, but it could have been avoided had there been proper funding and planning of the refurbishment and restoration of the line in previous years. The Government and the line management failed to acknowledge that, despite the fact that I and other Labour Members have been drawing attention to the problems of the misery line for a number of years.

The management's document says that the station will be closed when many passengers take their holiday. That is very kind of them, but the fact that the work will be carried out in July or August will not greatly reduce the irritation to customers. We are not a town that has a "holiday week". Thurrock does not close down and nor does Essex. In the south-east of England, in modern times, holidays straddle the summer months. It is of no great consolation to us that the work will be conducted in the summer and it is nonsense to suggest that that is any great concession to the fare-paying customers.

In their document, the managers of network SouthEast also say:

"We are working closely with London Underground".

I am not sure that that is so. Dear old London Underground has been told there about the closure of Fenchurch Street and Limehouse station and has to live with it.

In the past 24 hours, I have corresponded with the senior public affairs executive of London Underground. She replied:

"The eastern section of the District Line is currently operating the optimum level of service possible and therefore additional trains can not be provided by the line"

— that is the District line—

"during the 7 week closure period.".

The management of London Underground are in no position significantly to abate the problems of commuters from Essex; nor can they do anything to affect the impact on the existing underground customers who will also suffer through increased congestion on already overcrowded underground trains.

I also criticise the management because their glossy and expensive document does not give much time or attention to the problems that will be faced exclusively by my constituents on the Tilbury loop line. The section headed, "Your Questions Answered", contains hardly any reference to mitigating the problems for my constituents, apart from telling us that present proposals include the Tilbury line and that all stopping services will terminate at Barking with onward travel by tube. It then gives us the good news that LTS tickets will be valid on the underground.

I have been fighting a continuing battle with Network SouthEast about its penalty fares scheme and how it relates to the closure of Fenchurch Street. I support the principle of the penalty fare scheme, but the management of

Network SouthEast on the London-Tilbury-Southend line have been unable to maintain the ticket machines so that honest fare-paying passengers can purchase a ticket and avoid the embarrassment of having to defend their position when an inspector gets on the train. It is a wholly unsatisfactory state of affairs when, night after night on the main concourse of Fenchurch Street station, it is impossible, unless one has the exact fare, to purchase a ticket for use on that line. If Fenchurch Street station is to be refurbished, I hope that the management are able to get their act together. Apparently the machines there are supposed to be self-replenishing in change, but they do not self-replenish and the management seem incapable of arranging for people to empty them and fill them up with change.

The situation gets worse. If more people have to change at Barking on to London Underground, which is also introducing a penalty fares scheme from the beginning of this financial year, it makes it even more imperative that passengers are able to purchase a ticket or permit to travel at stations in Essex. I hope that the Minister will take that on board and ensure that the management of London Underground and Network SouthEast understand that that is a reasonable expectation and demand by the commuters in view of the penalty fares policy.

I want to ask the Minister some questions. First, what compensation will commuters who are disadvantaged by the lengthy closure of Fenchurch Street station receive? They do not have a good service at the present time. Despite what the management say, the journeys are still erratic in terms of punctuality. Their problems will be compounded. I guess that the vast majority of commuters from Essex will have each day an additional three quarters of an hour travelling time, at least, to their place of work in London as a result of the closure. That is not fair when one bears in mind that commuters from Southend, if travelling only on the LTS line, pay £1,912 per annum for their season ticket. If they are travelling LTS and Great Eastern, the season ticket costs £2,056 per annum. In my constituency, commuters from Tilbury pay £1,564 per annum. At that price, bearing in mind the problems that they will experience this summer, they are entitled to a rebate. I hope that the Minister will consider that matter and make the appropriate recommendation to the management of Network SouthEast.

Secondly, is the Minister able to give me an assurance that when the work is complete following the closure of Fenchurch Street and Limehouse stations, there will be no further hiatus for commuters from Essex? I ask that because I have no confidence about the frankness of the management of Network SouthEast. For example, they did not mention the possibility of this closure until it was almost unavoidable. They must have known about it a year or two ago, but they did not tell us. I have a deep suspicion that there will be further closures of stations along the LTS line in the coming months or perhaps the next two years. If I am wrong, I would welcome that correction and reassurance from the Minister.

Thirdly, after significant sums of public money have been spent on refurbishing the LTS line and Fenchurch Street station, will the station be fully used to the advantage of the Essex commuters? Each evening, commuters wanting to get back to Essex are faced with the absurd irritation of having to look at the clock and decide whether to head for Fenchurch Street station or Liverpool Street station. About halfway through the evening, Fenchurch Street is closed and those travelling to Essex must use Liverpool Street.

Fenchurch Street is a mainline station. It services my constituents on the Tilbury loop, and many others who want to get to towns between London and Southend. I do not think it unreasonable to expect those people to be able to board a train at Fenchurch Street throughout the evening. I hope that, following the expenditure on Fenchurch street, that problem will be remedied and a proper service will be restored.

Although I have tempered my remarks, I hope that the Minister will understand why I legitimately accuse the Government of neglecting the line. They are, to a large extent, to blame for the problems that will be experienced this summer by my constituents and by people living throughout Essex and in east London. Some of the blame must lie with the management of Network SouthEast but, putting that aside, I hope that the Minister will tell us that he will have a further meeting with the management to establish whether the work can be completed without closing the station.

I feel that, although it might be inconvenient and involve some additional cost to Network SouthEast, the work could be completed in the middle of the night and over a series of weekends. It might take a good deal longer, but the disadvantage to computers would be a good deal less. I suspect that a seven-week closure of Fenchurch Street station is the easy way out for the management, rather than being truly unavoidable. I hope that the Minister will investigate that.

I also hope that the Minister will establish whether it will be possible to increase capacity on London Underground during the closure of Fenchurch Street—assuming that it goes ahead—and that he will ensure that passengers can purchase tickets from properly maintained machines, both on that line and throughout the Network SouthEast area. That is not happening now. Finally, I hope that commuters will be told about any other anticipated problems months, if not years, in advance, rather than those problems' being sprung on them with the minimum notice.

I expect the Minister to say that Network SouthEast has consulted local Members of Parliament, because that is what Network SouthEast told me today. It is true that Mr. Kinchin-Smith has invited me to meet him, and I look forward to arranging a mutually convenient date. What he has never done, however, is write to me, as a Member of Parliament, saying, "We have a problem: we are going to have to close Fenchurch Street station, which will affect your commuters." All I got was a press release, some weeks weeks ago—not even a letter. I do not protest about that discourtesy on my own behalf, but I am protesting on behalf of my constituents and other commuters from Essex. It shows the way in which the management of the line treat their customers.

I hope that we will receive some reassurance from the Minister and that, as a consequence, the enormous chaos will be avoided for commuters this summer.

5.44 am

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) was courteous in apologising for the hour of the debate. That was kind of him, but there was no need to

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

apologise. Ministers are never inconvenienced at coming to the House to answer a debate at any time. The hon. Member was courteous to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the Officers of the House for keeping them up till this early hour. I should be happy to come at any hour because it is the responsibility of the Government and Ministers to answer legitimate concerns raised by Back Benchers.

Those who listen to our debates on the radio must wonder why three or even four times a year we have an all-night debate. It is one of the rare opportunities for Back-Bench Members to debate for longer than the normal half-hour Adjournment debate issues of relevance to their constituencies. It is a good use of Parliament's time. It brings the Government properly to account and allows issues to be properly explored. I would rue the day that these proceedings were in any way curtailed or changed. They provide a valuable opportunity for Back-Bench Members such as the hon. Member for Thurrock to raise various issues.

The hon. Member referred to the late Jo Richardson. This is the first opportunity that I have had to pay my tribute to her. When I was Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces in the Ministry of Defence, I had many occasions to talk to the late Jo Richardson because she was my Minister's pair. I always had courteous and friendly relations with her. We will long remember her contribution to the House.

The hon. Member for Thurrock referred to several of my colleagues. My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) and my hon. Friends the Members for Basildon (Mr. Amess), for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) and for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) have all been consistent in raising concerns about the London-Tilbury and Southend line on behalf of their constituents. They have been very assiduous. The fact that they are not in the Chamber now is no reflection upon their zeal, which is shared by the hon. Member for Thurrock, in looking after the interests of their constituents.

As many hon. Members will know, the London, Tilbury and Southend line is one of the undoubted rail success stories of recent years. The hon. Member for Thurrock referred to its performance as erratic. I would have shared that view if he had been referring to two or three years ago. I do not believe that that is a fair description of the service now. I have travelled on the line on a number of occasions during the past four years and I have spent a great deal of time talking to commuters about the quality of service on the line.

From those visits, one thing above all is clear—the London, Tilbury and Southend line is no longer the misery line of the late 1980s. The figures show that it is now one of the best performing commuter lines in the south-east. On average, over the past 12 months, 92 per cent. of LTS peak services have arrived at their destination within five minutes of the advertised time. Given the acknowledged poor punctuality and reliability of a just a few years ago, that represents a real turnaround.

It is important to remember that no new equipment has been available to the line over that period. The improvement is the result of the efforts of LTS management and staff and shows what can be achieved when there is a shared determination to provide a better service to passengers. I pay tribute to Mr. Kinchin-Smith, his predecessors and all British Rail staff, from the most senior to the most junior, for the tremendous improvement in the quality of service brought about over the past 12 months. It is a great credit to them. They have been successful without the completion of resignalling, without the delivery of new rolling stock and with the difficulties of running a 19th century railway line.

Further improvements are on the way. I said that the LTS has had no new equipment recently, but that is now about to change. The line is undergoing a major resignalling programme costing £83 million, which involves replacing equipment installed in the 1960s. The present 16 signal boxes are being replaced by a single state-of-the-art control centre at Upminster and the power supply is being upgraded and junctions improved.

Improvements on that scale cannot be made without some inconvenience to passengers, although British Rail has shown that disruption can be minimised by careful planning and consultation with rail users. Hon. Members may know that Charing Cross and Waterloo East stations were closed for three weeks last summer to allow essential work to be carried out so that the new 12-car Networker trains could be accommodated there. During that period, trains were diverted into Cannon Street and Victoria. By the careful timing of the work during the peak holiday season, when passenger numbers are at their lowest, and by warning passengers well in advance—the closure was first advertised more than a year beforehand and frequently thereafter—British Rail ensured that inconvenience was kept to an absolute minimum. It sensibly employed the media, including advertisements in local newspapers, to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information. The result was that many of those who were affected were impressed by the sensible and professional way in which the necessary closures were handled. No doubt some who were able to do so, knowing the details of the work so far in advance, arranged their holidays to avoid the closures.

Mr. Mackinlay: I am not surprised that the Minister and Network SouthEast pray in aid the closures on the old Southern region last year, but the right hon. Gentleman is not comparing like with like. Alternatives were offered during those closures, but the position that we are debating is not comparable. There will be major inconvenience to my commuters, whereas there was some irritation for people on the old Southern region railway, some of which they could overcome with relatively minimal delay.

Mr. Freeman: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to make some progress, I will deal specifically with his point, which I understand.

I have been describing the procedures followed by British Rail in relation to closures involving Charing Cross and Waterloo East stations. They are what passengers should be able to expect when improvements on this scale are carried out. Management on the LTS intend to ensure that their passengers are equally well treated when Fenchurch Street station is closed for seven weeks. The LTS has produced a code of practice on how the resignalling project will be carried out. It has been endorsed by the Southend rail travellers association and supported by other statutory and voluntary representative bodies. It is also publishing a regular newsletter, "LTS

Newsline", from which the hon. Gentleman quoted, which is keeping passengers fully up to date on progress and service alterations.

As with the closure of Charing Cross and Waterloo East, information will be disseminated via local press and radio. LTS commuters have the added advantage of the Pride system, the colour television monitors at each station which provide instant information.

The closure of Fenchurch Street for this period is unavoidable. The hon. Gentleman said that it could have been avoided if the Government had provided substantial funds at an early stage. That is not so. The station requires complete remodelling. Several miles of track and overhead power lines need to be replaced. The signal box currently just outside the station must be dismantled. All that work should take seven weeks. My information is that if it were carried out during the night and at the weekend, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, it would take three years, and I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would tolerate that for a moment on behalf of his constituents. All our experience of major rail infrastructure work shows that it is much better to concentrate the work into a short period. That inconvenience, which is regretted, is much better than spreading it over a substantial period.

While the station is closed, some LTS services will run into Liverpool Street and others will terminate at Barking where passengers will be able to transfer to London Underground's District line on which their tickets will be valid. In addition, bus services will be provided between LTS and Great Eastern stations that are in relative proximity. London Underground services from Upminster and Barking, where there are LTS interchanges, will be strengthened.

British Rail is in no doubt that the result of the project will be a great improvement in signal reliability which, it says, is the biggest single factor contributing to delays at the moment. There will be more crossovers which allow services to bypass failed trains or engineering works without causing serious disruption; better centralised control and co-ordination from the new centre at Upminster; and a more versatile and easily maintained terminus at Fenchurch Street.

When the important work is complete—British Rail hopes by next spring—the already much improved service should improve still further. I shall ensure that the hon. Member for Thurrock and all my hon. Friends who represent constituencies along the line are invited to the formal opening of the new service. More modern trains for the LTS service are due to become available in 1995-96 as a result of £150 million leasing facility that the Government announced in 1992.

The LTS line will be one of the first to be franchised under the Railways Act 1993. The Government believe that the improved performance of the past few years will be pursued even more vigorously when the LTS is an independent company competing for business in the market and subject to the rewards and penalties of the proposed franchise system. With new signalling, more modern trains and, most important, a real incentive and desire to meet the needs of its users, the LTS will be in the vanguard of the move towards the new-style rail service that we all want.

The hon. Gentleman asked me four questions. I shall examine the matter of the ticket machines at Fenchurch Street and the rebates and I shall write to him. Those are perfectly valid matters to raise. He also asked whether there would be any further problems and said that he had deep suspicions about further closures. I am advised that, once the work is finished next spring, the infrastructure work will be complete for the foreseeable future and, with the arrival of new trains, the hon. Gentleman's constituents will not experience any significant disruption to services.

The hon. Gentleman also asked for an assurance that the station would be fully used. He complained about the closure of the station in the early evening. We hope that the line will be franchised next year and, with more capital, freedom and innovation, there may well be a change in the pattern of railway services. I share his view that it would be advantageous for the people of Essex if services were expanded. If that is possible, and if it makes economic sense, I should welcome it.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked me to tick off Mr. Chris Kinchin-Smith, but I decline to do so. I am delighted that there is an interest in organising a management buy-out by Mr. Kinchin-Smith and his colleagues. Mr. John Welsby, the chief executive of British Rail, has just issued new guidelines to BR management on how they should discharge their responsibilities for running the railway services and prepare a bid. The hon. Gentleman may wish to know that I answered a parliamentary question, drawing attention to the fact that I had placed in the Library a copy of the guidelines that should resolve the problem of dual responsibility for management of the line and the preparation of the bid. Far from ticking off Mr. Kinchin-Smith, I congratulate him and his staff on the management of the line and on preparing to bid for the franchise.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Hartley Hospital, Colne

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

5.59 am

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): This debate is about national health service property and how it is disposed of. Since I applied for it, Hartley hospital, which is in my constituency, has been sold, after lying empty for five years. News of the sale came as a complete bombshell to me and, indeed, to everyone else in the constituency. Apparently, an offer has been made and has been accepted by the chairman of the North Western regional health authority, Sir Bruce Martin, who made the decision a few days ago, acting under delegated powers.

I am told that the buyers are a three-person partnership —presumably builders and developers—based in Simonstone, which is just outside my constituency. The regional health authority will not tell me any more than this as contracts have not been exchanged. I do not want contracts to be exchanged as I am totally opposed to the sale, as, indeed, is my local authority, Pendle borough council. In due course, I shall explain why.

I do not know how much the mystery buyers paid for Hartley hospital, and I do not know what they intend to do with it. But Mr. Richard Strickland, who deals with property matters for the regional health authority, hinted today that the main block of the hospital would be retained and converted into "quality private residential flats".

I want to say a few words about the background to the whole affair. Hartley hospital occupies a very special place in the affections of the people of Colne. There are two people who are famous benefactors of the town and are held in the highest regard. One is Peter Birtwistle, whose trust still benefits the residents of the town; the other is Sir William Pickles Hartley, made famous and wealthy by his jams. Sir William—Mr. Hartley, as he then was—was the driving force behind the new cottage hospital for Colne, which opened in 1900 to commemorate the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria. He put up half the money required, with the people of Colne making up the difference.

But soon the hospital became too small for the town. Sir William and his wife, Lady Hartley, this time generously agreed to pay the entire cost of the new hospital, which opened its doors to patients in June 1924. It was given to the people of Colne in perpetuity, but transferred to the national health service as a result of the National Health Service Act 1946, free of the trust, and it continued to serve the needs of the people of Colne, Trawden, Foulridge and beyond until 1989, when it was closed for good.

In fact, there had been creeping closure before then, as various aspects of the hospital's work were progressively moved to other hospitals in the area. But the closure and the lead-up to it sparked a public outcry, and the town saw candlelight vigils, packed public meetings, petitions attracting thousands and thousands of signatures and, indeed, visits by Ministers. The current Leader of the House, who was then a junior health Minister, descended on the town, which was in great turmoil. The newspaper files of the period bulge with coverage of the closure, which was very extensive indeed.

I want to say a word about Dr. Tony Pickles—one of the many people in Colne who deserve special mention. He is a councillor in the Waterside ward, and he was very active in the campaign to save the hospital. But his efforts and those of thousands like him could not prevent the closure.

Of course, time has moved on. We have seen the opening of the Pendle community hospital in Nelson, and we are all thankful for that new facility in the town next door to Colne. We have seen also the reorganisation of the health service and the creation of the new national health service trusts. But throughout this period of great change, upheaval and flux in the health service there was one constant: Hartley hospital was still there—boarded up, empty and, year after year, slowly and majestically decaying.

The regional health authority took over responsibility for the building and attempted to market the old hospital on three separate occasions, but with no success. On 13 September last year, I received a letter from the chairman of the regional health authority, Sir Bruce Martin, in response to an earlier letter of mine. He told me that planning consultants had been appointed with the aim of seeking a residential planning consent.

If one looks through the minutes of meetings way back into the 1980s, one discovers that that has been a recurring theme. Consultants were to be appointed to consider how the hospital could best be marketed. Sir Bruce told me that that action had not been taken before September 1993 because of the need

"to demonstrate to the local planning authority that there was no suitable interest in the premises for use as a nursing home or similar institution".

Sir Bruce said that discussions were taking place between the planning consultants and the local authority

"with a view to an outline planning application for housing being submitted shortly".

Months passed, and I was becoming increasingly concerned about how long the plans were taking to bear fruit. Following a further prompt from me, I received another letter from Sir Bruce dated 22 February—only three weeks ago—which said:

"On the marketing of Hartley Hospital, the situation remains one of offers being received but which are either not at an acceptable level in valuation terms or the prospective purchaser has failed to secure the necessary finance . . . Consideration has been given to other ways of enhancing the marketability of the premises. One possible option under discussion is to submit an outline planning application for the redevelopment of the Hospital for residential purposes. No formal decision has however been taken."

That was three weeks ago.

The letter continues:

"Although the Authority has no plans to demolish the Hospital, I would advise you that the cost of maintenance and security has risen by a further £23,300 since I last wrote to you on the matter in March 1993."

That is another aspect of the tale which needs highlighting. The cost of keeping the building safe and secure has been increasing every year—from £14,600 in 1993 to £37,900 earlier this year. Yet, despite that expenditure, the buildings were rotting away.

I have wandered round the old hospital several times, and it always amazes me that it has not been subject to more vandalism and theft. In December last year, my local authority felt obliged to write to the NHS management executive expressing concern about the lack of response from the regional health authority to concerns that the council had legitimately raised about the maintenance and security of the site and the buildings.

The old hospital has been boarded up for years, neglected and rotting away. Throughout that entire period,

no planning applications were submitted to the local authority; it was a period of indecision and vacillation, with nothing much happening. Then at the eleventh hour, just before I managed to secure an Adjournment debate, I was told that the hospital had been sold.

I shall say a few words about the planning context. Hartley hospital is set in attractive grounds and, as the House has heard, it has a special history. The stone building is also very attractive and in scale with its surroundings, and the local authority has a policy for the site which goes back many years.

The council's planning policy states that any redevelopment or conversion scheme for the former Hartley hospital should have due regard for the national green belt policy

"since it is the Council's intention to include the site in a Green Belt".

The council's policy refers to the Department of the Environment circular on redundant hospital sites in green belts, and it goes on to list the acceptable uses. These uses include agriculture or forestry-related uses, outdoor sport and recreation, or institutional use such as day care, nursing home, residential college and such like; but the local authority recognises that, should these uses not be practicable, the buildings could have a tourism or leisure use such as a conference centre or perhaps a youth hostel. Housing is in the list of uses that are specifically declared unacceptable, yet it has apparently been sold by the regional health authority for housing, which is in direct conflict with the council's draft local plan.

I want to know why a planning application was not submitted by the regional health authority to test what might or might not be acceptable to the planning authority. As I have shown, in September 1993 that was promised by Sir Bruce Martin, but six months passed and nothing very much happened.

The Department of Health publishes an estate code which is supposed to govern these matters. It is called "Property Transactions in the NHS". It looks at the disposal of surplus property and, in paragraph 4.2, under the heading "Consideration of optimum return", it says:

"Where there are no alternative health service uses, Health Authorities must consider with their professional advisers how to achieve the optimum return from the property."

Paragraph 4.3 says:

"To secure the best price possible, property which has potential for development should normally be sold with the benefit of planning permission. Health authorities or their agents must therefore establish the most favourable planning potential by making an application under the Town and Country Planning Act 1984 unless there are overriding reasons in terms of best marketing practice for not doing so and the District Valuer concurs."

I want to know why that was not done.

Advice paper 2 amplifies the advice from the Department of Health and discusses the options available for the disposal of surplus land and property. It says that

"a critical phase of a disposal is that of obtaining the best planning consent and a full discussion with professional advisers and the DV must take place on the type of consent to be sought and any other material marketing considerations."

I asked Mr. Richard Strickland of the regional health authority earlier today why no planning application was submitted, and he referred me to an undertaking that had allegedly been made by the Minister for Health in the 1980s—presumably, the present Leader of the House—that every effort would be made to secure a health service or allied health use. Mr. Strickland could not point me to where I might find evidence of this commitment, but he recalled its having been made. He also told me that the district valuer had approved the sale to the mystery buyers on the ground that the value of the site with existing use or with housing permission would be the same, something which I find difficult to grasp. If there were a housing development, Mr. Strickland said, it would not be a high-density one.

It seems to me that the regional health authority and the district valuer have made a lot of assumptions. Any planning application that the new buyer submits will have to be considered by the council, and the new buyer should not necessarily assume that planning permission will follow for any housing development. In one sense, the new buyers may be buying a pig in a poke because there is no outstanding planning permission for housing use.

The local planning authority will have to consider several matters. It will take into account its policy for a green-belt development, its own policy specifically for the development of the Hartley hospital site, and the Government guidelines. I am thinking of the 1991 guidelines on the use of redundant hospitals in green-belt areas. I believe that the Government are currently examining those guidelines and will shortly reissue them in a modified form. My contention is that what is acceptable and what is not acceptable can be tested only by submitting a planning application. The regional health authority did not do so, even though the guidance from the Department of Health specifically advises it to do so in order to obtain the best price.

My preference has always been for the hospital to be used as a hospice. However, one must be realistic. In the absence of such a proposal, I wanted to see it put to some community use. A proposal has been made for community use. An offer has been made by a Buddhist group, the Losang Dragpa centre. It has several established centres across the country. One is at Conishead priory, which was restored by the group in 1976. Another, at Kilnwich Percy hall in Pocklington, York, was opened in 1986. Another is in a former hotel in Buxton in Derbyshire. The group thinks that the old Hartley hospital would be a perfect setting for one of its centres.

The proposal has widespread all-party support locally. The local authority has looked at the application and supports it energetically. It will retain the buildings that Sir William gave to the people of Colne. It would allow some community use. The Buddhist group proposes that there will be some serviced residential accommodation. There will be a lecture theatre for residential courses. There will be quality overnight accommodation for tourists. There will be teaching facilities and evening classes. The centre will not be exclusive to Buddhists. Anyone, whether Buddhist or not, could use the centre.

The Losang Dragpa centre put in an offer last year of £245,000. It was apparently turned down. I have here a letter from the Buddhist group which tells me that it was shown round the hospital, it put in a bid and it was told by a Mr. Soloman of the estates department that the property was not on the market. I find that inexplicable because someone somewhere

[Mr. Gordon Prentice]

looked at the proposal and decided to reject it. Presumably it was the chairman, Sir Bruce Martin, under the delegated powers to which I have referred.

An offer of £245,000 was put to the regional health authority by the Buddhist group. That proposal falls full square within the planning policy agreed by the local planning authority. It was rejected. A mystery buyer based in Simonstone has made an offer—I do not know for how much—which has apparently just been accepted by the regional health authority. That proposal falls directly outside the planning policy of the local authority. The people who have bought the hospital should not expect to obtain planning permission to redevelop it.

What is the charge? It is that the regional health authority has, throughout the saga, moved at a snail's pace. The lovely hospital was gifted to the people of Colne in my constituency; it has been boarded up for five years and has been slowly decaying while the regional health authority has been biting its finger nails wondering what to do with it.

The regional health authority has totally disregarded the planning context, and has sold the property to a buyer—although the contract has not yet been exchanged—who apparently intends to put it to housing use. That is directly contrary to the publicly expressed policies of the local planning authority. I want the Minister to consider the history and background to the affair to see whether he can satisfy himself that the regional health authority has acted properly, because I do not think that it has.

I shall urge Pendle borough council, the local planning authority, to stick to its guns and to insist that any development of Hartley hospital falls full square within its planning policies. For that hospital of all hospitals to be turned into luxury flats would be an insult to the memory of Sir William Hartley. The people of Colne deserve much better.

6.21 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): In the short time that remains, I should like to make a few comments on the subject raised by the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice).

As the hon. Gentleman will know, there have been repeated efforts to sell Hartley hospital over a number of years. There has been a difficult property market in that area and, in common with many other districts, it has been difficult to sell property, whether commercial or domestic. The various offers and negotiations that have taken place over the years have not come to fruition, either because a buyer who made an offer was unable to come up with the finance or because offers were made that were unacceptably low.

The hon. Gentleman made a connection between the offer that has recently been accepted from a commercial concern and his successful application for a debate in the House. I have to disappoint him: there is no connection between those two matters. It could be said that the property market is recovering and we are fortunate that the regional health authority has apparently obtained an offer from a concern of good standing. I hope that it will come to fruition because we do not want the Hartley hospital to be lying empty and decaying any longer.

We want the health service in the north-west to receive the proceeds of such a sale. In the past year or so, the region has been successful in disposing of property, and the proceeds of all such disposals go back into the health service.

Although the hon. Gentleman appeared to wish to take the credit for the latest transaction, he also said that he disapproved of the nature of the transaction because he believed that the property was to be used for an unsuitable purpose. Our remit in the NHS is to dispose of surplus property for the price, or as close to it, that professional advisers and the district valuer advise us is suitable. We are not in the planning business, which is for others. Our responsibility is to obtain a good price. I am advised that the offer that has been made is close to the asking price, although that is much lower than it was a few years ago—in common with commercial property everywhere. Therefore, I hope that the deal will go through, but it is for others to decide whether to allow any specific use to which the property is put or to which the new buyers wish to put it.

The hon. Member for Pendle mentioned other possible uses. Obviously it would be a very good thing if the hospice movement in the north-west could be further extended. I understand however, that no proposal was made by any voluntary or other organisation to use the Hartley hospital as a hospice. I opened a new hospice only yesterday in another part of the country and I am well aware of the wonderful work that hospices do, but, although I gather that the hospice movement may be seeking further hospices or day centres around the north-west, there is no specific proposal in the hon. Gentleman's area.

I am not aware of any prejudice by Sir Bruce Martin against Buddhists. I am sure that if that organisation had made an offer that was, according to the region's advisers and the district valuer, a good offer and at, or close to, the asking price, there would have been no problem in selling the property to the Buddhists. I think that that is, if not a red herring, simply a matter of commercial reality. We have to dispose of health service property at a proper price and we have not, in spite of repeated efforts in the past three years, received a suitable offer from a concern that appeared able to complete until now.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that we want extra funds for the health service. We dispose of property in a way that provides extra funds for the health service and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me therefore—

Mr. Gordon Prentice: Before the Minister concludes, I wonder whether he would address the point that lies at the heart of the matter—that the regional health authority disregarded the planning context, and at no stage submitted a planning application to the planning authority to find out what might or might not be acceptable.

Mr. Sackville: As I said, our remit is to dispose of property at the price that professional advisers tell us it is worth. The question of planning is for other people. If professional advisers in the region believe that the buyer is good for a sum which is said to be the proper price for the property, that is our main consideration. The question

whether the buyer obtains planning permission is one for the planning authority and for the new owners. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in saying that if the price that has been offered is a good one, the NHS will achieve that price.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Six o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 18 March 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BILLS PRESENTED

INSOLVENCY (No. 2)

Mr. Secretary Heseltine, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew and Mr. Neil Hamilton, presented a Bill to amend the Insolvency Act 1986 in relation to contracts of employment adopted by administrators, administrative receivers and certain other receivers; and to make corresponding provision for Northern Ireland: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 76.]

TRANSPORT POLICE (JURISDICTION)

Mr. Secretary MacGregor, supported by Mr. Secretary Howard and Mr. Roger Freeman, presented a Bill to make further provision with respect to the jurisdiction of transport police: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 77.]

Council of Europe and Western European Union

9.34 am

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I beg to move,

That this House supports the important roles of the Council of Europe and Western European Union; takes note of the work of the Parliamentary Assemblies of both bodies and, in particular, of the work and efforts of the United Kingdom's delegation; notes the role of the Council of Europe in bringing the parliamentary process to the Parliaments and people of Eastern and Central European countries which have joined it in recent years; recognises the special role of the Council of Europe as an institution specialising in the protection of minorities and human rights in those countries; and welcomes the fact that under the Maastricht Treaty the Western European Union is to be the future European Defence entity and the European pillar of the new-role NATO.

May I apologise on behalf of many hon. Members on both sides of the House for their inability to be with us today? As the House knows, the subject of a Friday debate is not chosen until one or, at the most, two weeks before the day and hon. Members have constituency duties on Fridays which, understandably, are not easy to break.

I welcome the opportunity to initiate a debate on the Council of Europe and the Western European Union and I welcome the participation of my hon. Friends the Members for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) and for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), who have an interest in wider aspects of the subject and who—I hope—will speak later in the debate. I welcome the debate not only because I initiated it, but because it has been such a long time since the House has had the opportunity to debate the Council of Europe and the Western European Union. Events are fast moving in Europe.

In the past year, on 9 October in Vienna, the Heads of State and Governments of the member states of the Council of Europe met for the first time in the organisation's history. Its ringing declaration on that day summarised for me the reason why this debate is important and timely. The declaration stated:

"The end of the division of Europe offers an historic opportunity to consolidate peace and stability on the continent. All our countries are committed to pluralist and parliamentary democracy, the indivisibility and universality of human rights, the rule of law and a common cultural heritage enriched by its diversity. Europe can thus become a vast area of democratic security.

This Europe is a source of immense hope which must in no event be destroyed by territorial ambitions, the resurgence of aggressive nationalism, the perpetuation of spheres of influence, intolerance or totalitarian ideologies."

The Council of Europe was formed more than 45 years ago largely under the inspiration of the then Mr. Winston Churchill. It predates the treaty of Rome and the EC, or, as we now know it, the European Union. It is separate from the European Union, which is not always widely understood outside the House. Indeed the European Union is the tenant of the Council of Europe's parliamentary building in Strasbourg. Since it is separate, the membership of the Council of Europe has evolved over the years more steadily and more widely. Possibly, that may also have occurred because it is a council of members of the Parliaments of the countries which belong to it and it is not in any way a legislative body.

The effectiveness of a body that has no powers over countries of membership must therefore be limited to influence, to persuasion, and to leadership. Having no powers may account for its not having been debated in the

[Mr. Richard Alexander]

House for many years. Today, I want to highlight the contribution of Britain and British parliamentarians to the Council of Europe and to draw the work that we do to the attention of Parliament and the people of Britain.

The United Kingdom's delegation consists of 18 delegates and 18 alternates taken from both Houses, appointed proportionately from the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. The appointments are made by the Prime Minister of the day. The United Kingdom delegation is led by Lord Finsberg. I pay a tribute to him for his dedication to the task and the firm leadership that he gives to our deliberations. He is rightly one of the most respected delegation leaders and his wise counsel is appreciated and nearly always adopted.

The British delegation has a fine reputation for attendance and participation in the debates of the assembly and the work of its committees. We chair many of the committees and hold vice-chairmanships of many more. Despite the party-political differences in this House, when we are in the Council of Europe there is little, if any, of the party-political divisions and squabbling which too often pervade our debates here.

Having said that, I shall make only one party-political point in my speech. The futile and unnecessary decision of the Labour leadership in the House and the Labour Whips to refuse co-operation between the parties is causing grave damage to our reputation for attendance and participation. Other countries do not suffer in the same way. They have political disagreements, but they regard the work of the Council of Europe as sufficiently important to override internal bickering. They simply do not understand it. Our influence is undercut, British interests can be bypassed and the respect for our work and our enthusiasm, which has been built up by distinguished parliamentarians over many years, ebbs away. If Members from the two major parties cannot attend meetings of which they are the chairman or speak to reports of which they are the rapporteur, it will be a long time before we regain our reputation for hard work and reliability.

I make no criticism at all of Labour's representation on the Council of Europe in those remarks—the Labour party is well represented by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). However, I urge him and his colleagues to bring some common sense to their party leaders in the matter. The lack of co-operation has gone on for one third of the year and shows no sign of abating. I hope that Labour Members will exercise some common sense, because they cannot leave Britain's representation to the Liberal Democrats and the upper House. Both groups perform admirably in their way, but I do not think that anyone would say that they are entirely representative of British parliamentarians.

As with all parliaments, the main work of the Council of Europe is done in committee. Although the Council has no executive powers, it has considerable influence in the countries concerned on social affairs, legal affairs, migration and refugees, economic affairs, political affairs, European development, science and technology, agriculture and human rights. It is healthy that 32 countries in Europe come together from time to time to debate such subjects. Indeed, the composition of the Council of Europe is more European than the European Union itself. When people think about Europe generally, they do not think about only the 12 states; the 32 countries in the Council are much more representative in people's perception of what Europe is.

Especially since the iron curtain came down, the Council's work has expanded enormously, so it is doing a steady but often not too well recognised job. The emergence of the former eastern European countries has made them essential partners in a new and expanded Europe. They have shown great keenness in joining western Europe. Paramount among the work of the Council, with which those countries are concerned, is the European Court of Human Rights and the European Commission of Human Rights, which are now internationally recognised.

I was disturbed to read in the press this morning that the British Government are understood to have decided yesterday to abandon the mandatory right of individual petition for British citizens to the European Court of Human Rights. I hope that wiser counsels may prevail before such a decision is brought to the House. It would damage the public's perception of our Government's view of human rights in our country. At a time when we are rightly standing firm on Britain's interests in other respects in Europe, to take that unnecessarily harsh line would damage our reputation in the rest of Europe. I understand that only Turkey has taken that line so far. Without wishing to insult that otherwise excellent country, Turkey's record on human rights is not one which would commend itself to all hon. Members in the House.

As a result of the increase in membership, the work of the Council of Europe has expanded considerably—that must go without saying. Governments, including the British Government, must therefore recognise that there is an urgency to provide additional appropriate resources for the Council's work. I appreciate that it comes ill from a Conservative who is committed to a reduction in public expenditure, but some public expenditure is necessary; some increase is necessary from time to time in various fields. If additional resources are not provided to account for the increase in membership in the Council of Europe, there will be a growing burden on existing officials and important work may have to be delayed or omitted.

Perhaps without causing embarrassment, it may be appropriate at this point to mention the excellent work done by the clerks at the assemblies; often by our own House of Commons Clerks. I know that their professionalism and expertise are much valued by the Council of Europe and the Western European Union. Once again, I underline the fact that Britain is playing a full part in the work of the assemblies in so many ways.

Not least in the catalogue of people who contribute to that work, I mention the successive permanent representatives to the Council of Europe at Strasbourg with the rank of ambassador. In my time, Mr. Noel Marshall and Mr. Roger Beetham have played an important part in ensuring that Britain's position in the matters that come before the Council is well represented. The British delegation especially welcomes and appreciates the kindness and hospitality that are accorded to them at all times by the ambassadors in Strasbourg.

Earlier, I said that many newly emerging countries have joined the Council of Europe in the past three or four years. It must be remembered that they are emerging from centuries of repression, dictatorship and often barbarism. When they join the Council, they are left in no doubt whatever that human rights—or, as the French perhaps

more accurately describe them, "the rights of man"—are fundamental to continuing civilised society. They are also fundamental to their continuing good relations with the rest of the members as they work together.

That has made for difficult decisions in some cases, and assurances have been given by new members about their human rights records and about their treatment of minorities. In the case of Estonia, for example, there were grave questions about its electoral law which apparently denied half of the population the right to vote. The difficulty in some of those countries is that, because of the history of the past 50 years or so, they have significant minorities of Russian people. They are there no longer as part of an occupying power, but because their families have been there for many years, and they perhaps were born there and have grown and taken root there.

In Lithuania, there was concern regarding the treatment of that country's Polish minority. Examples abound in other countries that are now in membership. The problems raised by the possibility of a country's application being rejected are even greater when we consider the possibility of one country or another being suspended or expelled afterwards.

That was a real prospect in the case of Estonia last year. That country's Parliament passed a law on aliens in June of last year which effectively declared that all those of Russian extraction were not to be citizens, and were therefore disenfranchised. Estonia's expulsion was averted at the last moment by the country's president refusing to sign the appropriate Bill, and asking for expert advice from the Council of Europe.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): As the member of the parliamentary assembly which produced the report on Lithuania's application to join, I know what the hon. Gentleman is talking about when he mentions the Polish minority. Does not he think that it is absolutely essential for the parliamentary assembly to take careful note of the promises that are made by various applicant countries for membership to make sure that the promises made when their credentials are being examined are fulfilled subsequently?

Mr. Alexander: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. It has been a concern of some of us—there is no need to mention names—that those promises would be difficult to fulfil in some cases, and the task of the Council of Europe is to monitor what is going on.

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Does my hon. Friend recall that Yugoslavia applied to join the Council of Europe and received observer status, and that that status was withdrawn when Yugoslavia found itself in the terrible state which still exists?

Mr. Alexander: My hon. Friend gives another excellent example. In fact, both he and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) have helped me to reach my next point.

Such examples have convinced the assembly that there is a need for a formal requirement for the continuing scrutiny of the progress of new member states after their accession to ensure that there is no back-sliding, and that commitments entered into are honoured in the years to come.

The emphasis that I have placed on human rights and the rights of minorities illustrates one of the most important long-term aspects of the work of the Council of Europe. No other body can give such practical help with such powerful influence, and that is a strong argument for the continued support of the Council of Europe's work and, as I mentioned before, for financial support for what it does.

We must give some thought to whether the Council of Europe should be enlarged by the addition of other countries. Some countries, such as Russia, have guest or observer status so they can participate in debates but they do not have the right to vote. Others within Europe—I think particularly of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan—have no such ability.

There are strongly held arguments on each side about whether those countries should come in. One side of the argument is that there are too many countries in the Council already and that other countries would make it unwieldy. There would be a need for more staff and it would be more expensive. Some argue that, in any event, those countries are really in Asia; that may be a moot point.

On the other side, one must say that there would be long-term political implications for them and for us if we deny those countries the positive influence of full membership in due course.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): In considering whether membership should be extended to countries such as Georgia, will my hon. Friend take account of the rather disturbing things that are happening in the former Soviet Union? Russia is re-forming some of the ties that were broken on the collapse of the Soviet Union with military pacts and political arrangements and some of us are concerned about the full implications, particularly in Georgia where the Russian army now has three new bases.

Mr. Alexander: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and that brings me quite neatly to my next point. Those countries are small states and they do not belong naturally to any regional or other group. Many people think that, provided they go down the route of western democracy and the acceptance of our standards of human and minority rights, we should not reject those countries.

We can help those countries to resolve their ethnic tensions better if they are in than if they are out. If we leave them out, they could be tempted—in a world of much larger players—to find less suitable alliances. One or other of the larger regional powers might even chance its arm and decide to intervene, which would create just one more area of tension in an already disturbed part of the world.

Many hours have been spent in the Council of Europe and in the Western European Union in recent months and years on the subject of the former Yugoslavia. We have spent some time on Macedonia and there have been arguments with Greece about recognition and over its name.

On Bosnia-Herzegovina, the assemblies were in the forefront of asking for tougher sanctions, for a no-fly zone and for positive action to halt the Serb attacks. Recently, of course, NATO and the UN have agreed under certain conditions to bomb the Serbian artillery. Members of the Council advocated that more than two years ago and also advocated shooting down Serbian planes and bombing Serbian tank positions. Maybe the parliamentarians had more foresight, but certainly if their advice had been

[Mr. Alexander]

heeded thousands of lives could have been saved at that time. I accept that I speak with the benefit of hindsight and that there were other considerations at the time.

I should like to move on to the consideration of the work of the WEU, which forms a part of my motion. Britain is one of the countries whose members of the Council of Europe double as members of the WEU. First, may I record my pleasure—and that of colleagues from all parties, I am sure—at the election last year of my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) as president of the WEU. He is the first Briton to hold that office for more than 10 years.

The WEU began as an armaments inspection agency and had a minor role during the long years of the cold war. With the ending of the Soviet empire, NATO—and the WEU, which had always been allied to it—began urgently to seek a new role. At the beginning of my speech, I referred to the fact that the debate was timely in view of the fast movement of events within Europe.

At the NATO summit in January, the Western European Union was confirmed, with the blessing of the United States of America, as NATO's defence pillar, so it is vital to our defence interests. Under the Maastricht treaty, the WEU had already been designated as the European Union's defence agency—at least until the treaty obligations expire in 1996. In view of the way that it is tackling its responsibilities, I urge my hon. Friend the Minister that the WEU should retain that role after 1996. I hope that that view has his support.

Britain's current ambassador to NATO is jointly ambassador to the WEU, which is involved in the rapid reaction force and has established a satellite observation centre near Madrid—which I had the pleasure of visiting last year, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson). Those are important movements towards European defence.

The WEU is well known in Europe for its excellent, detailed and technical reports on all defence matters and they are valued by experts. Its recommendations are often taken into account and implemented by the Council of Ministers, which forms the WEU executive. The WEU's aim as an assembly is to bring about a new defence strategy for the whole of Europe and to produce an effective, respected defence capability capable of protecting the integrity of the whole of Europe.

Just as the Council of Europe had its problems over the extent to which it should be enlarged, those problems are even greater when the states of eastern Europe are considered. In 1992, the WEU established a forum for security consultation, to bring together its members and the states of eastern Europe. Just to mention some of them indicates the difficulties that may be involved in any defence alliance—the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Romania. The forum discusses aspects of European security and disarmament questions.

Matters cannot stay as they are. In the fluid situation of today's Europe, discussions are continuing with a view to creating affiliate WEU status for those countries. That would be consistent with NATO's partnership for peace and European Union plans for closer links with the states concerned. To do that too soon might pre-empt NATO proposals to strengthen relations, but it is important conscientiously to consider maintaining and increasing links with the countries in question. Otherwise, as with the Council of Europe, there will be a danger that those states will form less desirable alliances. Associate membership must be an early aim, to give those countries fairly full integration.

I have dealt with the various work of both assemblies. I was anxious to highlight the importance of that work and if, in initiating this debate, I have managed to do that, I hope that I have done justice to the assemblies themselves. The subject is vast and no speech can do justice to the huge range of activities involved. The longer that I remain one of Britain's representatives, the more certain I become that the Council of Europe and the WEU have and will continue to have an essential place in the architecture of the new Europe. I am honoured to have initiated this debate and to have been appointed to play a small role in helping to build that new Europe.

10.4 am

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) on introducing this subject, which has not been debated for some years. I will concentrate on the work of the parliamentary assemblies of the Council of Europe and WEU with one exception, to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

I will begin with that exception, because it is of great importance. If the Council of Europe is about anything, it is about human rights. The hon. Gentleman's motion, on which I also congratulate him, specifically seeks to recognise

"the special role of the Council of Europe as an institution specialising in the protection of minorities and human rights".

The motion refers to eastern and central Europe, but those issues should be considered not only in that context.

There has been considerable discussion about the workings of the European Court of Human Rights. Next week, on 21 March, Council of Europe Ministers will meet in Strasbourg to consider protocol 11 to the European convention on human rights, which was approved following a ministerial meeting in Vienna last October. The protocol's purpose is to streamline the European Court's procedures to ensure that enlargement of the number of convention countries, including countries in eastern and central Europe, will not protract hearings to between six and 10 years, consequently rendering the system ineffective and denying individual citizens international human rights protection. That problem has existed for some time. Many people are highly concerned about the length of time that it takes for the European Court to deal with issues.

Today's newspapers refer—clearly there have been some leaks—to a Cabinet split, between the Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary, over the proposal that following the adoption of protocol 11, individual citizens will have an automatic right to petition the European Court of Human Rights. The Home Secretary's view that they should not has, I understand, prevailed, and Governments would still have to notify their acceptance of the right of individuals to petition over five years, as the United Kingdom does now.

I further understand that the Foreign Secretary's view is that all citizens should enjoy that right from the adoption of the protocol. That is also my view and that of my hon. Friends. As we rightly demanded that eastern and central

European countries should offer a political guarantee to their citizens that they would have an individual right to petition, it would be hypocritical to deny that same right to our own citizens. Even if the Minister does not say much about that issue when he responds—after all, we are dealing with rumour—I hope that he will convey to his colleagues the fact that many hon. Members on both sides of the House would be distressed if those rumours proved true. We would feel that Britain was not giving the sort of lead that the hon. Member for Newark believes is the role of this old democracy in the Council of Europe.

One problem with the Council of Europe is that of size. How big is the Council of Europe to be? For example, will it contain the whole of Russia? Will Russia become a member if Belarus or Ukraine become members? Should we extend the Council of Europe to the waters that lap around Japan? That is a difficult question. Some people believe that it has already been demonstrated to be a good thing that Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and the relatively small countries of central and eastern Europe have joined, because, as the hon. Member for Newark said, they have accepted a basic framework of human rights. Membership also helps to stabilise their internal political circumstances and that must be a good thing.

I was in Strasbourg at the end of last week. A shiver ran through the institution when the Russian observer delegation list was examined and people espied the name Zhirinovsky. I suppose that does not mean that he will come. He would certainly add spice and the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) would, I am sure, have an enjoyable time.

We can change things only by having a dialogue with people. It would be excellent if Mr. Zhirinovsky came—

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: Yes, I am aware of the rumblings behind me.

Mr. Tony Banks: Perhaps it is a sign of democracy that Russia is capable of, or willing to, elect a total lunatic to represent it. In the case of Mr. Zhirinovsky, the Russians have clearly done that. Perhaps we should see this as a sign of emerging maturity rather than as a sign of complete stupidity on the part of the Russian people.

Sir Russell Johnston: That is an interesting theory, although I am not sure whether I go along with it.

Mr. Tony Banks: We do it.

Sir Russell Johnston: Yes, but the Monster Raving Loony party has been remarkably unsuccessful. Perhaps that condemns us as not being democratic.

Size is a problem. I hope that the Minister will have something to say about that, even in general terms. At some stage, we must decide whether we are going to say stop or whether we are going to go on into Asia. That is what it boils down to.

I will not make a long complaint about representation. I certainly have no complaint against my colleagues in the delegation. However, the Liberal Democrats have one member and one alternate. We have had exactly the same number since the foundation of the Council of Europe, whether we were doing well or badly electorally.

Strictly speaking, our place on the Council of Europe is not a Liberal Democratic place. It is a place for the minority parties—that is, the whole shooting match of them. Basically, that is very unsatisfactory. First, one cannot represent the minority parties in any real way. It is impossible for me to speak for the Scottish nationalists, for Plaid Cymru or the Democratic Unionists. Therefore, I speak for a Liberal Democratic position and am a member of the Liberal group and that is it.

The other minorities may feel a little aggrieved. When the Labour Government were in power in the early 1970s and the nationalists in Scotland had done especially well, the nationalists were given an alternate place. That was taken from the Government allocation and it was the fair and proper thing to do. If an arrangement is to be made for the other minority parties—I believe that the Irish have a case, although it is difficult to decide who to give a place to—it would be proper to reduce the size of the Government delegation. The Government should certainly take their beady eyes off the one member and one alternate that we have.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): At one point during the last Labour Government, Mr. Bill Craig of the Ulster Unionists and Mr. George Reid of the Scottish National party were members of the delegation.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman corrects me. I had forgotten Bill Craig. The point was recognised then, but we seem to have forgotten about it. That is unfortunate.

I associate myself with the remarks made by the hon. Member for Newark about Lord Finsberg, who contributes greatly to the work of the Council of Europe. In a way, the notion of delegations and delegation leaders is a bit of a fiction. The reality is that, when one arrives at the Council of Europe or the WEU assemblies, members work and operate within their political groups. The Conservatives associate with the group of the right; Labour members join the socialist group and I join the Liberal group. That is the way in which we operate.

The whole business of what constitutes the national interest very seldom arises. I cannot recall its ever coming up. There is a tendency, if one expresses a view contrary to the Government, for Conservative members to shout "Shame" sporadically.

Sir Donald Thompson: There very often seems to be a French national interest. After the last election in France, the French pressed for the same number of seats on each committee and the same number of chairmanships, despite the fact that the proportions had changed and that there should have been a change in the numbers. We never seem to have achieved that happy unanimity.

Sir Russell Johnston: I suppose that the only answer to that is yes. However, I do not notice that the French are all that happy when they are united. It is more a case of marriages of convenience than a merry united voice.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I wish to pursue the question of national interest in the Council of Europe. Quite clearly, people do not, by and large, look at their national interests in the same way and the reason for that is obvious. The difference between the Council of Europe and the European Community or the European Union is manifest. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, within the European Union, whenever the national states meet as members of that union, the predominant factor around the table is national interest?

Sir Russell Johnston: To some extent, that is mitigated according to what institution we are talking about. It is undoubtedly true of the Council of Ministers. I would not argue about that. However, my concept of the national interest is not necessarily advanced by the Government of the day. Nor do I accept that the Government of the day and the national interest always equate.

I agree with the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) that discussions in Councils of Ministers, whether in the Council of Europe, the European Union or WEU, are conducted in that way. However, things are changing in the European Parliament, where transnational political groupings, already specifically referred to in the Maastricht treaty, are operating. That process certainly operates in the Council of Europe assembly in Strasbourg. Like most of us, the hon. Member for Dorset, West is partly right and partly wrong.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman has touched on a significant point. One of the things that I find interesting about the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe is the degree of consensus that we are able to achieve both across and within national delegations.

It is interesting that in this place, which is very confrontational, by definition in most cases one disagrees with what is said by the other side. However, in the Council of Europe we can achieve more consensus. I wonder to what extent that is due to the atmospheres in which we carry out our business. The atmosphere is confrontational in this place while there is a desire and a need in the Council of Europe, if we are to move forward, to obtain some form of consensus.

Sir Russell Johnston: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I wish that some of that influence would seep back across the channel into this Chamber. It could do only good.

Time is always the enemy, so I shall now discuss the assembly of the Western European Union. In a way, there is a more urgent question here—what will happen in 1998. I am sure that the Minister knows that on 24 February this year, the European Parliament passed a motion, proposed by Karel De Gucht, by 173 votes to 41, with three abstentions. I point out that he is a Liberal, in case anyone hurls that fact at me later; I know that already.

According to Reuters,

"The resolution envisages the absorption of the WEU into the European Union by 1998 so that eventually there is just one single administrative European structure for the implementation of foreign, security and defence policies, with more use of majority voting and subject to the democratic control of the European Parliament."

I agree with that. As hon. Members know, the Liberal Democrats are rather maximalist in these matters. Nevertheless, I shall, if I am allowed, speculate about how that resolution will affect the assembly.

The European Parliament sees the change, which Reuters so succinctly sets out, as being effected in three stages. The first stage will be institutional reorganisation, the second stage will be more integration and the final stage will be, as a result of the new intergovernmental conference, everything coming together. The resolution says about the assembly:

"in the third stage, the European Parliament should replace the WEU Assembly in its entirety at plenary and committee level, the powers and voting conditions of Parliament being defined by the intergovernmental conference referred to."

If we eventually reach a far more integrated defence stage in the European Union, as I know that we shall, although it may take a wee while, does that mean that there is no place in the future for the WEU assembly? All of us know that there is much restiveness among the national Parliaments vis-a-vis the European Union because the national Parliaments see themselves increasingly by-passed. Their only access to the European Union is their existing access to their Ministers who, in turn, serve on the Council of Ministers. They take little part in the general formulation of policy, but they could take greater part through WEU.

It is not at all contradictory for me to say, on the one hand, that I want defence structures to be integrated in the European Union, but, on the other hand, to say that I do not see why that should necessitate lopping off the WEU assembly, which has representatives of the Parliaments of the members of WEU and therefore enables the link between national Parliaments and the institutions of the Community which many people in national Parliaments seek. Do the Government have any thoughts about how, specifically, they will view the WEU assembly when the Brussels treaty comes up for revision?

I compliment the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith), who is, apart from being a very popular Member of Parliament in any event, an extremely competent President of the assembly. I have never met a man in public life who is better at votes of thanks than the hon. Gentleman. If he ever leaves this place, he could set up a business and it would be highly successful. I mean all that in the best way, of course.

I do not intend to go into details about policies, but my next point, which needs to be raised, is finances. That point affects the WEU and, to a greater extent, the Council of Europe assembly. As the hon. Member for Newark rightly pointed out, because it acts as the bridge between central and eastern Europe and western Europe, considerably greater responsibilities have been laid on the Council of Europe assembly. It is expensive to send delegations to Estonia or Moldova, which are not easy places to get to. Apart from the travelling costs, there are overnight and other expenses. I do not think that the member countries of the Council of Europe and WEU, not excluding our own Government, have taken that matter sufficiently on board. Representatives from member countries are quite happy to make speeches praising the institutions, which all Heads of Government do from time to time, but they are not quite as good at putting their money where their mouth is.

By the end of the debate, the Minister will be aware that there is common cause throughout the House on the question of the value of the Council of Europe and WEU assemblies. Would he take some financial note of that as well?

10.25 am

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) on securing such an important debate this Friday morning. I may not be here for the winding-up speeches as a serious regional conflict will be taking place at Twickenham tomorrow afternoon and some of my colleagues are coming from the north, so I shall be looking after them later this morning. [Hon. Members: "Quite right."] Quite right, indeed—we must all have our priorities.

I listened with interest to the description of the Council of Europe by my hon. Friend the Member for Newark and to the description by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn

and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). They spoke of the eagerness of the new eastern European countries to join the Council of Europe. The size will be important. The Council of Europe is already large, with 32 member countries. If we go as far as the Urals, if not Vladivostok, the enlargement will be important.

I agree that attendance both with observer status and with associate membership of the Council of Europe reinforces the new pluralistic democracies and gives strength to the emerging market economies of many of those countries. I am amused to see the delegates who turn up from such countries. Some of them served in Parliaments before 1939 or before 1947 and they remember when their countries had democratic assemblies similar to ours here. Old men remember what happened a long time ago. Other delegates are new boys, often schoolmasters or solicitors, of whom we also have many here. Many of those delegates have never been outside their country before, but have waited, almost as the Resistance did during the war, for freedom, which they now appreciate very much. Those delegates come eagerly to learn what we have to offer. I am my side's Whip on the Council of Europe and I have long since given up trying to explain to delegates from other countries the whipping system as it applies to this democratic assembly. It is a glass bead game too esoteric to explain to an Estonian or a Lithuanian.

Those countries especially bring young men who were born in this country because their parents came here at the end of the war as displaced persons. They have lived in Todmorden, Bolton or Burnley, but they also speak Ukrainian, Lithuanian or Estonian and they are now back there advising their delegations, and doing so very well.

Then there are the smooth bureaucrats who come to represent their countries after serving in the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, or all sorts of world organisations. They are used to living in penthouses and wearing smart suits and they may form as much as one third of the delegation. It does not worry me that the Russians have appointed an eccentric to join them: many of the old guard are still there, moving, like the vicar of Bray, from one political system to the next, and doing it very well. Those newly emerging countries and many countries in the Western European Union see WEU as the stepping stone to democracy and to an enlarged EEC, EC and European Union. I say all three because people outside this place do not realise that they are the same thing.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): It is the Common Market.

Sir Donald Thompson: That is the phrase. I hear dissension about the definition among Conservative Members, so it does not only appear on the front pages of *The Times*.

The countries to which I referred view WEU as a stepping stone to fuller membership. The ante required to join the European Union, however, is too large for them even to contemplate. The amount of money that those countries need to sit down at the big table in Brussels is too great.

A new phase of development has emerged as recently as the past 12 months. The European Union is eager to hold joint committees with the Council of Europe in a way that has never happened before. Those committees will cover a range of subjects—local government, the environment, energy use and transport—and will thrash out a pan-European policy, or the threads of such a policy, on those subjects. It will, therefore, be to the advantage of all of us if the directives that subsequently emanate from Brussels take into account a wider Europe, its needs and the way in which the EC and a wider Europe can fit together.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Newark in paying tribute to Lord Finsberg and to the way in which he organises the British delegation. A national interest is involved and it is stated clearly without the need for many caucus meetings and without much disagreement across party lines.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has joined our debate to add weight to the importance of the three European motions on the Order Paper. I am sure that he will stay until 2.30 pm so that he can hear all the speeches.

There used to be three tiers of discussion in the Council of Europe—the ministerial and parliamentary tiers and the assembly, and there is soon to be a local and regional tier. We should grasp that opportunity or we shall be left out. The strength of regionalism is growing in Europe and world wide. I once told a group of Welsh farmers that they would rather buy something from a Yorkshireman than from an Englishman any day of the week and I received a resounding cheer. The Catalonians and Bavarians take their regionalism seriously, as do the Welsh, the Scots, and people from Yorkshire.

Regionalism will be a growing factor in the future and it must therefore be dealt with in the Council of Europe, which should be a forum where those people can express their views and interests, discuss trade and sell and deal with each other. Regionalism exists at all levels of life. It is not just about people dressing up in fancy regional costumes and doing a bit of dancing and singing, but about trading, bartering and exchanging views and ideas while keeping the identity that is so precious to them and to their children.

I am not sure that I agree with the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber that it will be a good thing if the Western European Union is subsumed into the European Union as it will block the rest of Europe—the greater Europe—from joining either WEU or the Council of Europe and from participating in them fully. The pressure points—the dangerous regions where people may kill and fight each other—are in eastern Europe. It would be fearful to rehearse the number of fires that could break out in the old Russian empire at any time. What will be the response of the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and, indeed, of WEU? There should be a talking shop where those organisations can argue it out, and that talking shop should be an enlarged WEU.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newark mentioned that he and I went to the European Space Agency in Madrid —a broad, exciting new initiative which, like many such initiatives, will cost money. If the agency is to advance and serve the Western European Union by monitoring and verifying the earth's environment, it will cost money and WEU will be asking us for that money. I say to my hon. Friend the Minister that we must be careful that a proportion of the money that the WEU asks from us is spent in the United Kingdom. Space technology involves

[Sir Donald Thompson]

the cutting edge of high-tech equipment, which companies in this country such as British Aerospace are so good at providing.

If the WEU decides that the European Space Agency should be its agent and should make up its own mind how WEU and Council of Europe money is spent, we shall receive only a small proportion of that trade because the agency spends its money in exact proportion to the amount of money contributed to it by national Governments. It receives only 3 per cent. from us, but we shall pay a much larger percentage to WEU and we shall be left as debtors to cash. We must consider carefully how we spend our money in WEU to ensure that our businesses and industries receive a fair return on that money.

I again thank my hon. Friend the Member for Newark for initiating the debate. Like him, I am proud to serve on the Council of Europe and the WEU. Hon. Members will have read my incisive and brilliant letter in *The Times* on 3 March deploring the present stand-off between us and the Labour party, which is damaging not the Conservative party or the Labour party, but Parliament as represented in Europe. I hope that wiser counsels, such as those of the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), will therefore prevail.

10.38 am

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I am grateful for being called early in the debate, and I apologise if I am not here for the closing speeches as I have a constituency lunch to attend. I am delighted to take part in the debate, which was so excellently initiated and introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander).

I welcome the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson). I was interested in his description of the arcane procedures of the Whips and how they are explained abroad. I remember being at a conference with some new east German representatives, who had not yet become members of their Parliament, at the time of the unification of Germany. They had just emerged from the former East Germany. I was with my right hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), who had just completed a stint as Deputy Chief Whip. He tried to explain to them the whipping procedures of the House. I distinctly recall that one of the East Germans looked distinctly bemused and said that if that was what democracy meant, perhaps the Stasi—the secret police of East Germany—were not so bad after all. It is difficult to explain the benign and friendly behaviour of our Whips to people in other countries.

This is an important debate. Hon. Members so far have focused on the importance of people who live in democracies working together and sharing their experiences. It is particularly important when those of us in what we proudly call a stable democracy can assist people in countries that are emerging from a bleak, dark background. With the collapse of communism, their attempts to create a stable society will not be without difficulty.

Those difficulties are not purely economic, although I accept that they are important if one wants a stable country. In many cases, cultural difficulties are experienced in coming to terms with the tolerance that is needed in a democratic society, tolerance of others' views and ethnic tolerance as well. I know that the Council of Europe is doing an important job in attracting new people to its meetings and attempting to share experiences for the greater good of the wider Europe.

This is a particularly crucial period in which to make such contacts, because the movement towards democracy from the ashes of communism will not be easy. As I said in an intervention, I am profoundly disturbed at the way in which Russia is going. We want to assist the general reforms that President Yeltsin has initiated, but if one looks slightly below the surface one sees disturbing signs, such as the Red-Brown coalition, Zhirinovsky and many other suggestions that the old guard in Russia may have given up their communist pretensions, but not necessarily their ambition to reunite what was the Soviet Union by other means.

I have spoken in the House before about the power of the Russian army in terms of its declared ability to intervene in the near abroad, so I will not take up time today by rehearsing that concern. It is a crucial matter, however, and the policies that we adopt towards some former members of the Soviet Union must be carefully judged between encouraging Russian expansionism and attempting to pull those countries into our western European councils in order to give them the strength to avoid that expansionism.

The situation in Estonia is extremely delicate, with 20,000 Russian troops still based in that country. The signs are similarly discouraging in other parts of the former Soviet Union such as Belarus. Ukraine is another enormous potential problem, because it is, to put it lightly, bankrupt. It is the only place where the Russian rouble is looked on as hard currency. The instability in the Ukraine is of critical and possibly vital importance to the rest of Europe. It has a population of 58 million and most of the population in the eastern half of the country is ethnic Russian. It is a vast land mass, including the trigger point of the Crimea. We and the Council of Europe must consider those serious problems.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newark spoke with great thoughtfulness about the potential role of WEU, which is the point upon which I wish to focus. It has an opportunity to play a vital role in attempting to solidify and strengthen the reaction of European powers to some of the problems and instabilities to which I have just referred, if they were ever to turn into security threats.

Following the Maastricht treaty, the position of WEU as the defence arm of the European Union is critical. In the past year or two, many initiatives have been launched in Europe, which I strongly support. They include the North Atlantic Co-operation Council, which now has about 30 members. It represents a co-operative security arrangement, or at least a way in which to share ideas on security policy.

We have also seen the emergence of the Balladur initiative, the stability plan, which is an attempt at preventive security and the NATO initiative—partnership for peace. I understand from this morning's edition of *The Daily Telegraph* that the Russians have agreed to join it, which is welcome. The partnership for peace initiative is broad, because it potentially covers all the former members of the Soviet Union, so it can be little more than an arrangement to try to remove the potential for tension or reaction. It will also be the means of planning joint manoeuvres and other arrangements under which a more secure basis for peace can be built.

What if anything went wrong and there was a requirement for some military action? What if the United States, as a leading member of NATO, was not necessarily ready to play a full part? This is why the recent NATO summit in Brussels was so important.

Sir Russell Johnston: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. In respect of the former Yugoslavia and the need for prompt action, does he agree that the WEU assembly and the Council of Europe assembly were well ahead of individual national Governments in taking action?

Mr. Taylor: I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. The Council of Europe and WEU responded quickly to the problems in the former Yugoslavia. The real difficulty, however, was that the efforts of WEU and NATO were often duplicated, as we saw in the Adriatic. I am now more confident, however, that those difficulties have been removed as a result of the NATO summit in Brussels in January.

I believe that at that summit the importance of WEU was clearly defined for the first time. Its status as the defence arm of the European Union was also clearly understood. That clarification is vital if we are to move towards achieving WEU's ultimate role of enforcing common foreign and security policy under the Maastricht treaty.

The Brussels summit made some important changes. The NATO command structure is being revised to cope with the instabilities in Europe to which I have referred. More concentration is to be given to mobile forces, away from static, territorial defence. Understandings now appear to have been reached for the use of United States intelligence targeting and lift capacity for WEU action in low-intensity conflict when American armed forces are not directly involved.

That is an important point, because, until now, it has not been clear how European forces could act, since we are dependent upon American assets. Under the Brussels NATO summit, the Americans have agreed that it is now possible, with their permission, but without their participation, for WEU to have access to the vital components of intelligence targeting and lift capacity.

Sir Donald Thompson: When my hon. Friend talks of American forces, does he mean land and naval forces, or simply naval forces?

Mr. Taylor: I am positing a possibility that is widely talked of in NATO about America not wishing to commit its land forces. In those circumstances, doubt had been expressed about whether the ability of WEU to undertake separate action was a credible option, because, if America was not using its land forces, it was unclear whether European powers would have access to intelligence targeting and lift capacity, which are owned by America, although assigned to NATO. That is an important step for the credibility of the Western European Union.

The second matter to emerge from the Brussels summit was confirmation of the move to flexible command structures and combined joint task forces within NATO to accommodate Western European Union activity. That could provide one of the signals that are necessary to bring the French further into operations with other European countries under WEU capacity. It is certainly unlikely that the French would join an integrated command, but they seem to be moving to an understanding of the concept of separable but not separate involvement. For example, they have accepted double hatting of the Euro corps, which is gaining more and more adherents. British forces are not part of that, but more and more European countries are assigning forces to it, double hatted with NATO.

The agreement by the French that their forces in the Euro corps should be double hatted to NATO indicates a significant shift in the French position. It was also highly significant that the French Defence Minister attended the Brussels summit. I am not sure about the official description of his attendance and shall leave that to those who are more knowledgeable about the accuracy of those terms. However, to me his physical presence was interesting and important.

All that provides the Western European Union with the beginnings of the possibility of enforcing the European Union's common foreign and security policies. The importance of that should not be underestimated, given the disturbances that are possible within the wider Europe and the potential for conflict on the fringes of Europe, both of which could affect our security and interests. In both those areas, the Americans may feel less than fully committed although supportive of western European interests. Those matters could grow in importance in the years ahead.

The credibility of European common foreign and security policies will depend on the ability of Europe to enforce them with military action if that should be necessary. I am delighted at the way things are going. Nevertheless—and this is my only reference to a debate that may take place later today—if western Europe is prepared to adopt a higher profile defensive role, western European countries will have to remember that they will not be able to grab the peace dividend.

Countries that have sharply reduced defence expenditure in the past year or two will probably have to reverse that trend or at least arrest it. I accept the stricture in terms of the British Government's position. In our case, a fall in the percentage of gross domestic product from about 5 per cent. in the mid-1980s to 3 per cent. by 1995-96 is having an effect not only on manpower levels but on operational capability and runs the risk of overstretch. I do not wish to be drawn further into that, but merely place on record the fact that it is important to have not only the political will but the military capacity to react to reinforce foreign policy objectives.

The interlinkage of the European Union and the WEU is vital and will assist in the development of a clear British goal—to ensure that common foreign and security policies in the European Union are credible. I welcome the fact that those are on an intergovernmental pillar, because I cannot see any other way in which countries can work together and, at the same time, guard their national interests. However, working together will lead to a much greater common appreciation of those common interests and there will be a much more instinctive preparedness to act and to ensure that the action is common. That has been held together with great difficultly over the former Yugoslavia but, thankfully, it has been done with great effectiveness.

The European Union has not diverged: it has held a common line. I admit that at times that has not been easy, but the important matter is that Western European countries have not fallen out with each other over events in the Balkans. Historically, that is worthy of note because the Balkans have often triggered strong antagonisms between the great western European powers.

[Mr. Taylor]

All that leads me to the conclusion that the Western European Union is about to enter a new and very important phase. As I said earlier, the Council of Europe plays an important role in bringing countries together to exchange ideas on how to reinforce democracy. The WEU can provide an important plank for Europe to gain great influence on enforcing security and making some credible effort to provide a collective security arrangement for those principal central European countries that will inevitably begin to join it. It will not be an immediate effort, because any country which joins the WEU and NATO would have to accept the article 5 obligation on collective security. That matter should be subject to careful consideration.

Meanwhile, there is co-operative security and a general commitment to look closely at the need to respond if any member of the partnership for peace or the North Atlantic Co-operation Council feels that its own security is threatened. Response is not automatic, but we can consider whether the threat is capable of being treated seriously. As a result of the Brussels summit, the WEU will have a serious and credible operational ability to respond.

In all those areas, we are moving in the right direction. I welcome the debate, and I hope that for the years to come we are signalling the direction of a Europe that is united politically and capable of looking after its own defence.

10.56 am

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander), first, on having the good fortune to come top of the ballot for private Members' motions and, secondly, on having the good sense to choose a motion on the Council of Europe and the Western European Union. Little is said and known about both and the debate will help to inform people at Westminster and throughout the country about the significant contribution of WEU and the Council to freedom and democracy throughout Europe and beyond.

I served as a member of the United Kingdom delegation to both bodies for two and a half years and felt privileged to be part of a worthy all-party team. As a former member, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to members of both Houses of Parliament who take on senior roles in the Council of Europe and the Western European Union. The list of United Kingdom members in the information bulletin which has just been published shows the extensive commitment to the business of those organisations by our representatives. Their roles include chairmanships, vice-chairmanships and rapporteurs.

I join other hon. Members in giving particular recognition to my noble Friend Lord Finsberg, who is the leader of our delegation. He enjoys considerable status, not only in our delegation, but in the delegations of other countries because he is a previous president and vice-president of the assemblies of the Council of Europe and the Western European Union.

During my time with the team, I was deeply impressed by my noble Friend's abilities, his dedication to duty and the impressive way in which he presented to our continental colleagues the rather British method of doing things and for which he has gained enormous respect. For example, when he was in the chair for an Assembly meeting it started on time. I can remember the first assembly meeting that he chaired, when he informed members that they were to be given only seven minutes each in which to make their case, thus giving every member on the long list of those wishing to speak an opportunity to gain the attention of the assembly and to put his or her case.

The first speaker began—one of our very good continental friends—and he was totally amazed when Lord Finsberg, or Sir Geoffrey as he was known then, stopped him in mid-flow after exactly seven minutes, switched off the microphone and informed everyone that he was moving on to the next speaker. By the time the fourth or fifth speaker had been called, everyone had certainly got the message. To the delight of all the speakers on the chairman's list, including me, we were all called to make our contribution to the debate that morning. When Sir Geoffrey brought the business to a close, there was a loud cheer from everyone in the assembly on the way in which he had handled the meeting.

In the corridor shortly afterwards, on my way back to the United Kingdom delegation office, I bumped into one of our French colleagues who was notorious for making very long, boring and repetitive speeches. He was full of enthusiasm for Sir Geoffrey's chamber discipline, much to the relief of all his colleagues. The very British way of fairness and an even-handed approach to procedure was applauded by all.

Another colleague who has also taken a senior role in WEU is my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) and I pay tribute to him for the very important work that he is doing and congratulate him on his role as President.

Many important points have been made already by hon. Members on both sides of the House and I shall not repeat them. There are two areas in the work of the Council of Europe on which I would like to focus. The first involves the role of the COE in connection with the demise of communism in central and eastern European countries and the important support that the Council of Europe is giving to those emerging democracies.

The collapse of the old Soviet empire was the most liberating moment in European history this century. I think that few of us will forget the joy and enthusiasm which accompanied the fall of the Berlin wall and the spread of freedom to central Europe. Old nation states have reappeared after being submerged for half a century. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia—the Visegrad Four—have regained control of their destinies. They are enthusiastically embracing democracy and are looking to the west for assistance. However, they have seen the Soviet Union break into a patchwork of states, some with civil war, with rising tensions between Russia and the Ukraine. I am sure that we all appreciate why the Visegrad Four feel vulnerable. That is why I am delighted that they have joined the Council of Europe, along with a number of other former communist countries.

The Council of Europe offers a broad area of political debate, funds programmes of co-operation and assistance, participates in cultural and educational projects and, perhaps most important of all, as my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) has acknowledged, is a stepping stone towards involvement in other major European institutions. Any serious applicant to the European Union is expected to ratify the Council's European convention on human rights. The other countries

joining the Council of Europe include Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia and, among the Baltic states, Estonia and Lithuania.

At the same time, the Western European Union has established a forum for security consultation to bring together WEU members and the states of eastern Europe. These are likely to lead to a new affiliate WEU status consistent with NATO'S partnership for peace. It is clear that, step by step, the states of central Europe are being welcomed into our western European institutions. There is no doubt that the Council of Europe is playing a key role in helping to give them the appropriate support for stability and cohesion—two priceless assets for which they yearn.

I raise a second point on a totally different topic: the European Pharmacopoeia. As chairman of the Select Committee on Health, I was most interested to read in the March edition of the Council of Europe magazine *Forum* about the important work of this body. The magazine's special section draws attention to the fact that in 1964 eight countries agreed that harmonising their drugs legislation was in everyone's interest. Today, more than 20 states are involved in preparing and enforcing a whole series of common standards—one way of guaranteeing the quality of medicines currently on sale in Europe. The European Pharmacopoeia is also one of the European drugs industry's main weapons in its fight against American and Japanese competition.

From a legal point of view, the European Pharmacopoeia is unique in that it is the only one of its kind to be supranational in scope, which means that it has the force of law in all the countries that have signed the convention. In fact, its influence extends considerably further—it serves as a reference for many countries with cultural or historical links to one or other of the signatories. The Council of Europe is thus making its contribution to the safety of medicines which, in turn, means greater protection for the European citizen, coupled with support for the European pharmaceutical industry. I am sure that the House wishes to join me in registering pleasure that the convention on the elaboration of a European Pharmacopoeia is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

Finally, I place on record my admiration for the good cross-party working relationship that exists in the COE and WEU United Kingdom team. I am aware that there is a problem at the moment involving attendance at meetings and that the lack of pairing arrangements has curbed Members' trips across the channel to undertake their duties. I am sad that the British delegation is not making its very considerable contribution to the deliberations of those organisations at the moment. I know that our many continental friends are missing their wisdom and co-operation and I hope that the problem can be resolved as soon as possible so that the United Kingdom group can take its rightful place at the centre of debate and discussion and exert its considerable influence on decision making.

11.8 am

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) on choosing this subject for debate and on winning the ballot. It is, after all, a raffle which we should all like to win. I think that he was very astute in choosing to debate this subject.

It is somewhat regrettable that the Government do not find time to have a regular debate on the work of the Council of Europe and the Western European Union. All Members of Parliament—whether from the Opposition or the Government side of the House—are appointed as members of the British delegation with a letter from the Prime Minister's office. Since we represent the British Parliament in those parliamentary assemblies abroad, I think that it is incumbent on the Government to find time for us to report to the House about what we do. We should not have to rely on the astuteness and wisdom of the hon. Member for Newark.

I thoroughly enjoy my membership of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe and I wear the 12-star button in my lapel. It is usually incorrectly identified as the flag of the European Union. On 5 May, we shall celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the statute of the Council of Europe in 1949. Perhaps the Minister, the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), can spare a moment from his important deliberations to listen to what I am saying—*[Interruption.]*

I am deeply grateful to the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) for drawing the Minister's attention to the fact that I am trying to address him through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It would be helpful and appreciated if, on 5 May, the flag of the Council of Europe—the 12-star flag that is often wrongly identified as the flag of the European Union—could be flown in the capital city on the anniversary of the Council's foundation. Of course, 5 May is also local election day, so no doubt the Minister will have things to mourn, but there could be a cause to celebrate and to unite both sides of the House.

I find working on Council of Europe committees an excellent antidote to the introspection and parochialism of this place. It is amazing that just a short journey takes one, almost literally, into a different world. Matters that concern us so much in the House seem to have no reverberations outside it, certainly not beyond our shores. One can be in Strasbourg during the parliamentary assembly and have to struggle hard to find out what is happening in this place. One can consider problems on a broader canvas in the wider world. That is intellectually refreshing for those of us fortunate enough to be members of the Council of Europe and parliamentary assembly.

The hon. Member for Broxbourne mentioned the fact that few people outside—and not many inside—this place know much about the Council of Europe. It is not my function to go through the handbook of its institutions, but it is worth reminding colleagues on both sides of the House of the way in which we go about securing delegations. The Opposition elect their delegation via the regional groupings, while I understand that the Conservatives make direct appointments—no doubt appointments of the Prime Minister, closely advised by the Whips. So be it.

When I was first elected and arrived in our delegation offices in Strasbourg I was greeted by the then Conservative Member for Streatham, who said, "What are you doing here? This is a place for people who are finished." I found that remark acutely depressing; when I looked around I realised that he was speaking more than a germ of truth—*[Laughter.]* Let me develop my argument. I do not think that it is incumbent on Conservative Members, particularly members of the delegation, to laugh at what was said by a member of the Conservative party. I mean no disrespect to anyone on the delegation. The former Member for Streatham revealed an element of truth.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Being a member of the delegation seems to be regarded by Conservatives as a reward for past services—so be it. Everyone is entitled to a reward, but in this case the reward is for past services. Opposition Members have to choose. The rules of the parliamentary Labour party do not allow anyone to be a member of the delegation to the Council of Europe and be a member of the Front-Bench team.

I was placed in the invidious position recently of having to make a choice between remaining in the delegation to the Council of Europe parliamentary assembly or coming off the Front Bench. I chose to come off the Front Bench, not because I am totally devoid of party political ambition —although some might think that my occasional suicidal forays would suggest that I am—but because I find the work of the Council of Europe so interesting. It enables me to see problems in the round, gives me a greater perspective on the country's political problems and allows me to appreciate more keenly the problems and possibilities of Europe as a whole. I made that choice, but I do not think that I should have been forced into the position of having to make that choice.

Other member countries seem to regard their delegations more seriously than we do. Many of my hon. Friends, and perhaps Conservative Members as well, think that one becomes a member of the Council of Europe because it is a junket or a boondoggle, as the Americans say. They seem to think that the only reason why we are members is that we like tripping and clocking up air miles —a little advantage that I understand the Government have recently been shutting off. It is not like that, but it is because we are never given the opportunity to debate in the House what we do as a delegation on behalf of this place that some of the misconceptions arise.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the organisation is so important—as I believe we all do—what steps is he taking to put pressure on the Opposition to ensure that co-operation is re-established so that the delegations can continue to go to Europe?

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman asks a good question. I cannot reveal—indeed, I do not want to reveal in the presence of the Opposition deputy Chief Whip—what is going on. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the leader of the Labour delegation, my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), who is present on the Front Bench, has made a series of representations. We recognise that considerations in this place must be taken into account, but there are also wider considerations and our European relationships are being affected.

Our colleagues on the other side of the channel do not understand what is going on, and a few people here do not understand either. I shall not say what is going on—the Opposition deputy Chief Whip is a wise old bird who understands exactly what is going on. I hope that, eventually, the Conservative Government will recognise the validity of our case and concede the various arguments that we are making so that we can restore normal relations as soon as possible.

To return to the way in which national Parliaments treat their delegations to the Council of Europe, there is far more of a procession between the national delegations of other countries and ministerial office than there is on all sides of our British delegation. Mr. Pangalos—a Greek socialist —is now the Foreign Minister of Greece. When the Foreign Ministers meet, he chairs the Council. There have been examples of people having gone from their national delegations to high office in their own Governments. We do not seem to do that, which shows that this place gives membership of the Council of Europe low priority. That is wrong, and not simply because I happen to be a member of it. It is wrong in terms of the work that the Council of Europe carries out and the role that it plays in building a wider Europe—the sort of subjects that have been discussed by hon. Members on both sides of the House this morning.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) mentioned political groupings. He said that, although we go as a British delegation, we fall into our respective party groups, which is self-evidently true. But it is also true that, within our national groups and delegations, we manage to achieve a much wider consensus in Strasbourg than in Westminster. That is partly because we have to operate with other national delegations and political groups, and the need to find a consensus is always present. But here there is no need to find a consensus.

Our system is not about finding a consensus, but about winning a vote. As long as there are enough votes to achieve victory, it does not matter whether consensus is achieved, and that damages this place in many respects. We are unable to proceed on the basis of mutual agreement on broad issues. It is a confrontational place. The positioning of the parties places us in face-to-face confrontation. Rather like spectators at a football match, the pitch is below us and we are up in the Kop. We cheer our own team even if they play badly. As a result, we lose something. I do not find the word "consensus" weak, although some of my colleagues do.

When I was a trade union official, consensus meant achieving, through negotiation, an agreement that maximised the achievement of what both sides wanted. Consensus, to my mind, is not a weak word in that sense. It is a way of living. Life is a consensus, for God's sake. We try to achieve what we want, but we have to make concessions from time to time. However, in the House it is "take no prisoners." Although that might be good fun from a party-political point of view, I wonder at times how much it advances the national interest—and I mean genuinely the national interest, rather than narrow party interests.

The last point that I shall make about consensus is that I am pleasantly surprised from time to time by the amount of agreement that we can achieve. I see former Conservative Ministers, Tory Members, signing up to things that I imagine they would never be prepared to support if the matter came back to the House. The fact that so much that we do in the Council of Europe is never rehearsed here might be what enables them, as it were, to lead a double life. I do not know.

Mrs. Roe: When the hon. Gentleman speaks about consensus, does he agree that there is a forum in the House where we try to get consensus, and that is the Select Committee system? There Members of all parties work together on a specific inquiry and try to reach a conclusion where there is consensus—general agreement.

Mr. Banks: I agree with the hon. Lady and I pay tribute to her work as Chair of the Health Select Committee. It is

an interesting point because, when we have to produce something that is broadly in conformity with the views of the whole Committee, we are able to achieve consensus. It is obviously not working in the Home Affairs Select Committee with regard to the financing of political parties, so it will not work in every instance, but it tends to work broadly if we want it to work.

Perhaps that is why the Select Committees receive far more public respect outside the House than do proceedings on the Floor of the House of Commons. There are lessons to learn there. Perhaps we fall into traditional roles when we get into the Chamber. One listens to an argument of a Member on the other side and thinks, "That is not a bad argument", and vice versa, but one does not translate that into one's voting pattern. It is not a debating Chamber in that sense. We do not walk in to listen to the ebb and flow of debate and think, "That is very good", and then defy our party Whips and walk into a different Lobby. One would not survive very long, and nor would the party system, in this place if that were to happen.

The stark contrast between the work on the Council of Europe parliamentary assembly and the work that we do here always comes home to me. I trust that I am not considered a weak-minded individual. I do not find consensus a frightening concept. I like the constructive nature of the debates that we have in the Council of Europe and the way in which we can strip away so much of the party rhetoric that goes on here which, frankly, is intellectually demeaning and does not advance the cause of either side very much.

That is all by way of a digression actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I allowed myself to be enticed by Conservative Members. Wait until the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) reads my speech—because he will, I can assure you.

The role of the Council of Europe received an enormous boost with the developments in eastern Europe in the mid-1980s and has gathered considerable pace since as country after country seeks to democratise its political institutions. That provides an enormous challenge for Europe and an enormous and exciting challenge for the Council of Europe. The countries of eastern Europe need all the economic and political help that we can give them.

It is interesting to note that the end of the cold war has led to an upsurge in a number of exceedingly dangerous regional conflicts, but the battleground in Europe has shifted from the military to the political and the economic. Although Conservative and Opposition Members have identified real dangers, especially in respect of the possible break-up of Russia and the problems in the Ukraine, it is not for us simply to stand on the sidelines wringing our hands. They will be real difficulties for us, not just for them. In those circumstances, far more positive action is necessary from the western democracies to give assistance to the emerging eastern democracies—economic and political action, but especially economic at the moment, to ensure that those newly emerging democracies in eastern Europe do not disintegrate socially and politically.

That provides the opportunity for the Council of Europe to fulfil its role as the democratic training ground of Europe. That is how I regard the Council of Europe—as a democratic training ground, especially for eastern Europe in terms of political democracy and human rights. It is true that, of the 32 countries that are now members of the Council of Europe, those new entrants to the democratic family of nations regard the Council of Europe as an essential stepping stone to the European Union. The first thing that they do is line up to join the Council of Europe.

That is one of the arguments that I use when members of the Labour party ask, "What is the point of the thing?" I can tell them that the eastern European countries see the point of it. That is why they immediately line up to join the Council of Europe: because they regard it as the essential stepping stone to the wider Europe as we expand the European Union. Of course, it is inconceivable that any country should or could join the European Union now without first having been and proven itself a good member of the Council of Europe.

I shall develop two points that have been mentioned before. Should we expect applicant countries to be fully democratic before they join the Council of Europe? That argument has gone on regularly in the parliamentary assembly and in the political affairs committee. We set, rightly, high standards of membership for the Council of Europe. That is what makes it so strong. However, there is also an argument that says: should not we throw our democratic embrace around the newly emerging democracies to reinforce the democratic elements in those societies? Or do we stand by and say, "Only when you can match up to the mature democratic standards of western Europe will you be allowed to be a full participating member of the Council of Europe parliamentary assembly"?

That is a dilemma for us. We do not want to diminish the democratic standards of the Council of Europe, but we do not want the flickering flames of democracy in eastern Europe to disappear under the reaction that could take place as people's great expectations at the overthrow of totalitarianism are frustrated and thwarted by what they see coming afterwards.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it does not help if Britain gets itself into the position of arguing against a direct right of appeal for the individual to the European Court of Human Rights?

Mr. Banks: Yes. That is another discussion that is going on in the Council of Europe. It illustrates the fact that our western democracies are by no means perfect, in terms of either democratic institutions or human rights. The fact that the British Government have taken the position that they have does not look good. It sends the wrong message. All right, so perhaps we feel—I will take the position of the British Government for a few minutes in this new consensual feeling that has overwhelmed me—that British citizens have adequate and other protections in our parliamentary or legal systems. That might be the Conservatives' argument, but it could be used by less democratic Governments in other parts of Europe to say, "Here is a mature British democracy doing it, so it cannot be wrong, can it?" It can be wrong and it is wrong. That is why it is essential for the British Government to rethink the position. If not, we shall send out the wrong messages.

Sir Donald Thompson: The hon. Gentleman has had a distinguished career in the Council of Europe with new European nations, and he will know that those new nations are sitting down in committees in their own capitals and making up the constitution. They are saying, "Let us try this bit", "Let us try that bit", and "Let us try the other bit", in a way that one would have thought impossible five years ago. They are sitting there and doing it. Surely, then, while

[Sir Donald Thompson]

they are doing that they are saying, "We need to get into the Council of Europe. Let us write that bit in." So we must be as resolute as possible on the Council of Europe to ensure that those bits, which protect citizens at all levels, are put in.

Mr. Banks: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is interesting that the new nations are all producing written constitutions. We still do not have one in Britain. Perhaps we could examine our credentials to see whether we qualify as a truly democratic nation. We are requiring a number of things from those eastern European countries that we do not even have in this country, such as a Bill of Rights and a written constitution.

Mr. Duncan: No way.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman says "No way". That might be the case now, but a great movement going on outside this place will eventually influence us and lead us to having a written constitution and a Bill of Rights. But that is an argument for another day.

It is intriguing to see what is happening in those countries. Only when I went to Lithuania and sat in on several such discussions did I realise how much assistance they need. Simple matters such as organising political parties or registers of electors had never before occurred in the sense that we know it. Those countries need some basic know-how, which we can give them, and it seems right to do so through the Council of Europe.

My second point was raised by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber—where does Europe end on the map? It must end somewhere. The argument has been going on in the Council's political affairs committee. The Asian republics of the former Soviet Union cannot be classified as European, or we would be left with the narrows of the Baring straits in Alaska and we would move down Canada and into the United States. We all know that the world is round—at least Opposition Members know it, although there may be a few flat-earthists left on the Government Benches—but we must draw a line, or the Council of Europe will end up encompassing the world. That is an interesting concept, but a line must be drawn.

The fact that Israel has been granted observer status sometimes make me feel that we have stepped over a line that we should not have stepped over. I understand the reasons for that in the past, but it sends out confusing messages to those who wish to join the Council of Europe, particularly when we are discussing the need for a line that defines Europe on the map, with membership not being available to countries on the wrong side of that line. However, those countries should be able to take up observer status.

The Council of Europe could take on board two further functions. Because of its support for human rights, it could easily act as the United Nations regional representative in that vital area of concern. If we are to have a UN commission for human rights, the duplication of those responsibilities through different institutions would cost an enormous amount and would not necessarily be efficient. The UN could build on the Council of Europe's role in Europe as the upholder, preserver and guardian of human rights in our part of the globe.

The second function that the Council of Europe could usefully perform is to act as a co-ordinator of election monitoring. For example, every national institution and Parliament in Europe was asked to send observers to Russia's elections. It can get confusing. The Council of Europe is the obvious umbrella organisation to co-ordinate those observers of elections in eastern Europe and elsewhere.

May I say to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber that it is interesting to see how the new eastern European democracies are sending delegations to the Council of Europe. I am not particularly alarmed at the thought of Vladimir Zhirinovsky turning up at the Council of Europe. He is a complete nutter, but it may be a sign of an emerging and healthy democracy that they can afford to elect a semi-lunatic. After all, we do it here fairly regularly. In those circumstances, we should not be too concerned that that individual may turn up. Perhaps we could teach him something; if not, we could organise a fairly good multinational fight around him.

I have been very privileged—it is an overused word in politics, but I feel genuinely privileged—to have been a member of the Council of Europe and Western European Union parliamentary assemblies for a few years now. I have been particularly privileged to listen to some distinguished heads of government and state from around Europe addressing the parliamentary assemblies. It was great to be able to ask Helmut Kohl a question and to corner Mrs. Brundtland from Norway about Norway's irresponsible attitude towards whaling. She went totally nuclear, but Conservative and Labour Members thoroughly enjoyed it. Geoffrey Finsberg, my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and I felt that we were exercising democracy. Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland did not share our enthusiasm and enjoyment, but it was a privilege to be able to do it.

The greatest moment of my membership of the Council of Europe was in May 1989 when I heard Mikhail Gorbachev, then President of the Soviet Union, speak to the parliamentary assembly. He chose to address us rather than the European Union. He talked about a Europe that stretches from the Atlantic to the Urals and about the common European home. He created, as he and a number of others can, a vision of a united Europe. Although we have our difficulties, it was exciting to hear him talking in those terms. He was the leader of what many people in this country saw as the enemy, addressing us and discussing our common ideals, common purposes and common European home. That was a high spot for me. The Council of Europe represents the basis for that common European home and it is built on the firmest foundations.

The Council of Europe deserves our full support and enthusiastic participation. I congratulate the hon. Member for Newark on choosing this subject for debate. I only hope that, in future, the Government will debate it regularly in Government time.

11.36 am

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): On the last occasion that I spoke at length in this place on a European matter I was wearing a tie similar to that worn today by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston)—the tie of the Council of Europe. On that occasion, the tie got more comment than my speech, so I decided to wear a more politically neutral tie today.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) who introduced the debate. He rightly

referred to the Labour party's attitude to non co-operation in this place at present, which is frustrating hon. Members' contribution to the Council of Europe and Western European Union. The Opposition's activity sits ill with their claim to be a good European party. A Labour Front-Bench Member recently advocated that we should pass into British law a measure that he knew was contrary to a treaty that we had signed, on the ground that it would take a long time for the treaty to catch up with us and for the courts to hear the complaint that would flow from passing that measure into law.

It is all very well for the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) to lambast the Government for not having a regular debate on this subject. The groaning Opposition Benches hardly pay testimony to his call for such a debate. I should have much more sympathy for that call if the Labour party at least allowed the institutions to run effectively. I noticed that the Labour Deputy Chief Whip carefully took on board his remarks on that subject and I hope that he will bear them in mind.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West disingenuously suggested that a list of demands were being made by the Leader of the Opposition. From this side, it looks rather like the classic mistake of the trade union negotiator who gets into a dispute and does not know how to get out of it. I had more sympathy for much of the rest of his speech and agreed with the general thrust of what he said. I understand his concern about consensus and was interested in what he said about the Council of Europe in that respect. Here we tend to work towards the same aim, but use a different process of reconciliation—a more robust word which would command more respect on these Benches—in an attempt to reconcile conflicting points of view rather than work towards some arbitrary consensus.

The main purpose of my remarks is to discuss the context of the institutions that are the subject of the motion and to examine whether the institutional structures of the Council of Europe, the Western European Union and the European Union itself—I hope that that will be a subject for a later debate in which I would also wish to take part—are appropriate for the Europe of the future.

It is important to pause and examine the state of modern Europe. Obviously, the whole world rejoiced when communism collapsed in Europe, and rightly so. It was—as I think is agreed on both sides of the House—a repulsive creed which doomed millions of our fellow citizens of Europe to live in repression and fear. The creed lives on in some parts of the world—noticeably in China—but in Europe and in most of the rest of the world, it is firmly finished.

For the countries of eastern Europe, and indeed for the whole world, that is obviously a cause for great rejoicing, but it has an effect on the drive towards peace in many other regions. For example, in the middle east the collapse of the Soviet Union has played a major part in pushing Syria towards considering the previously unconsiderable—the prospect of peace with Israel. In a world with only one super-power, Syria cannot afford to be an enemy of that super-power. The imperative for peace around the world grows as a direct result of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.

Sir Donald Thompson: May I take my hon. Friend back—he cannot possibly remember—to the end of the war, when the Council of Europe began under the instigation of Winston Churchill? He went to Strasbourg and asked where the Germans were. The other countries said that the war had just finished. Churchill said that peace had just begun and that we could not have a Council of Europe without the Germans. Now, we cannot have a Council of Europe without those countries that were formerly communist.

Mr. Luff: I associate myself entirely with the wise remarks of my hon. Friend. He rightly draws attention to the constantly far-sighted attitude of the former distinguished leader of our party, Mr. Churchill, in making those remarks at that time.

Having expressed some optimism about the effects of the collapse of the Soviet Union on places such as the middle east, I know that it is acknowledged generally that that same collapse has made local conflicts in Europe and elsewhere more likely. Civil wars may increase in number, but global conflict, at least, seems less likely. For Britain, the United States and the rest of Europe, the collapse of communism is producing a whole set of problems which we did not foresee when the Berlin wall came tumbling down.

As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said to the Royal College of Defence Studies in London on 8 December:

> "Across history, the defeat of empires has led to elation—often followed by confusion among the victors. Victories which change the old truths are disquieting. It is tempting to portray our old enemies as the source of all our insecurity. But life is not so simple.
>
> The collapse of the Soviet Empire, unlike the collapse of most previous Empires, did not need a decisive battle. It was an implosion rather an explosion. But the disappearance of one of the most implacable enemies the countries of Europe have ever faced has presented us with a new set of challenges."

Those challenges are real and are more wide ranging than is often realised.

In a funny way, the Soviet Union gave western Europe its own identity. It gave us an identity by defining the opposite of liberal western democracy. There is now consensus that the end of communism in mainland Europe has had one important consequence. The way in which the Germans chose to re-unify has thrown the rest of the European economy into turmoil. I am glad to say that that is a turmoil from which Britain seems to be emerging; indeed, already has emerged. However, that factor was damaging.

Much more fundamental—where the institutions of the Council of Europe and the WEU have an important role to play—is the loss of the moral comparison for western liberal democratic capitalism. In the west, we have always been able to judge our success and our freedom relative to our communist neighbours. Communism was the common enemy by which we measured the health of our society. Its demise has robbed us of that powerful weapon. We are now forced to argue the details of how we run our affairs in Britain and in the rest of Europe without that overwhelming argument, based on the evils of the old, totalitarian alternative. The major failures of western liberal democracies, such as high unemployment, will be much harder for us to explain away when we cannot remind people of the unpalatable consequences of the only real alternative.

The implications of that change are huge. I believe that the Council of Europe and the WEU have a major role to play in addressing them. I am not for a minute regretting the end of communism in Europe. I have always been a firm believer that Marks and Spencer is better than Marx

[Mr. Luff]

and Engels. However, there is a difficult consequence for political debate in western Europe as a direct result of the collapse of the Berlin wall. That factor lies in large part behind the collapse of confidence among the electors of many European and other countries in the way in which we run our political society. They have lost sight of the alternative.

As Winston Churchill remarked in the House in November 1947:

"No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time;"—[*Official Report*, 11 November 1947; Vol. 444, c. 206.]

He was right. That cautionary advice now lacks so much power, because the alternative to democracy has disappeared.

We are very fortunate that the institutions of Europe have developed in a happy and fortuitous way in which to help us to address that problem. It is an accidental tripod of institutions. The Council of Europe, the WEU and the European Union—or the European Community as I still prefer to call it—exist to address the problems facing Europe.

Post-communist Europe has four basic organisational needs. First, the European Community, serves the needs of free trade, co-operation in other areas of strong mutual advantage, the underpinning of democracy in countries which only recently were far from democratic—Spain, Greece, Portugal—and most importantly, the reduction in the likelihood of war between those countries, especially between France and Germany.

Another need has emerged more recently since the end of the cold war: to provide an effective defence structure to maintain the security of our continent and to provide the European pillar for the Atlantic alliance.

Thirdly, a point of which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West made a great deal, with which I agree, there is the need for a forum for debate and involvement of the wider Europe, not only eastern Europe, but some of the countries such as Turkey on the fringe of Europe whose aspiration is to be part of the EU in due course. Those countries may involve themselves in that democratic debate and in that democratic training ground of which the hon. Gentleman spoke so accurately.

There is a fourth need. It is a mechanism for Europe —the cradle of western civilisation—to ensure that the values of civilisation, especially with regard to human rights, are respected across the whole continent of Europe. That is an important function.

My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) outlined many of the agreements, organisations and structures that exist, particularly in the defence field. However, the basic structure that has emerged is a simple one: the European Union, the Western European Union and—to couple the third and fourth needs: a democratic training ground and the protection of human rights—the Council of Europe, together with its related activity in the European Commission of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights. That three-legged structure—we are always told that three-legged structures are the most stable—has happened almost by accident. One of those legs, the Western European Union, could so easily have been knocked away, yet it was not.

I shall look first at the Council of Europe. The Council, about which I shall not add much to what many hon. Members have already said, seems to have secured for itself a firm future. Its large membership of 32 full members, nine countries with the rather charming status of special guests of the Council of Europe and one observer, Israel, has a proven track record. There is now general consensus that its role is invaluable.

The aspect of its work that is noted in the motion moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Newark—to protect minorities and human rights—has possibly attracted the most interest. It is in that respect that the Council of Europe often gets itself into hot water in this country. Sometimes, the United Kingdom and our voters feel that we have a poor record at the European Court of Human Rights.

It is true that many of the applications to the Court have come from the United Kingdom, but the vast majority of those applications have been judged to be inadmissible. One reason why a large number of United Kingdom cases go to the Court is that the convention has not been incorporated in United Kingdom domestic law. I heard what the hon. Member for Newham, North-West said on the subject of Bills of rights. That is as it may be—I am no great enthusiast for written constitutions.

Many complaints are taken to the European Court of Human Rights simply because there are no domestic remedies. Since 1981, only 20 cases that have come before the European Court of Human Rights relating to the United Kingdom Government have been judged to be violations of human rights. That is against the background in the United Kingdom over the past three years of an average of 939 cases a year being referred to the European Commission of Human Rights. It is interesting that France has a higher average figure of 1,464.

The European Court of Human Rights has a valuable and important role to play in the structure of Europe. Sometimes, when Tory Members complain about the interfering nature of the Court, as I have heard them do, they do not understand that simply because a case is referred to the Court does not mean that the Court will have any sympathy for it. Britain's record is much better than that.

In the most recent year for which I have figures a total of 48 judgments were made by the Court; in 27 cases the Court reached the conclusion that there had been at least one violation of human rights. The United Kingdom had three judgments made by the Court, and in only one was there found a violation. Therefore, we should have some confidence that the European Court is not the monster that it sometimes seems to be; indeed, it is a valuable protection of human rights throughout the whole of the European house.

Having had some reservations about other aspects of the work of the Council of Europe, I must admit that perhaps I was guilty to some extent of the sin referred to by several hon. Members as regarding the Council as a "boondoggle" —I think that was the word used by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. Much of what I have heard today has at least partly reassured me. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) talked about the European Pharmacopoeia. That seems to be a valuable and practical example of the work that such an institution can perform.

It is also worth noting that the Council of Europe is not a particularly expensive institution. The United Kingdom's contribution to the work of the Council of Europe came to

some £15 million in the most recent year for which figures are available. That does not mean to say that we can be entirely relaxed about the way in which the Council handles those funds. Hon. Members will be intrigued by a report in the *Financial Times* of 11 December 1993. I quote:

"European fund for refugees criticised in report. A fund owned by 21 European governments to help refugees evolved into a substantial investor in international money markets and provided lavish rewards for its staff . . . The report by accountants Castel Jacquet Ernst and Young into the activities of the Council of Europe's Social Fund says it exercised insufficient care in monitoring how its loans, which totalled Ecu6.7bn (£5.1bn) at the end of 1992, were used.

A loan from the fund had, for example, been used to finance the building of a Sheraton hotel in Milan, according to Mrs. Paule Dufour, president of the fund's governing body, who has been trying to reform the institutions.

The Ernst report also discloses that cheap mortgages for employees were used for property speculation and executives were allowed to make large withdrawals from a pension fund while retaining their jobs."

That shows how important it is for the British delegation to get back to the Council of Europe and do their job of scrutinising the work of the Council. I hope that that will be possible soon.

I turn to the work of the Western European Union. Against the background of the collapse of communism, the question that we must ask ourselves is to what extent Russia is a threat to European security. It is a fact that the Russian federation is the only state which has the military potential to commit an act of aggression on any massive scale against our country and is not firmly aligned with the United Kingdom. Similarly, it is the only state which has the potential to commit massive aggression against any NATO member. The Russian federation is unique in Europe in that it possesses both nuclear weapons and the ability to arm and equip peacetime armed forces which, even when current reductions have worked through, are likely to number more than 1 million men.

The question for British policy planners is whether there is a residual threat from the Russian federation—the old threat from the Russian bear which has haunted British foreign policy down the decades. That gives rise to dilemmas in Britain. Should NATO's mutual security commitments be extended to any state in eastern Europe, including the Baltic republics?

I am optimistic about the Russian federation. The fact that the buffer states of the old Warsaw pact are no longer there—or, at least, are now in a different guise—reduces substantially the threat that we face from the Russian federation. Russia is substantially smaller, but it remains a great power.

Kenneth Waltz, in an article on the emerging structure of international politics in the *International Security Review* last year wrote:

"The ability of Russia to play a military role beyond its borders is low, yet nuclear weapons ensure that no state can challenge it. Short of disintegration, Russia will remain a great power—indeed a great defensive power, as the Russian and Soviet states were through most of their history."

Inevitably, the ghost of Vladimir Zhirinovsky haunts the debate. However, I agree with Neil Malcolm, who wrote in *World Today* earlier this year:

"The possibility cannot be excluded that sections of disenfranchised industrialists will seek to form an alliance with extremist politicians such as Zhirinovsky and their numerous supporters in the military. However, this is a concern for the future, and it is important not to allow alarm at the aggressive non-imperialist rhetoric of the extreme right to colour our interpretation of the increased assertiveness which has been evident for at least the last 12 months. What we have seen so far is most likely not the "evil empire" getting ready to strike back, but rather Russia feeling its way towards the role of a "normal" regional power."

It seems that Neil Malcolm endorses the view of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West that electing lunatics is a sign of good health in a democracy.

It is inevitable that eastern Europe will feel insecure. Most of the countries there have experienced more than 40 years of Soviet military occupation or domination. It is more likely that the challenges that those countries face will be more like those faced by the old Yugoslavia. There will be regional and local conflicts, and not the kind of threat that used to be posed from the existence of a strong Warsaw pact.

The WEU has a crucial role to play in this area. It is a fascinating thought that the WEU itself was nearly thrown away. It was founded in 1948 by the United Kingdom, France and the three Benelux countries, who committed themselves to collective security. Indeed, I am informed that the commitments to collective security in the treaty are stronger than the commitments contained in the North Atlantic treaty.

The WEU was a demonstration of the willingness of those five countries to co-operate in European security, and it played an important part in drawing the United States into the defence of Europe and in the formation of NATO itself in 1949. The WEU could have been wound up, but it was not, and that was to become a welcome oversight.

I should like to take credit for this metaphor myself, but it properly lies with the author of the House of Commons Library background paper No.278, which was published in 1991 and said:

"the WEU has appeared as the jack-in-the-box of post-war european security, constantly appearing on the diplomatic agenda in a new guise."

First, in 1954, it helped draw Germany and Italy into NATO. In the late 1970s and 1980s, it became apparent that the WEU could be used to strengthen the European contribution to NATO, leading to the formal reactivation of the WEU in 1984. Subsequently, it has helped to permit the involvement of France in military activity in relation to both the Iran-Iraq and Gulf wars. The WEU now provides the perfect vehicle for a European defence identity outside the European Union, and for a European pillar of the North Atlantic treaty. I welcome that whole-heartedly. I would have had severe reservations about giving the European Commission and the European Union a significant defence role. The jack-in-the-box popped up to serve its useful purpose again. The WEU's importance cannot be underestimated.

One question in my mind is whether we have the right jack for the box. I do not mean to undermine the important role played by the WEU's current Secretary-General, Willem van Eekelen, but if that post is to fall vacant in the near future, there is a good British candidate to fill it. I hope that Lord Owen's role as a peace mediator in the former Yugoslavia is drawing to a satisfactory conclusion. What a fine candidate he would make for that office, which would emphasise its importance to the collective security of not only Europe but of NATO.

The Council of Europe, Western European Union and European Union have a diversity of purpose, overlapping membership and complementary roles. I welcome that happy tripod of accidents—that threefold structure—that separates the different roles of Governments. Their two primary roles are the defence of the people and the raising

[Mr. Luff]

of taxes. Provided that the defence of our people is kept separate from economic policy in the European Union and by national Governments, we can rest more easily in our beds at night, knowing that there is no prospect of the development of a true European Government. I welcome that.

12.1 pm

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) proves, if anything does, that those who had behind-the-scenes experience in Government before entering the House bring to it a great fund of wisdom. His work and his comments today are born of the experience that he brought to the House after being elected two years ago.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has proved an entertaining and lively advertisement for the Council of Europe, and that is true of any cause that he chooses to embrace. Many appreciate his hard work in the Council of Europe.

One interesting aspect of any debate on the Council of Europe and the WEU is that most people who study the body politic are largely unaware of the advantages that those institutions bring to relationships between Governments internationally. People may be familiar with the European Commission and perhaps with the European Court of Human Rights, and certainly with the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament—but the value of the Council of Europe and the WEU is largely lost on them. We are doing a great service by debating their value today.

Perhaps that proves one adage of government—that the usefulness of an organisation is often in direct inverse proportion to the noise that it makes. Those institutions are quiet and hard working, but they are of great value. Many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have great experience of them. My near neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander), who raised the issue today, and my hon. Friends the Members for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) and for Esher (Mr. Taylor) have much greater experience than I, and one big advantage of the structure of the Council of Europe and the WEU is that that experience can continue to be brought to the House. In other parts of Europe, there is an unfortunate separation and that experience is lost to the national Parliaments. That experience is something which we should value and preserve.

One of the Council of Europe's great merits is the width of its membership and the links that it forges between a number of diverse countries in a cauldron of international change. Its list of members includes all the EC countries and many others besides. Albania, Belarus, Bosnia, Croatia, Latvia, the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine enjoy special guest status, and Israel enjoys observer status. I cannot think of a more purposeful grouping of countries, which brings those countries together in such a productive way, than the Council of Europe. They embrace the fringe described by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester and the co-operation engendered by that grouping is of enormous value in a changing world from which new risks emerge daily.

I wish to refer particularly to the way in which the European Court of Human Rights works. The nub of the issue currently being debated is whether the right of direct petition to the court for citizens in the United Kingdom should be abolished. My hon. Friend the Member for Newark said that it should not be abolished, but I disagree.

A very large number of petitions have been made to the European Court of Human Rights. For example, 70,154 applications have been received by the Court since 1955; 22,651 have been registered and 1,392 were finally declared admissible. Last autumn, the Commission's backlog stood at 2,780 registered applications, of which 1,624 were waiting for more detailed scrutiny. I contend that that is an enormous number and that it is almost impossible for the Court to discern properly which applications have the highest priority if the applications have not been through an initial weeding-out process.

In that regard, we should draw a parallel with the redress that many of our constituents seek by wishing to have cases referred to the ombudsman. That must be done through the Member of Parliament, who probably has experience of the case concerned and of the kind of case that may or may not contain an important legal point that merits further recognition; from personal experience, the Member has the qualities to weed out the frivolous cases and those that would risk over-burdening the Court in the way that it has become over-burdened.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): As a member of the Select Committee that oversees the work of the parliamentary ombudsman, who also acts as the health service ombudsman, I welcome what my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) is saying. He is probably aware that, in a sense, the parliamentary ombudsman is an under-used asset in this country. In any particular year, quite a few hon. Members do not refer any cases to him and many others probably do not refer enough potential cases to him. Will my hon. Friend develop that line? In particular, will he develop the point that making appeals to the European Court of Human Rights can set aside deliberate policy decisions taken by this House or by our Government whom we support here, but who have then been overruled by the Court abroad?

Mr. Duncan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has helped me to develop my argument in a most valuable way. It would be detrimental to the interests of the European Court of Human Rights and its fundamental purpose if cases admitted to it were reduced to the level of a lobbying stunt. If a citizen is free to apply directly to the Court in that way, there is a risk that the purpose of the Court may be devalued by the manner in which citizens use it for ulterior purposes.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) about the ombudsman. The ombudsman has kept his value and reputation in the minds of citizens and Members of Parliament because applications have to undergo a selection process through Members of Parliament. If my hon. Friend can lend his agile mind to devising a parallel system for the European Court of Human Rights, he would do us a great service and would enhance the reputation of that important institution.

The Council of Europe is helping other countries to set up institutions that will bring them from tyrannical communist centralisation towards free-trading democracy. For instance, the Council of Europe can advise on legal co-operation in matters such as extradition, data protection and computer crime, as well as on social affairs, culture,

education, sport and environmental matters. The environmental backwardness of the former communist countries is very damaging, but those countries can be brought forward if they are allowed to benefit rapidly from the expertise that we have gleaned in the west. The Council can also advise on communications matters, health, youth, local government and all areas of public administration, so it is absolutely invaluable.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West suggested that all those countries should have a written constitution and, indeed, that we should. He may have a point when he argues that when, from the ravages of unsatisfactory government, those countries are effectively having to start again, they will need some written guidelines from which to take the first steps towards forming their own traditions and conventions. However, I warn against putting them in the straitjacket of a written constitution to which they must always adhere in every letter.

Considering a constitution is, to me, like looking at all the qualities of a favoured friend. If one understands that friend's subtleties of behaviour and quality, of rage or whatever, and if one then tries to write all that down, one can never translate into script as great an understanding of that person as the simple fact of knowing that person as a friend. It is exactly the same with a constitution. As soon as it is written down, it is devalued and trivialised and merely provides an opportunity for bickering. We should limit the advice that we give in terms of emerging countries having to write everything down in a written constitution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) hit on the most important point when she said that the Council of Europe could help those countries to emerge from communist oppression. We have encouraged them to do so and it would be absolutely unforgivable if, in their hour of need and in these nascent years, we were suddenly to desert them. The Council of Europe is helping us to feed to them the wisdom that we have accumulated in our own democracy to help them build theirs.

My hon. Friends the Members for Esher and for Worcester and other hon. Friends have raised the question of Mr. Zhirinovsky in Russia. I am rather more optimistic than they have been. They have suggested that there is a severe threat to the future of Russia from the fact that most of the army recently voted for him. However, that is to misinterpret what happened. It was not actually a military phenomenon. The army was really a welfare system in uniform. The army system has largely collapsed. Thousands of soldiers now live in tents and are selling their uniforms for ready cash. They are thoroughly dependent and economically deprived. What we saw in the vote for Zhirinovsky was an economic phenomenon, whereby those facing severe poverty felt that there was an appeal in Zhirinovsky's rather brazen nationalism. It is through the endeavours of the Council of Europe that we can help such matters to be better understood and ensure that the system of democracy is not considered in such simplistic terms in the likes of Russia.

The Western European Union has had a valuable influence on the peace and security of the western world. In the post-war settlement on the mainland of Europe, NATO, was critical for post-war peace. It was so critical largely because it linked the United States with Europe. There was, and still is, complete and utter confidence in NATO's internal commitment to the belief that an attack on one NATO member would be considered as an attack on all. NATO, however, is not a perfect being. For instance, France is not a fully fledged member of NATO, yet it is one of the most important countries on the European mainland.

Europe is in a state of change, where old enemies are becoming friends. In considering that argument, we should remember the important point that regimes, and not the people, were always the enemy. Communism has been defeated, but we should not regard it—and nor should they—as a defeat of the Russian people or of any other people in the erstwhile Soviet Union. Our disagreement was with the regime, of which we disapproved and of which ultimately the Soviet people vehemently disapproved. Given the uncertainty that still colours everything about Europe and beyond, because the European order has changed fundamentally, it would not be appropriate for Russia to join NATO. That is where WEU is invaluable.

The discussion on enlargement of WEU is the most productive means of deciding how to embrace the emerging democracies in security matters. Democracy and free trade are the greatest guarantees of peace anywhere at any time. We should use the various pillars of the European Community, including WEU and the Council of Europe, to share democracy and free trade with those emerging nations and other nations in Europe, where events will otherwise provoke concern about the peace and security of the continent.

The other important argument that I should like to advance is that both the Council of Europe and WEU demonstrate the virtue of allowing such institutions to evolve as opposed to imposing them according to a theoretical framework. The value of sending Members of this House to such institutions is that they benefit from their experience there.

The pattern of the various institutions in Europe is like a patchwork—it is confusing as they overlap and interlock. Ironically, the Council of Europe and WEU are less obvious in the framework of overlapping institutions, but their work is more purposeful and more respected. The value of the Council of Europe and WEU is that they teach us to be wary of institutions that are shaped by theories and ideals and to appreciate those that have emerged because of their proven practical value. I commend those two institutions' work and their value and importance.

12.17 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) is blessed, first, by the fact that he was fortunate enough to secure the debate, secondly, by the commendation of hon. Members, who have congratulated him on the choice of his subject, and, thirdly, by the approbation for the grace of his speech, which was both wise and informative. He was kind enough to explain to the House why some hon. Members on both sides of the House would have liked to be here—some perhaps should have been here—but could not be. It is a bad time of the year, and they have to attend annual meetings of their parties and constituency events.

The hon. Member for Newark commented on the current disputation between the parties. I also recall the comments of the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson), whose most interesting letter about that dispute was published in *The Times* the other day. Conservative Members who deplore the impasse did not, however, remind the House of its reason, which is that Her Majesty's Government have sought to ride roughshod over

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

Parliament by forcing Bills through the House. They are also pursuing policies that some of us find particularly distasteful.

I find it extremely inconvenient, as leader of the Labour party delegation in Europe, that the Opposition are unable to play our proper part in certain debates. The hon. Member for Newark will understand my anger at the privatisation of the coal industry and my detestation of the Government's disregard for mine safety, which lies at the heart of my political commitments and those of other hon. Friends. The Government cannot, by the insolence of their office and the arrogance of their policies, expect Opposition Members to sit tamely by.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Hear, hear.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend may not agree with my next comment, because we must consider the contributions that must be made in Europe by the United Kingdom. I hope that the Government will make it clear to the Opposition that they will not continue to conduct themselves as they have in recent months, because that will assist my right hon. Friends to return to the path of virtue.

Sir Jim Spicer: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would elaborate on the point about disagreeing with Government policy, which has led the Opposition to take action. If that is the case, surely we can say goodbye to any co-operation on any subject for all time, in the life not only of this Parliament but of every other Parliament, because, inevitably, an Opposition will object to Government policies.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Member has reminded me that politics is not a science, but an art. A Government must understand which issues are sensitive and go to the heart of people's beliefs and commitments. Perhaps the Government do not understand the mentality and values of the coalfield areas; otherwise they would not have done what they have done in recent months.

This is not the occasion on which to debate the plight of the coalfields, but privatising the mining industry contemporaneously with the demolition of mine safety, the achievement of which was one of the main aims and purposes of the Labour movement from the 19th century, reveals that the Government are ignorant of the reality that a modern and intelligent Government would consider. I do not think that it is right to labour that now, although I know that the hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) has heard me do so on a number of occasions in recent weeks in the Standing Committee that considered the coal Bill. The fact remains that the arrogant insensitivity of the Government persuaded my right hon. Friends to adopt their policy of non-co-operation. To respond to the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), let me say that I hope that the practice of that policy will not be unending.

It would not be fair on the hon. Member for Newark if I did not return to the subject under debate, which is important. He has done the House a considerable service, because the debate has not merely given the House the opportunity to be acquainted with the work of the Council of Europe and WEU—an evident need—but to conduct a little stocktaking and assess the work of those organisations. If hon. Members read the *Official Report* for today, they will be greatly enlightened by the comments made in the debate.

It is obvious that there is a true appreciation in the House of the fact that the Council of Europe parliamentary assembly is a consultative body. Although it does not have legislative powers, it occasionally acts with searching inquiry. It has been innovative and, since its foundation, it has launched a number of initiatives, as a result of its recommendations, for the benefit of Europe. Although the assembly does not operate by direct enactment, it has influenced and will continue to influence the quality of life in Europe through the instrument of convention. I shall refer to some later.

I have been involved in Europe for a long time. I have been leader of my party's delegation for more than a decade, and over those years I have developed a number of opinions and views on the organisation, some of which are highly complimentary while others are a little critical. The assembly could be more effective. We in the House have many faults, but the assembly could invigilate and question Ministers rather more effectively if it adopted the Westminster model rather than being so consistently courteous and rather supine when Ministers inflict their opinions on the assembly.

One of the problems that need to be tackled—and it relates to a subject that I addressed in a speech to the assembly not long ago—is that members diligently seek to be rapporteurs. Every two or three years, each committee produces vast numbers of reports on which people work extremely hard. It would be helpful if committees and the assembly itself devoted as much time to following up the reports as they do on their preparation. Too often, members congratulate the rapporteur on a job well done, but no one returns to the subject to see whether the recommendations that have been so enthusiastically endorsed have been implemented.

The committees have an extremely important purpose and hon. Members from all parties have made an enormous contribution. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was the principal rapporteur on the subject of the accession of Lithuania. The work carried out by members in examining the applications of new member states to ensure that they are assimilated effectively and purposefully is extremely important, but is often overlooked. I doubt whether most of my hon. Friends are aware of the work carried out by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West, and similar tasks have been undertaken by Conservative Members, not least by the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson), who has been chairman of the committee on non-member states, a job in which he has had to work extremely hard.

The Government get a little uneasy about the Council of Europe and, in that context, the Minister will guess what I am about to refer to. It is that most people in Britain have not heard of the Council. One reason for that is that the budget for press and public relations, which would allow the British people to recognise the existence and value of the organisation, is pathetically small. I am not an especially competent mathematician, but I should think that it is certainly less than 1p per head per year, and it might be a small fraction of that.

I understand why the Government are a little reluctant about the Council of Europe, and it relates to the matter mentioned in the speech of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan). It is that, from time to time, the

Government find themselves arraigned before the Court and sometimes convicted. They do not welcome the fact that a body in Strasbourg should be able to find Her Majesty's Government guilty of human rights offences. In my view, our democracy should be sufficiently robust that if the Government are convicted of an offence they should not wish to hide behind a mean and miserly approach in order to escape public opprobrium. I think that that must be the reason that they seek to do so, because there are no other reasons of any great significance. I know that the Treasury breathes very heavily on Departments, perhaps as a consequence of the severe economic decline that Britain has experienced for the last decade and a half, but they should be able to find a few more coppers to make people aware of this very important institution.

Partly because of that fact, very little attention is paid to the Council of Europe. I was reminded of that a few years ago when some malevolent person from his constituency gave the story to the national press that a Conservative Member of Parliament had disappeared. The Member was a very active member of our delegation, which was then meeting in Strasbourg. There descended upon Strasbourg a horde of representatives of the tabloid media. They knocked on people's hotel doors and, indeed, in some cases I think they actually burst into people's hotel rooms, such was the eagerness with which they searched for that hon. Gentleman.

The media representatives were all around Strasbourg, no doubt with quite substantial expense accounts. The one place in which they did not look for him was in the assembly the Palais de l'Europe; he was there making speeches. They did not report any of the debates that were taking place while they were engaged in their expensive search for the hon. Gentleman because, presumably, they shared the Government's view that debates did not really matter. They did not see whether there were any juicy cases before the Court of Human Rights, so busy were they in pursuit of an hon. Gentleman who was not missing at all.

I have a great deal of sympathy with the early-day motion about a recent personal tragedy tabled earlier this week by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). Another tragedy was the disregard for Gorbachev's speech—perhaps the most important speech heard in Europe, before or since that time. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend said that he enjoyed hearing it, as did I.

I also enjoyed watching Conservative Members, who did not join in the standing ovation for Mr. Gorbachev as he entered the assembly before the speech was made, joining in the ovation when he had finished. It was a great pity that the British media's reporting of that seminal contribution was negligible. That may have been partly due to the fact that the Foreign Office had issued a statement offering comment on Gorbachev's statement and, since he had arrived three quarters of an hour late, I think that the statement was issued before the speech was made.

We sometimes feel a little cynical about the fact that matters of enormous importance can be considered in Strasbourg and completely ignored in Britain. Perhaps we are accustomed to the fact that if we do say something wise or make a contribution of value, inevitably in the national press it will be attributed to the European Parliament or the Commission in Brussels when those bodies may have made no contribution in that direction.

Because that is wrong, and because in the end it is foolish and of no service to the nation, it is time that Her Majesty's Government looked at that matter again, even to the point of standing up a little more resolutely to the demands of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Another aspect of this matter goes to the day that Mr. Gorbachev addressed the assembly. Members of our delegation will recall that we had just accepted the then Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary as guest members. On the evening of the Gorbachev meeting, I, as chairman of a major committee, instructed the clerk of my committee to invite representatives from the four new member states to serve on the committee. I said that members from those four countries would and should serve on my environment committee, and we sent out the invitations fairly rapidly. Sir Geoffrey Finsberg—about whom I shall say more shortly—endorsed my request. At that time, I had invited members of my committee to visit the United Kingdom. The hon. Member for Calder Valley may well appreciate it when I say that the committee members were not going to spend their time in London. They had received invitations from Rotherham, Doncaster and York local authorities, as well as from Sheffield university. I said that they would meet in Yorkshire, but could gather in London and so proceed to Yorkshire with minimum delay.

We needed the invitation to be confirmed by the Government. The Secretary of State for the Environment grudgingly said that he would have to confirm the invitation, but the Government would provide only one meeting room for one meeting. I thought that that was somewhat mean and perhaps churlish. I said that I did not want rooms for more than one meeting and that we would gather on King's Cross station and proceed north by way of an Intercity train—trusting that the train would not be late—before embarking on our deliberations.

We managed to obtain a little more because Lord Finsberg, as he is now, endorsed my request and the Government ultimately paid the cost of hiring simultaneous interpretation facilities. I do not know whether the system has changed, but it should have done. The Government did not then have, outside the Welsh Office, their own facilities for simultaneous interpretation, which made it difficult when international forums came here. The Government are so eager to privatise everything in sight that they do not—or did not—own mechanisms and equipment to guarantee the provision of simultaneous interpretation services.

In the end, we made a splendid visit to Yorkshire. We were assisted by Lord Newall in his capacity as chairman of the British Greyhound Racing Board. A greyhound from my constituency managed to win the Council of Europe trophy—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I do not think that his Member of Parliament gained anything from that triumph, but it was a pleasant occasion.

It was sad that her Majesty's Government displayed churlishness, and it would be appropriate to recognise now that we have not encountered such churlishness in the past 10 years among those who represent Britain and Her Majesty's Government in Strasbourg. Reference has already been made by the hon. Member for Newark to the contribution and kindness of Noel Marshall and his successor, Mr. Beetham. We could extend that tribute to the predecessor of Noel Marshall, Mr. Colin McLean, who certainly established an excellent record.

Sir Donald Thompson: Will the hon. Gentleman give a nod, as he passes, to our ambassador in Paris, who always entertains us most royally?

Mr. Hardy: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. It would be completely inappropriate not to recognise the ambassador, whose name I should know as I worked closely with him when I was a parliamentary private secretary at the Foreign Office in the 1970s. I trust that in the banking career that he has begun to pursue—*[Interruption.]* I trust that Sir Ewen Fergusson will do extremely well.

We have been greatly assisted, not only by the hospitality of the Government's representatives but by their endeavour to ensure that when major events happen in Britain we are pretty well informed. On one occasion, they were extremely helpful when a critical situation had developed.

The assembly has played an important role, in which the Labour party has been heavily involved over the years. It is only right to say that a road behind the Palais de l'Europe is named after Ernest Bevin. Immediately across from the Palais de l'Europe there is a road named Boulevard President Edwards. Those names are obvious. Bevin was Foreign Secretary at the time of the foundation of the Council of Europe. President Edwards was a Labour Member of Parliament—a west Yorkshire Member—who died as President of the Assembly after a distinguished contribution to its work, and that very important road in Strasbourg is named after him.

I do not believe that any roads are named after Conservative Members, although pictures of Winston Churchill abound in the Palais de l'Europe and in Strasbourg. It is interesting that the Labour Government, in their magnanimity at that time, afforded the opportunity to Churchill, as Leader of the Opposition, to play a starring role. That magnanimity was obviously due to the service that Winston Churchill gave in the second world war, but it illustrated that people such as Attlee and Bevin were determined to ensure that a new Europe was forged after the second world war, which would guarantee the peace and provide structures to secure human rights. Those were, and remain, the principal purposes of the organisation. Therefore, the churlishness and grudging approach to which I have referred are regrettable.

I mentioned that the Council of Europe operated by convention. I am worried that the assembly does not take a positive approach to those matters. Reference has already been made to the need to examine the new member states, to find out whether they fulfil the requirements of freedom and human rights. We should ensure that we do not act patronisingly in the way in which we adopt that approach by suggesting to states that their house must be completely in order, or they will not be allowed to join, when one or two established member states do not invariably properly maintain their own commitments.

Turkey has been mentioned. There was a marked difference of view between the Labour delegation and our Conservative colleagues when, under the previous leader of the Conservative delegation, there was excessive enthusiasm to restore Turkey's membership before democracy had been restored. Indeed, relations in the delegation were not satisfactory at that time because we did not attend certain social functions that were blessed by the presence of the then leader of the Conservative delegation, who seemed to us to be excessively eager to bring the Turks back. I think that he would have had them back even if they had not had a parliament. Things are not as they should be in Turkey and it would be perfectly reasonable for some of the eastern European countries to ask, "Why does Turkey's membership go unquestioned when you are taking a severe view of ours?"

Perhaps the British Government are slightly uneasy. They are over-sensitive. They may think that the presence of unelected members in the other place may come into question because the statutes provide that our delegations should be composed of elected parliamentarians. I do not want them to go along that route—I dare not, because Lord Kirkhill, a member of our delegation, has played such a distinguished role as chairman of the legal committee in the past few years that I would hate his services to be dispensed with. The hon. Members for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) and for Calder Valley will have in mind their colleagues from the other place who make distinguished contributions to our deliberations.

We seem to act with a slightly patronising style if we subject the new members to a critical analysis when that same analysis, if applied to existing member states, might cause eyebrows to be raised or even more serious issues to be discussed.

Mr. Duncan: Has not the hon. Gentleman just made the best possible argument for not endorsing the call by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for a written constitution, either for us or for those who wish to join the WEU or the Council of Europe?

Mr. Hardy: I share the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West on the matter. If Governments are to trample on people as many of our people have been trampled on in the past few years, the call for a written constitution will gather force. The hon. Gentleman should not adopt a superior approach, which is scarcely justified by the political record. He tempts me to go down a route of partisan politics which I am trying to avoid.

The assembly must become a little tougher in its approach and a little more demanding in its attitude towards Ministers. I have been chairman of the sub-committee on the natural environment for a long time. Our work led to the Berne convention, which is a recognition of the fact that wildlife cannot survive if its habitat is not maintained. Most member states have signed, ratified and, through legislation, implemented their commitment to it. Unfortunately, some member states, particularly Greece, have behaved extremely badly. When hon. Members can start to attend the environment committee again, they may soon have to deal with that subject, because Greece has deliberately flouted its obligation in terms of endangered species in the Mediterranean. I understand that the Greek Government have sold land that is essential for the survival of the turtle.

If Governments sign conventions and Ministers bask in righteousness and receive the plaudits of the international community and conservation organisations, but then completely ignore those obligations, the international forums must challenge them if their national parliaments will not do so. Before much longer, the Council of Europe will need to become much tougher on these matters.

That may be particularly relevant to the new convention on civil liability for environmental damage, which both Ministers and mandarins recognise is a major issue. It is the

first international agreement that recognises that the environment can be damaged and must be given priority consideration. That liability has been accepted within the new convention. If Governments then decide that they have exhausted all the credit that they can get from that development and let it rust, there will be profound disappointment.

I was slightly involved in the matter because of the Braer disaster—the tanker that was abandoned and wrecked in the far north of Scotland. Britain was extremely fortunate because a storm continued to rage and the oil was a light Norwegian crude. Had that not been the case, the shipwreck's disastrous effects would have been appalling. Liability was limited to £50 million. If those thousands of tonnes of oil had wreaked the havoc that was feared, £50 million would have compensated neither the north of Scotland nor the rest of the British Isles.

That incident justifies the need for that convention, to which I referred in my report. We need to ensure that such instruments are meaningful.

Sir Donald Thompson: I heard the hon. Gentleman's good speech in the local government and environmental committee of the Council of Europe on that very matter. Is not the obverse of the coin also true? If this country thinks either that it cannot agree with all the terms of a convention or that other countries will sign it without agreeing with all the terms, we should not sign at all.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Member for Calder Valley takes me to my final point on the Council of Europe. I strongly supported the initiatives in the 1980s which led to the charter on local and regional government. I recall attending the annual meeting of the executives of the local government organisations in Ireland with my Council of Europe environment committee and Ministers. I was joint chairman of the meeting with the Irish Secretary of State for the Environment and we discussed what should be the first item on the agenda. With the Conservative Members of the local government associations present, we decided that it should be the charter. I asked the Irish Minister whether he would invite a representative of each Government to respond and to state their Government's position on the charter. Naturally, the United Kingdom was at the end of the list of Governments.

All the Ministers present said that they supported the charter and that most of their countries had signed it. However, the British Minister present made the point that the hon. Member for Calder Valley has just reiterated. Obviously, one has a great deal of sympathy with the Minister's view. He said that Britain only signed charters which it could implement, but it would have been inappropriate for the United Kingdom to endorse that charter because it was about regional government, and we had no form of regional government and administration in Britain at all.

I said to the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), who is Secretary of State for the Environment, that it was a jolly good job that there were no Scots, northern Irish or Welsh parliamentarians present at that gathering, because they would have been able to point out that in Northern Ireland to some extent and, certainly, in Wales and Scotland there is some devolution of power and administration. That in itself could have justified a rather more sympathetic approach to the charter than the Government exhibited. However, we may well find that that especial problem will be overcome because the Opposition are rather more sensitive to the case for regional government than are Conservative Members.

Before I sit down, I shall refer to a number of aspects of significance that have been raised with regard to the WEU. The WEU was described as the Jack-in-the-box of Europe. A few years ago, it was described as a sleeping giant which was about to awake. I remember pointing out that I did not know whether it was a giant, but that it had certainly been sleeping. The WEU is enormously important and I feel some anxiety about the view that the whole of our defence and security responsibilities should be passed to the Community. I do not feel that the Community can or should be excluded from consideration of security matters, but if defence and security are to be seen solely as matters for the member states of the EC, we would be acting in an irresponsible manner. The security of Europe is, and must be, wider than that.

There has been a considerable change in the WEU. When I first took part in the debates I used to be infuriated. We had three and a half days twice a year for debate and a profusion of Ministers would arrive—I see the hon. Member for Broxbourne smiling because she has heard me raise points of order on these matters on numerous occasions—in Paris to address the assembly. In three and a half days, we sometimes heard seven or eight Ministers and it was quite impossible to have any meaningful debate that was not interrupted by some Minister making a speech that may not have been at all interesting and, often, had remarkably little relevance to the consideration of European security. A number of British Members supported the complaints that I continued to make about the absurd frequency with which Ministers inflicted their presence on us. Without being too flattering—I have criticised the Government in many things—British Ministers of all persuasions have usually made more meaningful contributions, so their journeys may well have been more valuable than those of most of their colleagues.

The fact remains that the WEU existed, and appeared to be seen to exist, merely as an accommodation for France while it was outside the alliance structures. Of course, the situation is different now. The end of the cold war has meant that the WEU has a new role—it is a new role which most politicians in Europe have not fully perceived or recognised. During the previous assembly of the WEU —one or two hon. Members were present—we were visited by a number of politicians from eastern European countries who were demanding security guarantees. I went to the standing committee of the WEU with my hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson), who is away today with the President of the WEU, to whom tribute has been paid. The hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) was also present, obviously, as President of the organisation there.

We heard the pleas from the eastern European countries for security guarantees. However, it had to be said that the search for the peace dividend, to which the hon. Member for Dorset, West referred, has meant that Europe is not capable of affording a security guarantee to the eastern European countries at present. By all means, we should give the opportunity—the WEU provides the vehicle for it —for those countries to maintain a dialogue which, in itself, may allay some of their anxieties.

While the WEU exists, at least it means that the frontier of NATO is not taken so far to the east that it borders the boundary of Russia. Therein lies a great deal of risk and

[Mr. Hardy]

balance and the Russian extremists whom we may have to meet and welcome with some grace in Strasbourg may well find themselves fortified.

I remind the House that some odd individuals have come to the WEU and the Council of Europe in the past. One of Mr. Le Pen's closest friends came, did not conquer, and went at remarkable speed. I recall a German Green arriving one day at a WEU meeting dressed in a woollen smock and wearing a large bronze bauble around his neck. Unfortunately, his only contribution was to complain about the waste of paper and the world's resources as a result of everyone travelling to the committee. I pointed out that he had arrived five minutes before the end and therefore had used as much energy in arriving at the meeting as those of us who had been there from the start. We did not see that gentleman again, and I think that that will be the same experience with the gentleman from the Soviet Union when we reach Strasbourg.

The WEU has an important role to play and not simply for the purposes that both sides recognise and have already mentioned in the debate. That role seems obvious to those Labour Members who are certainly internationalists, of whom there are many, and who are not prepared to see the structure of Europe merely making us little Europeans rather than little Englanders. That means that if the WEU is to play a proper part in the future, it must be the organisation which can provide the organised support and structured co-operation that will be necessary if international authority is to continue to be exercised, and is to be more effectively exercised in response to danger, instability and conflict within near continents or, indeed, anywhere else. The United Nations itself cannot at this stage operate as effectively as it might in response to international crises. The Western European Union, without any extravagant structures and without causing long negotiations to establish new committees and chains of command, could make a continuing contribution in that regard.

The success of the Armilla patrol in the Gulf a few years ago was one demonstration of that capacity. More recently, there was the superb but unsung operation by the naval forces of western Europe in the Adriatic to ensure that the embargo on armaments entering the former Yugoslavia was effectively operated. One rather regrets that the embargo was less satisfactorily operated at other points of entry into that troubled area.

Given the experience in the Gulf and in the Mediterranean without lavish expenditure on structures and committees, the WEU has demonstrated the value of its existence. The fact that it is there and is capable of having a sensible dialogue with the emerging east means that it would be wrong for anyone to suggest that the evolution of the Community should be of such a character as would take that role away and remove the WEU's responsibilities by transferring them on a premature and over-rapid time scale towards Brussels.

I repeat that the House is indebted to the hon. Member for Newark. He has done us a great service by introducing the motion. I trust that right hon. and hon. Members will read his speech and the others in the debate, which has been extremely useful.

1.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I congratulate my hon. Friend the *Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander).* I listened with the greatest possible interest to the debate, and I found be interesting and informative. It is most important to bring together the Council of Europe and the Western European Union and to draw them to the attention of the House. Certainly it has been too long since there was a debate on the bodies, but I can assure my hon. Friend that both receive considerable attention from Ministers. In particular, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, take a close interest in the work of the organisations. Indeed, the latter met a number of delegation members as recently as 18 January, as I am sure that my hon. Friend knows.

We have been fortunate also to have had two substantial speeches—from the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), who has given many years of distinguished service to the Council of Europe as leader of his group, and from the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), who, likewise, has served on the Council for a number of years as leader of his group.

I will deal first with the Council of Europe, which forms the substantive part of the debate. The United Kingdom was one of the 10 founder members and has therefore been a member since 1949. Our support for the organisation has not wavered since that time. It is a unique body, dedicated to the establishment and preservation of the rule of law, democracy and human rights throughout Europe.

That role has never been more important than it is today. The break-up of the Soviet Union and the democratisation of central and eastern Europe has resulted in an increase in membership of the Council of Europe from 22 members in 1988 to 32 at the end of last year. Others could join during the next 12 to 18 months, making the organisation truly pan-European. The United Kingdom delegation's information bulletin notes that 1993 was a busy year for the Council of Europe. The UK held the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers for six months until May last year, before handing over the reins to Austria. During our period as chairman, the political affairs committee visited London for the first time in many years and was addressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. My right hon. Friend also addressed the parliamentary assembly on 12 May, when he presented the statutory report from the Committee of Ministers and answered questions from delegates. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State chaired the Committee of Ministers meeting on 14 May which ended our chairmanship. As hon. Members emphasised, our chairmanship was recognised as successful and did much to enhance British prestige in the Council of Europe.

The first-ever Council of Europe summit was held last October, in Vienna, when the United Kingdom delegation was led with distinction by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor. That summit laid down the future direction of the Council's work. It noted that the end of the division of Europe offered an historic opportunity for peace and stability on the continent and that the Council was the pre-eminent European political institution capable

of welcoming on an equal footing and in permanent structures the democracies of Europe free from communist oppression.

Emphasis was placed on the Council of Europe's role in developing and consolidating democratic and constitutional structures, human rights and the rule of law in the new democracies of central and eastern Europe. That role is one that the Government whole-heartedly endorse and it entirely reflects the views expressed in my hon. Friend's motion.

The Council of Europe has a number of programmes of assistance to eastern and central Europe. Lode is geared towards local democracy. Demosthenes, the largest programme, covers such matters as human rights, social questions, education, culture and sport, youth and legal co-operation. Activities such as workshops, study visits, training assistance, missions and seminars are organised under that programme. Another programme, Themis, concentrates on legal training. Expenditure on co-operation with the countries of eastern and central Europe in 1994 will amount to 41.4 million French francs, which is about £4.8 million.

The assembly plays an increasing part in Council of Europe affairs, and the information bulletin provides a wealth of evidence of that. Hon. Members would neither expect nor appreciate a blow-by-blow account of everything reported in the bulletin, but there is a wide range of activities and I am pleased at the contribution made by British parliamentarians. Thanks to their efforts and those of the permanent delegation, the United Kingdom's reputation in Strasbourg is higher than ever. Moreover, our former colleague in this House, my noble Friend Lord Finsberg, has played a truly remarkable and successful role at the Council of Europe.

I also acknowledge one of the assembly's lesser known roles as parliamentary interlocutor for organisations as diverse as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Free Trade Association and the European Transport Committee. That role may be little known, but it is not unappreciated.

My hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) and the hon. Members for Wentworth and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) commented on the difficulties encountered by right hon. and hon. Members in attending and performing their duties at Council of Europe committees as a result of the arrangements in the House, and I have some sympathy for them. I hope that their cross-party opinions will be made known to Opposition Members responsible for the current situation as the need for right hon. and hon. Members to attend their committees and the assembly has been clearly demonstrated. They have demonstrated the need for our members to attend the assembly and the committees whenever possible.

If I may say so, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West spoke with characteristic feeling and frankness. He demonstrated very well for my benefit, as did my hon. Friends, the value that our members contribute to the British reputation and standing in that institution.

My hon. Friends the Members for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), for Worcester (Mr. Luff) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) gave interesting analyses of the challenges that are arising as a result of post-communist Europe. My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton mentioned the evolution of institutions and I want to comment on that.

The motion invites us to note

"the role of the Council of Europe in bringing the parliamentary process to the Parliaments and people of Eastern and Central European countries".

I am glad to do that. The parliamentary assembly plays a full and important part in that, not least by extending special guest status to countries before they are full members of the Council of Europe and in its examinations of applications for Council membership.

From the comments of hon. Members whom I have mentioned and of others whom I have not mentioned by name, I have been enormously struck by the fact that the Council of Europe is a remarkable example of an institution that was invented in different times for different purposes, which has suddenly acquired an enormously enhanced new role and purpose in a post-communist European world. It must be very exciting for members of the Council of Europe to play their part in bringing those countries and their representatives into the fold of the world that we occupy and which we wish to see universal and global.

As I have said, the motion specifically notes

"the role of the Council of Europe in bringing the parliamentary process to the Parliaments and peoples of Central and Eastern Europe".

It is a sine qua non of entry to the Council that a state must be a functioning, pluralist, parliamentary democracy. On that basis alone, the Council fulfils the role mentioned. However, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West said, there is a dilemma. When people are not completely perfect in their institutions, we must give them comfort and welcome to encourage them to do better.

That is precisely the role of guest status. It is in that first step, in which the assembly plays a leading role in the form of the granting of special guest status in the assembly, that the hon. Gentleman's dilemma is answered.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the first encounter with that robust body by parliamentarians of some of the former communist states left some in a state of shock. Further evidence suggests that, once they become used to saying freely what they like and think, they quite like the idea and take it home with them. I am only sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley has been unable to explain to them the full depth of importance of the whipping system that we enjoy in this country. As hon. Members have explained, we sometimes despair of that system when it lets down delegates who wish to attend debates in the Council.

I agree with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West about Mr. Zhirinovsky. It is important to expose him to debate and ridicule where that is possible. I sometimes think that it would be a great thing if we could get Mr. Zhirinovsky into this place. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West and my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley would reduce him to size in no time at all.

The assembly provides further assistance under its co-operation programme including colloquies, the training of young parliamentarians and parliamentary staff and legislative assistance to the Parliaments of central and eastern Europe. In addition, information offices run by the Council have been established in Bratislava, Budapest, Prague, Warsaw and Moscow which should soon be supplemented by others in Ljubljana, Sofia, Vilnius, and possibly Bucharest. All that can only strengthen the ideals of parliamentary democracy and bring them to the attention of the wider population in those countries.

[Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd]

At present, there are nine countries with applications outstanding to join the organisation, including Russia, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and Latvia; others will join the queue. As I mentioned, the assembly will examine new applications with care. It is clear that membership is seen as a prize and as a badge of honour for countries that attain the standards set by the Council. We would not wish it to be otherwise. We should also encourage continuing dialogue with the applicant states to ensure that they are always fully apprised of what they must do to qualify for membership. That is especially true of Russia.

We and our European Union partners are on record as looking forward to Russian membership of the Council of Europe at the earliest possible date. We appreciate that there are procedures to be followed and benchmarks against which applicant states must be examined. There must be no lowering of standards and the system cannot be short-circuited. However, if the Russians are to be encouraged to develop their relationship with organisations such as the Council of Europe, it is essential that they feel that they have a fair wind behind them, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West said, and that they have assistance and advice to meet the standards required.

We therefore especially welcome the introduction of the unique Council of Europe-Russia joint programme which envisages, among other things, regular political contacts and dialogue with the assembly and its committees, with Ministers and local government, legal advice on the compatibility of Russian law with European standards, full participation in various Councils, Council programmes, institutions and bodies, expert appraisal, colloquies, seminars, conferences, training courses, study programmes and, finally, the establishment of a Council information office in Moscow.

We hope that both Russia and the Council will seize the opportunities offered by the programme to promote mutual understanding. I understand that a successful seminar on federalism was held in Moscow last month. I have no doubt that the very wise counsel of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson), who has been mentioned today and who is one of the assembly rapporteurs, will be a key factor in the handling of this issue.

My hon. Friends the Members for Newark and for Esher (Mr. Taylor) spoke about Russian troop withdrawals. Obviously, Russian troop withdrawals are an important issue which the Council needs to consider. We welcome the agreement this week between Russia and Latvia to withdraw Russian troops by 31 August. We hope that a similar agreement can be reached with Estonia so that troop withdrawals there can also be completed by 31 August. I believe—of course this is a matter for debate in the Council—that it would be impossible to consider full Russian membership when Russian troops remain in other countries against the will of those countries.

The flagship of the Council is the European convention on human rights. I shall give hon. Members some background on recent moves. The work load of the European Commission of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights, the machinery of the convention, has grown rapidly as more countries join the Council and as public awareness of the recourse that the system offers has increased. The growth in the number of cases lodged has been such that it can now take up to four and a half years for a case to be decided in Strasbourg, which is an unacceptable delay.

Consequently, all member states of the Council have agreed that reform of the machinery is urgently needed to enable it to cope with the increasing work load and to deal with cases expeditiously. Devising an effective reform has been one of the key tasks that the Council has faced in recent years. Together with a number of member states, principally the Netherlands, Italy and Sweden, the United Kingdom originally argued for reform based on retention of the existing two-tier system of Commission and Court. Other countries favoured a merger of the two bodies into a single Court.

As hon. Members on the Council will know, support for the merger option grew and at the meeting last May, we decided to accede to that view. Ministers agreed on a mandate for the drawing up of a draft protocol on reform which, based on a single Court, included some key elements that we and other member states regarded as crucial to the success of the reform.

The work on the draft protocol is now substantially complete. Some minor tidying of the text remains to be done, but we are confident that the protocol will be ready for adoption by the Committee of Ministers at its next meeting in May. As an amending protocol to the convention, it will come into effect when it has been signed by all member states.

Several hon. Members, including my hon. Friends the Members for Newark and for Rutland and Melton and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber mentioned the right of individual petition to the European Court of Human Rights. There is a misunderstanding in some people's minds on the issue. Every citizen in the United Kingdom has the right of petition to that court. The issue under discussion is whether that right should be enshrined as a permanent right or should remain renewable at regular intervals, as has happened in this country. At present, it is optional whether member states recognise the right of their citizens to apply to the court. Like most other member states, the UK has recognised that right since 1966, but it has done so on a renewable basis. Successive Governments have renewed their recognition every five years.

At a relatively late stage in the reform negotiations, it was proposed that recognition of the right of individual petition should be made mandatory for member states. The UK has reserved its view on the issue and is considering its position. Negotiations are continuing and it would not be appropriate for me to say more on the subject today.

I should like to comment on the incorporation into UK law of the European convention on human rights. We fully accept the principles set out in the convention. Successive Governments have taken the view that the rights set out in it are generally secured by the provisions in existing common and statute law. If the European Court finds Britain to be in violation of the convention, action is taken —usually through specific legislation—to remedy the breach.

The Government believe that incorporation would undermine the sovereignty of Parliament by giving the courts a direct role in determining the compatibility of domestic law with the convention. That would propel judges into the political arena, which we have always tried

to avoid in Britain, and thus, to an extent, to undermine their independence. Individual rights of that sort should be determined in Parliament, not in the courts.

In opening the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Newark commented on the rights of national minorities. The problem with the Russian criticism that Estonia's proposed citizenship legislation discriminates against ethnic Russians is—so I am informed—that that legislation never became law. There is no evidence that there is discrimination. Many international missions, such as the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, and those from the United Nations and the Council of Europe, have visited Estonia and found no evidence that it discriminates against or abuses the human rights of its Russian minority.

One of the key decisions made at the Vienna summit was to take action on the protection of national minorities. We recognise the urgent need to deal with the tensions that have arisen as a result of the the position of national minorities in post-communist eastern Europe. The most grievious example of those problems is found, all too tragically, in the former Yugoslavia.

In the run-up to the Vienna summit, member states sought to draw up an additional protocol to the European convention on human rights, which would have set out rights for persons belonging to national minorities and would have made those rights justiciable under the convention. In the event, the efforts to draft a protocol foundered because of differing views among the member states on whether rights should be conferred on the group or on the individual; and, if the latter, on how to identify whether the individual belonged to a national minority.

Some member states saw the term "national minority" as referring only to indigenous or long-established groups, while others wanted to cover all ethnic minority groups, including those of recent immigrant origin. Our own view was, and is, that to define national minorities as comprising certain groups but not others would be to create more discrimination, not less, and thus undermine the whole purpose.

Immediately before the summit, a draft protocol was proposed under which individuals would have gained the right not to have a name or surname imposed upon them —in other words, the right to choose and use their own names—the right to have their cultural identity protected and the right to use their own language for private purposes. Modest though those proposals were, those additional rights would have represented a huge step forward for some national minorities in central and eastern Europe. We were very much in favour of that protocol, but unfortunately opposition elsewhere was sufficient to block it. Instead the summit instructed the Committee of Ministers to draft a framework convention specifying the principles to be observed by states to ensure the protection of national minorities and to prepare a draft protocol complementing the European convention on human rights in the cultural sphere by provisions guaranteeing individual rights, particularly for persons belonging to national minorities.

The Committee of Ministers has set deadlines of 30 June this year for the completion of the framework convention and 31 December for the additional protocol. Work on the two instruments is proceeding in parallel. The United Kingdom is contributing fully to that work. A progress report is to be submitted to the Committee of Ministers next month. We see the roles of the Council of Europe and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe to be complementary on this issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester mentioned the social development fund. We are glad of recent decisions designed to make it more open and accountable and acknowledge the role of the parliamentary assembly in bringing its deficiencies into the open. I am afraid, however, that the United Kingdom is unlikely to join the fund. Our initial investment today would be about £26 million, added to which would be running costs of about £275,000 per year. That would entail a considerable diversion of resources from bilateral and other multilateral programmes in our aid budget. Neither we nor the other countries concerned in those programmes would favour the resulting reduction.

My hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley spoke about the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities. The summit decision to create a consultative organ representing local and regional authorities has seen the changing of the standing conference of those authorities into the new bicameral congress with separate chambers for local and regional authorities. Britain played a leading role in implementing its resolution and charter. The first meeting of the new congress will take place on 31 May.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne mentioned the European Pharmacopoeia, which was also mentioned by other hon. Members. I am not sure whether I have pronounced it correctly—[HON. MEMBERS: "No"]. It seems that I have not. It plays a leading role in setting international standards in medicines and the British Government are a firm supporter of it. I understand that China has been invited to send an observer delegation, which is must be welcome as it will extend the European Pharmacopoeia's interest and remit even wider.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West said that he wanted the flag raised on 5 May. We are all for flags in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but the hon. Member must remember that the flag is also that of the European Union, although first of the Council of Europe. I wonder whether anything could be achieved other than total confusion.

Mr. Tony Banks: This is a genuine inquiry. Could the Minister throw some light on it? When did that happen? I have been involved in some arguments with members of the European Parliament, insisting that this is the flag of the Council of Europe. When did the European Union decide to take it away from the Council?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I will, of course, investigate the matter extensively and fully and write the hon. Gentleman a comprehensive letter.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I shall do so briefly, but I cannot give way again.

Mr. Hardy: Perhaps I can assist the Minister and my hon. Friend. The Council of Europe decided to allow the European Community to borrow the flag and to make use of it in fairly recent years. I imagine that the flag still remains the intellectual property of the assembly, and my hon. Friend's question is a correct one.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The funding of the Council of Europe could be enhanced by charging the European Union an appropriate fee for the use of the flag.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West also asked about the Council of Europe acting as regional representative for the United Nations on human rights. That is an interesting point, but it would be much better to raise it in Strasbourg. The Council of Europe and the United Nations would certainly do well to co-operate in this area. The hon. Gentleman also spoke about co-ordination by the Council of Europe of election monitors. The Council plays an acknowledged part in election monitoring. We encourage co-operation between European organisations. There may be times when the Council of Europe is best placed to act as co-ordinator and times when others, such as the CSCE, might be better. The point is certainly good and interesting.

I should now like to comment on the Council of Europe's budget. As is quite clear from my speech so far, the Government fully support the work of the Council, but, for some years, it has been Government policy not to support by vote increased expenditure that would take the overall budget of an institution such as this beyond zero real growth. My hon. Friend the Member for Newark, who was the first to raise this matter in the debate, knew that that would be my reply.

It is important to put on the record some figures on the Council's budget over the years. The budget has increased in 1994 over 1993 by 4.6 per cent. That is against an inflation rate in France of about 2 per cent., so it is significantly more in real terms. The assembly's budget has done even better. It has been increased by 7.7 per cent. Since 1989, the Council's budget has increased by some 80 per cent. in nominal terms and by about 27 per cent. in real terms. That is over five years.

United Kingdom contributions to the Council this year will be about £15 million. We continue to urge the secretariat to prioritise its expenditure plans in accordance with the policies laid down at the summit. We are beginning to see some results, but it is a hard slog. We can only encourage the assembly to do the same by deciding its priorities. On any fair analysis, the Council of Europe has had helpful increases in its budget over the years.

Before I conclude, I should like to speak about the Western European Union.

Mr. Hardy: The Minister says that expenditure has increased by 27 per cent. over five years. The membership has increased by 65 per cent. Would the Minister care to compare that and write to the delegation on the matter?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I take the hon. Gentleman's point and I will make sure that a considered reply is given to the leaders of the delegation groups.

I welcome the fact that in the debate attention has been given to the WEU. It may not always capture the attention of the media, and in the public consciousness it does not enjoy the same profile as our principal security alliance in NATO. However, I am happy to join the hon. Gentleman in welcoming the fact that the Maastricht treaty set out the future of the WEU as both the European pillar of NATO and the defence component of the European Union. I am also mindful of the importance of the WEU assembly and of the central role played by the United Kingdom delegation in ensuring that the assembly remains vibrant and relevant in the changing security environment in which we now find ourselves.

I, too, send my warm congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) on his success thus far as President of the assembly.

A central and important issue was raised by several hon. Members—including my hon. Friend the Member for Newark, who introduced the debate, and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber—concerning the future of the WEU after 1996. The WEU will not come to an end in 1996—that is absolutely clear. In that year, it will carry out a review of its functions as part of the intergovernmental conference which it is expected will occur then. No decision about its future will be made until then. It is an autonomous, intergovernmental organisation and the decision about its future will be made by WEU Ministers, in the WEU and in the European Union. The modified Brussels treaty will not come to an end in 1998, so the future is still up for grabs. If that institution plays a role which is seen to be appropriate at that time, it will continue.

At the end of the cold war, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation adapted itself to enable the alliance to undertake operations going beyond purely territorial defence. We are seeing the first fruits of that adaptation in the former Yugoslavia. The NATO summit in January endorsed further steps in this direction and it makes abundant sense for the WEU to follow suit.

In Petersburg in January 1992, WEU Ministers set out the sorts of operational activities that the WEU could undertake. These included humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping, and the tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking. The only limitation on these tasks laid down at Petersburg was that they should be fully compatible with the military dispositions necessary to ensure the collective defence of all NATO allies. It follows that if the forces have NATO liabilities there would clearly have to be consultation with NATO before the forces were used for a WEU operational task. That is an important point.

If such a policy as I have touched on is to work, we need an effective co-ordination system and up-to-date knowledge of the effectiveness and availability of WEU forces in times of crisis. For that reason, all WEU member states have designated military units and headquarters that they are willing to make available to the WEU for such tasks. The WEU military planning cell, which was established in October 1992, has the task of keeping updated lists of units and combinations of units that might be allocated to the WEU for specific operations.

As to WEU relations with NATO and the European Union, it is stated in the Maastricht declaration that the WEU will be developed as

"the defence component of the European Union and as a means to strengthen the European pillar of the alliance."

The WEU is an autonomous treaty based on defence organisation and it occupies a unique position in European security architecture. It is thus important that I should talk about the WEU's relations with both NATO and the European Union.

It is agreed by all WEU member states that a strong transatlantic partnership is fundamentally important to European security and stability. In turn, however, the development of a European security and defence identity is an essential component of a renewed and strengthened

transatlantic partnership. The WEU is not in competition with NATO; it is a means to strengthen the European pillar of the alliance. The implementation of the Maastricht treaty has led to greater cohesion within the European pillar and hence a more effective and visible contribution to the alliance.

Relations between NATO and the WEU are based on the fundamental principles of transparency and complementarity. NATO is kept fully informed of what is happening inside the WEU, and vice versa, and there is no duplication of effort between them. Full transparency is possible because all full members of the WEU are members of NATO. European allies that are not members of the European Union can, as agreed at Maastricht, become associated members of the WEU, sharing as fully as possible in its activities. It is open to European Union members that do not wish to become full members of the Western European Union to take observer status.

As was stated at Maastricht, the common foreign and security policy includes all aspects of security, including the eventual development of a common defence policy that might eventually develop into common defence. As stated in the treaty, it is for the WEU to elaborate on and implement decisions and actions of the union that have defence implications. Among the Twelve, defence matters remain at intergovernmental level—reserved at this stage to the WEU, which forms the bridge between NATO and the European Union and ensures that everything that the Union does in the security sector must be compatible with the views and activities in NATO. The WEU has a key co-ordinating role to play.

The WEU has made considerable efforts to help spread stability beyond the frontiers of its member states. We are extremely keen that the WEU should strengthen its links with the countries in central and eastern Europe. I know that the assembly has been active in considering the security problems of those countries. The current link between the WEU and the countries of central and eastern Europe is maintained through the WEU forum of consultation—a purely consultative mechanism that meets once a year at ministerial level and more frequently at working levels.

The WEU Council of Ministers meeting of 22 November 1993 commissioned a study of concrete steps to enhance the relationship between the WEU and the forum of consultation countries. We are now taking that proposal forward with our partners as a matter of urgency and we believe that at this stage the focus should be on strengthening the WEU's existing arrangements for political consultation.

I have mentioned my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington. I pay tribute to the hard work and high level of participation of all members of the British delegation. Some right hon. and hon. Members may not be aware of the institutional importance of the assembly, as has been mentioned today. It occupies a unique position in European security architecture as the only elected European parliamentary organisation with a mandate to discuss defence matters. It provides an important forum for participation by parliamentarians from all parties from all WEU member states and, increasingly, by parliamentarians from central and eastern Europe. The reports produced under the auspices of the assembly are undoubtedly a valuable addition to the European security debate. We place great value on that and I know that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary hopes to address the plenary session of the assembly in June this year.

I hope that I have been able to make some comments of benefit to hon. Members about what they have said, and to give an indication of the Government's policy on those important organisations. I do not often have the opportunity to address the House on European matters. It is not a subject of my responsibility in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and falls to my right hon. Friend the Minister responsible for European matters, but I am glad to have been able to speak on the subject today.

Our relationships with other European countries are central to our security and prosperity. That is why the Government attach such importance to the effective operation of the European institutions that we have been discussing.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House supports the important roles of the Council of Europe and Western European Union; takes note of the work of the Parliamentary Assemblies of both bodies and, in particular, of the work and efforts of the United Kingdom's delegation; notes the role of the Council of Europe in bringing the parliamentary process to the Parliaments and people of Eastern and Central European countries which have joined it in recent years; recognises the special role of the Council of Europe as an institution specialising in the protection of minorities and human rights in those countries; and welcomes the fact that under the Maastricht Treaty the Western European Union is to be the future European Defence entity and the European pillar of the new-role NATO.

Chief of Defence Staff

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you have received a request from the Secretary of State for Defence to make a statement to the House. I say that because the forward notices for the defence study group say that Marshal of the RAF Sir Peter Harding, Chief of the Defence Staff, will address Members of both Houses on 29 March in Room 3 at 6 pm. I wondered whether that was a mistake in the forward notices or whether there had been a development about which the House should be informed. If it is the latter case, would it be in order for the defence study group to invite Lady Bienvenida Buck along so that the House can hear both sides of the story?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I have had no such request.

Europe

1.46 pm

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I beg to move,

That this House notes the importance of all European organisations, including the Council of Europe; and further believes that the long term future peace and prosperity of the continent depends upon the evolution of the European Union into an organisation deserving of the whole-hearted confidence, respect and support of the peoples of the Member States and also the rest of the world.

As I look around the Chamber of the House of Commons, even on a Tuesday and a Thursday, I find that very few people are left in the House who have been staunch Europeans for as long as I have. The reason is obvious. I was born in 1925. In 1940 and 1941, from the age of 14, I served as an air raid messenger in London during the Blitz. I joined the Army at the age of 16 in 1942. I fought through France, Germany, Holland and Belgium in 1944 and 1945, and I have vivid memories of those days and of the horrors of that war.

However, the horrors of that war were surpassed, in my mind, by the immediate aftermath of that war in Europe. I watched concentration camps being opened up. I saw millions of displaced persons moving about our continent, starving, lost, having nowhere to go, and above all—I am ashamed now at the fact that our Governments knew no better and we knew no better on the ground—we played our part in rounding up those displaced persons who were nominally described as citizens of the then Soviet empire and shipping them back, often at the point of the gun, to a country where they would inevitably land up either in a death camp or in a gulag camp where they would serve 20 or 25 years for no other reason than that they had been in Germany and had seen another world which others in the Soviet Union had not experienced.

So in the 1940s and 1950s I and my generation and the generation before us said, "Never again", and out of that will and determination came the firm idea that we would bring the nation states of Europe closer together and create a prosperous and more peaceful Europe. I supported that concept from the beginning.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who has joined us in the Chamber, will know that I founded the Conservative group for Europe with the late Lord Beamish, who was a great figure in this House before he went to another place. I also served for eight years in the European Parliament and was Chief Whip of our group for five years, when I had occasional brushes with my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East—usually pleasant ones.

How far have we gone in achieving what we all set out to do in the 1940s and 1950s? If we are to have a prosperous, peaceful and influential Europe, it is essential that the Community enjoys the whole-hearted support, confidence and respect of the peoples of our Community. Let me list some of my worries. I have accepted—we have all had to accept—the changeover from our being a European Community to a European Union, but I do not like it. The Maastricht treaty may say that that changeover must take place, but European "Community" has a good feel to it. It implies a community of individuals working together for the good of that community. I do not like the idea of a "Union" because it implies not only a trade union, which can sometimes be a difficult organisation to work with, but forcing people into a union of which they do not want to be part.

May I illustrate the difference between the Community as the Euro-enthusiasts see it and the reality of the Community on the ground? I imagine that a chairman of a major company in this country would sit down at a board meeting knowing that all the directors on the board have one aim in mind—to work whole-heartedly and single-mindedly to ensure that the company improves and grows more prosperous and profitable for the shareholders.

Let us contrast that with the average meeting of the European Union. Whoever holds the presidency of the European Union knows that when he attends a Council of Ministers or Heads of Government meeting, individuals round the table are not single minded in their support for the Union, but are serving two masters. They are serving the Union, but they are also looking over their shoulder at their other master, which is their national interests and their individual interests within their nation state.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): My hon. Friend kindly referred to me in the context of the Conservative group for Europe. I think that I succeeded my hon. Friend as chairman of that group. I agree with some of what he has said, but the Union is at an early stage and will evolve gradually. We are only at the beginning of implementing the treaty. Does he agree that part of the problem is the excessive nationalism that still resides among individual member states? I mean not patriotism but nationalism. The best way to overcome those difficulties of separation or dislike from a historical standpoint is for both the European Parliament and individual national Parliaments to work together to promote the Union.

Sir Spicer: My hon. Friend is right. It is a problem and in my view it is insoluble. I shall tell my hon. Friend exactly why. In the past two years, the Danes have held a referendum. It was clear that the Danish Prime Minister looked over his shoulder and was given a clear message by the people of Denmark. There was a French referendum through which the President was almost given the same message by the people of France. We are now in 1994. Is my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East is saying that Chancellor Köhl in Germany is not thinking far more about the elections in November than he is about what is happening on the European scene? Everything that he does while sitting around the European table is absolutely dedicated to creating the right atmosphere for his party and for his individual stance back at home, which is perfectly human.

Next year there are presidential elections in France. Is my hon. Friend saying that a French President or a French Prime Minister is not already embarking on a campaign of fighting France's corner up to the line and to the exclusion of all other interests? That is the reality. Perhaps we wish that it was not, but I am sad to say that it is and will remain so because of the question of serving two masters.

If we are to have a prosperous Europe with low unemployment, it cannot be achieved in isolation from the rest of the world. We cannot construct a cocoon in which we in Europe have our social chapter, with ever-rising standards for our people, with low unemployment, increased productivity and all the good things coming through, while the rest of the world is in a position of, year after year, competing with us much more favourably.

Last September, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister wrote an excellent article in *The Economist* which drew attention to that particular point. He said that European labour costs had risen by 4 per cent. during the 1980s and that elsewhere they had not risen at all. He highlighted the fact that expenditure on social services and health in the Community was more than double that of the rest of the industrial world and said that that gap was increasingly widening.

It is impossible for us to compete with the rest of the world. I wonder how many hon. Members saw a programme on BBC 2 on Saturday night about China called "The Giant Awakes". It illustrated the sort of competition that we can expect in the years ahead. The BBC hand-out about the programme said:

"In the centre of the Pearl River, the People's Liberation Army has joined the rush for wealth—their new factory, manned by 7,000 teenage peasant girls and dubbed Virgin Island, churns out millions of cheap pairs of shoes monthly and is already rocking the world's shoe industry. The teenage girls work 10-hour shifts, six days a week, for £20 a month. 'We run the factory through discipline and love,' announced the general in charge. That means drill sessions, marching to the canteen, pep talks . . . and dancing at the factory disco."

It was a frightening programme. However, it illustrates exactly what we are up against. It becomes even more frightening when one realises that they are so pragmatic about the way in which that factory is run and that the main person involved comes from Taiwan, is in charge of all production and has invested a great deal of money on mainland China.

I wonder whether that lesson is wasted on Opposition Members? I suspect that it is, because liberals and socialists are enthusiastic about signing up to a social contract, which will raise expectations of ever-better working conditions and higher wages, regardless of our competitors in the world. That is totally irresponsible and will do this country and our people no service in the future.

More generally, may I quote two words used by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade when he spoke about Europe the other day? He said that we were facing "European sclerosis". That is true. Time and again, one sees examples of how Europe is not going the down the road which those of us who are staunch supporters of a European identity would wish it to travel. There are ever more costly regulations and in many cases they are not being implemented by all the nation states that signed the directive involved. An article in *The Economist* clearly says:

"Unfortunately, most governments find it easier to pass laws than to respect their letter or spirit. Every year the commission gets roughly a thousand complaints against governments for restraining trade. The commission's usual response is to start 'infringement proceedings', which may, after a couple of years, end up in the European Court."

What happens during those two years while the Court is dealing with an infringement? Does the nation state continue totally to ignore the directive and its substance, which it signed up to? I sincerely hope not.

I can illustrate that much better by talking about the water directives. The United Kingdom is the only country in the Community that implements the water directives in full. In that context, if not only the water directives but all the directives are to be implemented, it is essential that we have better and proper policing which is not left to the national state but is dealt with by the Community as a whole.

The future in terms of the advance of joint foreign policy and defence is a major problem, especially when there is no longer any external threat. There is an increasing likelihood that nation states will go their own way and follow their own national interests. I do not want to go into the details of how we got into the appalling situation in Yugoslavia. However, there are certainly some member states of the European Union—as I must call it now—that bear a heavy responsibility for the situation that exists today.

When we are talking about defence, the average person in the Community can see little relevance in the establishment of a German-French joint brigade. What purpose can that brigade perform outside the Community? If there is a need for troops to operate outside the Community for any purposes in Yugoslavia or anywhere else in the future, the German component of the brigade would have to draw stumps and say that the French can go but the Germans cannot, and all the integration that has been built into the brigade would fall apart overnight. The concept of a brigade is idealistic and does not have any bearing on where we are and where we should be going.

I shall say what we should be addressing if we wish to create a Community that will command whole-hearted support. I refer first to the Bruges speech by Baroness Thatcher when she was the leader of the Tory party. At the core of that speech was this question:

"How are we to reform European institutions so that they provide for the diversity of post Communist Europe and are truly democratic?"

That question remains unanswered today and it is one which all of us must address.

I shall conclude by quoting the response given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in an article on 23 September 1993. He said:

"It is for nations to build Europe, not for Europe to attempt to supersede nations. I want to see the Community become a wide union, embracing the whole of democratic Europe, in a single market and with common security arrangements firmly linked to NATO. I want to see a competitive and confident Europe, generating jobs for its citizens and choices for its consumers. A community which ceases to nibble at national freedoms, and so commands the enthusiasm of its Member Nations (and peoples).

Such a community would be a more genuine and lasting European union than anything we have now. It offers peace. It promotes security. It widens free trade. It preserves and enhances infant democracies. It marches with the instincts of free people in free nations. It is an ambition for the new century that dwarfs the dreams of the founders of the Community. The Treaty of Rome is not a creed. It is an instument. We must tune it to the times."

That statement unites every Conservative Member, and I know that it would strike a chord with many Opposition Members if they were allowed to express an independent opinion. They would not do that at this time for fear of offending their Whips. The views are in line with French and Danish opinion, and now—most notably in my view—with the views being expressed by the possible future German leader, Mr. Schauble. He has made it clear that he believes in a Community of nation states, not a Community that is dominated by Brussels.

That is not the view of the Opposition. As we move towards the European elections in June, I hope that the distinction between the views of the Government and those of the Opposition will become clear to the people of this country, and that they will vote accordingly.

2.6 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I start by congratulating my hon. Friends the Members for Newark (Mr. Alexander) and for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) on achieving the two debates. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West on the sentiments that he has just expressed. My hon. Friends had two advantages over me—they scored above me in the ballot for motions and, as you may recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, their names were legible to Madam Speaker, whereas she had some difficulty reading mine. I have taken Madam Speaker's warnings to heart.

In a few weeks, in this country and across western Europe we shall commemorate the 50th anniversary of D-day. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West, I was born a couple of months after D-day. I do not want to enter into the debate as to whether the Germans should be present at that commemoration. If they were, it would mark emphatically that the commemoration was a way of celebrating the present peace, unity and strength. We would be looking forward, instead of looking back. It is right to look back, but there is a case for celebrating the present.

After the war in 1918, there were less happy developments which led inevitably to a further European conflagration. After 1945, the victorious powers were much wiser. There was the generous and imaginative gesture of Marshall aid, following the speech by General Marshall at Harvard in June 1947. There was the imaginative speech from Winston Churchill about a European union at Zurich in September 1946.

I have been involved and interested in those developments through my work before entering the House of editing the diaries and letters of Leopold Amery, the father of the noble Lord Amery of Lustleigh. I read in the diaries how, as early as November 1945, Amery wrote to Churchill:

"There is only one way of limiting Russian demands and that is . . . for the future, build up some sort of European Union or Commonwealth"—

Amery used the vital word commonwealth, which has much a more attractive resonance to us in this country than the term union—

"that can hold its own against Russia . . . So long as Europe remains Balkanised, European countries will be tempted to look to outside patrons in every quarrel, while the outside patrons will consciously or unconsciously tend to foment their quarrels. In the end it will come to a final struggle between the patrons. A European Commonwealth is something that can hold its own with Russia and figure, much more genuinely than China or France alone, as one of the real world powers."

Amery was a great British Commonwealth man but in the last years of his life—he died in 1955—he worked with Churchill on early attempts to develop a European commonwealth.

Earlier, we debated institutions that predate the treaty of Rome and the European Community as we know it now. Amery welcomed Churchill's speech at Zurich a year later, commenting that although Churchill may not have been altogether wise in putting the Franco-German partnership in the forefront,

"he is absolutely right about it, and the idea will presently sink in."

We may reflect on whether, if Britain had been fully involved from the start in developing European institutions, it might have avoided some of the rigidity of the treaty of Rome which developed in the way that we know. Britain was not involved in the Community during the 1950s. It twice attempted to become involved during the 1960s, but failed to enter the Community until 1973. By then, the bus had moved on and the EC had developed some of the rigid structures that have definitely caused this country certain difficulties.

I shall examine four aspects of the European Union. As to defence, perhaps I may commend my own motion on the Order Paper, which will not be debated but which contains various references to the fact that Britain still spends above average for NATO European countries because of our particular involvement in Europe and outside it. My motion also emphasises—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West supports this—the need for equipment to aid the mobility of our forces together with those of our allies. My motion refers in particular to helicopters and the Westland Apache. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), who is in his place, also supports that.

Finally, on defence, the Government—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not seek to make the remarks that he would have made if the third motion had been debated. He must relate them to the motion before the House.

Mr. Nicholson: I merely wanted to comment that in Bosnia, in which European Union states are much involved, we have the balance right—taking into account our interests, the need to establish a civilised community in Yugoslavia and public opinion. One extreme holds that Britain should provide more troops to fight in Bosnia, which I believe would be entirely wrong. The other extreme holds that we should wash our hands of the matter and have no involvement. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence have taken the right course, as recent developments bear out.

Our debates on Maastricht and current debates on local government reorganisation bring home to the public how many actual and potential tiers of government exist at European, national, regional—which Labour and the Liberal Democrats would like to develop, but which we would probably oppose—and local government level. I support the Government's attempts prudently to reduce bureaucracy and regulation in Europe as well as nationally. However, we should have regard to the sentiments, expressed in recent months in respect of over-regulation and over-administration from those various and sometimes conflicting tiers of government. I believe that counties are an effective means of communicating the needs of those communities to the European Union and that we would pursue a sorry path if we moved towards a regional tier which is the view of the Labour party. However, that is a matter for debate.

I intervened on my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) in relation to the European Court of Human Rights. I am concerned about the overriding of laws that we have deliberately passed in this House by reference to European institutions and, in particular, the European Court of Human Rights. Such overriding has occurred not when we have made accidental lapses, but when we have passed purposeful measures.

I received a letter this week from a constituent in the construction industry, drawing my attention to a report on the front page of the *Daily Mail* which stated that the Law Lords' judgment which brought Britain into line with the European Union on rights for part-time workers triggers the threat of redundancy pay demands back-dated up to 16 years. He said that that was a nightmare and the consequences of the development of such a nightmare have been described today.

Following that development, the Government had to concede to European pressure to boost maternity pay entitlements in line with a European Union directive. My constituent wrote:

"This is the European social chapter in by the back door. It will undoubtedly damage prospects for women in employment."

I commend to the Government the need to stand up against that. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) is present in the Chamber because he has a silent interest in employment matters. He will note carefully what I am saying.

Enlargement is at the centre of the present debate about qualified majority voting and the matters that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is pursuing most skilfully in Brussels. Enormous damage would be done to the United Kingdom if we were seen to be placing obstacles or delays in the way of the entry of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Austria into the European Community. Those countries have much in common with us and the way in which they approach matters will be more in tune with how Britain approaches matters than some of the Mediterranean countries. Those countries have much in common with us for historical reasons: Norway is an ally in NATO and Sweden and Finland open up the Baltic and relations with the Baltic states. We would welcome a speedy resolution of that difficulty.

I do not want to comment further on that dispute, which was debated yesterday. If our partners were to be particularly stubborn and hostile in respect of some of the matters that lie between us, that would jeopardise Britain's ability to co-operate willingly in a positive and constructive way.

Having said that, there are people in this country—I hope that they are not on the Conservative Benches although it is up to my hon. Friends on the Euro-sceptic wing of the party to speak for themselves—in the press and elsewhere, and the article in *The Times* yesterday by Lord Rees-Mogg is an example of such thinking—who argue that it would be worth risking a few years of Government under the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) if, as a result, the Conservative party in opposition were not only to move to the right, which is what many of those people want, but to become hostile to recent developments in the European Community.

I firmly believe that that would so badly damage and divide this party that it would thrust us out of office, perhaps for a decade. We have lessons to learn from what has happened to the Labour party since 1979. After 1979, the Labour party was overtaken by extraordinary insanity and extremism which have kept it from office for 15 years. I hope that people in the press who have been flogging the European issue so mercilessly over the past year—I believe that this is the main motive for so many elements of the press being so extraordinarily hostile to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—will consider carefully how they represent these matters as the sort of thinking that I have described is extremely dangerous.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West mentioned the European elections. If the country elects many Labour and Liberal Democrat candidates to the European Parliament, that will be greatly detrimental to the interests that my hon. Friend has set out, and which I have tried to pursue, of developing a European Community with which British people can be at ease—a European Community with low regulation and in which the various tiers of government can co-operate. Whatever happens in the elections, I am sure that any successes for the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties will be extremely damaging to our national interest and to the longer-term interests of our people.

2.20 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I am grateful for catching your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, especially at such an early time of day. I previously spoke on a European matter at about 2 am. I did not speak for long then and I guarantee that I will not speak for long this afternoon.

We have heard many splendid contributions to this debate and the previous debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) on initiating this debate today. It could not be more appropriate given that our Foreign Secretary is currently discussing the enlargement of the European Union. We have had today an excellent debate on Western European Union and the Council of Europe, two important institutions of Europe. As was said time and again by my hon. Friends in that debate, becoming a member of the Council of Europe is almost a stepping stone to applying to become a full member of the European Union.

At the moment, we are considering the question of four countries joining the European Union, but in future—perhaps the near future—we shall consider even more applications from countries to become full members of the European Union. The current debate on Norway, Austria, Sweden and Finland is vital to the future of other countries that may seek to join the European Union.

We have talked about the emerging democracies of the former Soviet Union becoming members of the Council of Europe. A Council of Europe report shows that nine countries have outstanding applications for membership: Latvia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Albania, Andorra, Belarus, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In the future, such countries may apply to become members of the European Union. Who can say now which way things are likely to go?

I hope that in any future widening of the European Union, which we and perhaps Opposition Members want to see, we shall pay full attention to common sense. That is why I fully endorse the speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Dorset, West and for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), and the wording of the motion, which is full of common sense. It talks about a European Union with which people in this country and the rest of the world will feel comfortable and at ease.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) and I visited one of the European institutions the other day; we went to see the new parliament building in Brussels. It is not finished yet, but I am sure that it will be in the near future. I sometimes lose track of how many parliament buildings we have around the European Union. In my time, I have been to the European Parliament in

[Mr. Nigel Evans]

Luxembourg and I have been to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The new parliament building in Brussels is lavish. Strasbourg is now saying, "We can do better than that and we can build a brand new parliament building so that we shall not have to give up European Parliament sessions in Strasbourg."

So yet another parliament building is on offer. I sometimes wonder whether we should have one each. There are 12 member states; if each had a parliament, we could meet there once a month. What will happen when there are 16 member states? Can we not have some common sense in decisions on our institutions? Such institutions are extremely expensive. People floating between Strasbourg and Brussels is expensive enough, and I hope that we shall consider establishing one parliament building to which everyone can go. I know that it would not be set up in the United Kingdom, so I am not bothered about where it would be located. Let the people concerned make up their minds on the matter.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Is not the problem that there is no agreement about the seat of the European Parliament because the Governments of the member states will never come to an agreement that will suit the Union?

Mr. Evans: That may be the case, but it does not detract from the argument that the common-sense approach would be to knock a few heads together in the European Union and to decide where the European Union Parliament should be based. All the supporting institutions could be around it, so we would not have to float around the European Union, as we currently do, which is a waste of European taxpayers' money. That is the last thing that we as Conservatives want to happen.

The common-sense side of subsidiarity allows member states far more say in what goes on in their country, if it does not impinge on other European Union countries. I want far more common sense to be applied.

We have heard some horror stories recently. My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton mentioned a subject on which, as he said, I am silent, but that does not mean that I do not have feelings about Brussels' decisions on it. There has been a proposal for a European plug, for example. I am sometimes exasperated by some of the Commission's proposals. It is almost as if it has to justify its existence by continually coming up with ideas. But people in this country ask, "Why do we need to go down that route?"

Mr. Dykes: It is part of the single market.

Mr. Evans: Yes, but we have had our present plug and socket system for many years. It can be proved that it is extremely safe and that it does not impinge on our fellow European Community member states. Another system may be more convenient for them, but if I were to accept the argument that we should all have the same plugs and sockets, before long we would all be speaking the same language and driving on the same side of the road. That may be the direction in which my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) would like to lead us, but the vast majority of people in this country would not support that. Let us have some common sense in the rules and regulations emanating from Brussels so that we can feel more comfortable about supporting them.

My constituents and the majority of my Conservative colleagues are extremely pleased with the Foreign Secretary's policy on qualified majority voting. In the past few years, far more issues have been settled by qualified majority voting. That may have been right. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East said that problems would arise if each member state could block proposals just by saying no and that we would not get anywhere. The blocking measure is important to protect the interests of this country in certain sectors and it should be retained.

If future qualified majority voting extended to 27 countries as opposed to 23, it would be more difficult for us to block the application of European Community legislation to Britain. In that case, we should hold back for a while. An intergovernmental conference will be held in 1996, so I cannot understand for the life of me why there is such pressure to decide on QMV by Tuesday. The four countries that will join the European Union will be net contributors, so I should imagine that all the members of the Union would like them to join. If the decision on QMV were deferred until 1996, at least we should have time to reflect and to ensure that we got it right. We should have a full 12 months to discuss how QMV should work and we should then be able to judge whether any alterations should be made to it.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

INSOLVENCY BILL

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—[*Mr. Butterfill.*]

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

HEDGEROWS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 April.

NURSERY EDUCATION (ASSESSMENT OF NEED) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [18 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 15 April.

INSOLVENCY (NO.2) BILL AND TRANSPORT POLICE (JURISDICTION) BILL

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Insolvency (No.2) Bill and the Transport Police (Jurisdiction) Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bills have been read a second time.—[*Mr. Arbuthnot.*]

EUROPEAN STANDING COMMITTEES

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 4616/94, relating to agricultural prices proposals 1994-95, shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee A.—[*Mr. Arbuthnot.*]

Edgware General Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Arbuthnot.*]

2.33 pm

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to draw attention to the dismay caused in my constituency by the suggestion that one of the two Barnet hospitals, Edgware general hospital, should be closed. I am glad to see that my hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), and for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) are here. They have neighbouring constituencies, will which be equally affected if the proposals are implemented.

Edgware general hospital has been an important part of the north Hendon community for 65 years. During that time, it has steadily built a reputation for excellence in its treatment of patients and for the dedication and care of its staff. The hospital has now become an integral part of the community that it serves. It has become so much a part of the local scene that literally no one is prepared to contemplate its loss.

Many of my constituents feel that to be deprived of a facility such as their general hospital would be akin to Kew losing its gardens or Canterbury suddenly finding that its cathedral had been confiscated. That is the measure of how gravely my constituents regard the local health authority's proposal to deprive them of their hospital.

Of course, tradition or sentiment do not of themselves provide justification for preserving an institution. One must respond to changing circumstances and, if need be, match them to new arrangements. Nevertheless, when matters are both profoundly disturbing and vastly expensive, we should be doubly certain that innovations are required.

My constituents feel, and I agree with them, that these changes involving the proposal to close Edgware general hospital are most definitely not necessary or desirable. They fail on every ground laid down by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he was Secretary of State for Health. At that time he said:

"a better national health service . . . means a service that always puts the patient first . . . in ways responsive to people's views."

My constituents simply do not agree that the arguments for the closure of Edgware hospital do that. They do not meet the criterion of "putting patients first". How can one say that one is putting people first if, in the process, one is making them sick with anxiety because of what one is foisting on them? How can one say that while ignoring every potential patient's objections?

Public opinion apart, the closure does not stand up to examination on other grounds. Even the process of public consultation upon which its acceptance is supposed to be based has been inadequate—an inadequacy to which I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East will attest.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): We are deeply grateful to my hon. Friend for his leadership and resolute determination in our campaign and many hours of meetings. We have all worked together under his leadership to save the hospital. Is not one of the most bizarre issues the fact that while there is heavy population density around the hospital, which makes it an ideal

[Mr. Hugh Dykes]

location on the border between his constituency and mine, the local health authority's alternative proposal, Barnet hospital, is in a relatively rural underpopulated area?

Mr. Gorst: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I thank him for the support that he has given to our endeavours to keep the hospital open.

While proclaiming a regard for public opinion, the so-called "consultation process" has been little more than window dressing. If there has been a success, it has been in uniting all sections of the community, and every shade of opinion within it, against a proposition that has the dubious distinction of never before having united so many people in such a concentrated area on a single subject with such universal hostility.

Young and old, left and right, doctors and patients—all have joined in a show of unparalleled opposition. More than 40,000 names have been collected and public protest meetings have drawn unprecedented audiences. Ordinary local residents, many of whom have never before protested about anything, let alone attended a public meeting, have gathered to express their indignation, astonishment or concern.

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): My hon. Friend's knowledge of my constituency is as wide as, if not wider than, that of his own constituency. I echo the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) about the leadership that my hon. Friend has given in attempting to keep the hospital open.

Throughout my constituency, there is considerable concern about this matter. Endless letters have been sent about it and concern has been expressed in small meetings in churches and elsewhere. I do not accept the Government's figures and their claims that beds have to be taken out of London hospitals. I think the figures are erroneous. The bed numbers in London are no better than those in the rest of the country.

Today, we are concentrating on saving the hospital and I hope that the Minister will assure the House at the end of the debate that it will be saved, otherwise this battle will increase. I think that throughout London—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Interventions should, by their nature, be short, particularly in a debate such as an Adjournment debate.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I shall finish this thought and then sit down. I support my hon. Friend in all that he has said.

Mr. Gorst: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend. Indeed, I will return to the point that he has made in a moment. I reiterate that the people who are protesting against this proposal are not rent-a-mobs of local trouble-makers. They are active business men, elderly pensioners and worried housewives—the sorts of people whom we are used to calling middle England.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): My family has twice used Edgware general hospital and the concern that my hon. Friend expresses is shared by many electors in Hendon, South. They recognise that there are very poor travel links between Edgware and Barnet and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) used that fact to emphasise the need for a new Barnet hospital, so we must use it to emphasise the need for Edgware hospital to remain.

Mr. Gorst: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for endorsing a point that I shall make also. I hope that the Minister will take it on board when he hears it twice.

There has been an overwhelming expression of public sentiment which contains a very simple message: why is Parliament, the Government, or whoever, setting up a consultation process to allow all interested parties to have their say and then turning a deaf ear to their arguments and opinions? Patients pay through their taxes for the use that they make of the national health service. They should not be treated as numbers in an accountant's ledger.

Some of those people are sick or elderly, infirm or disabled or perhaps distracted by family worries. Governments have a special responsibility to them: a duty to ensure that desk-led proposals do not supplement patient-led preference. Those present and prospective users of the national health service have not been standing alone on this issue. Doctors, too, have had their opinions brushed aside. Local GPs in the borough of Barnet—highly trained professionals who, every day or night, deal face to face with their patients on health matters—have expressed their concern also.

The medical profession should be both a linchpin and a starting point for any serious reform. Without its backing, reform in that sector is not just unwise or unworkable but likely to be stillborn or crippled. To steamroller through the changes without the whole-hearted support of local doctors would be a mixture of folly and foolhardiness.

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): I join the hon. Gentleman in expressing concern at a hospital closure that would have an impact across London. Local Labour party branches and community groups share the hon. Gentleman's concern and the worries of general practitioners. I understand that they are also anxious that the decision has been based on highly flawed data. The figures on which the proposals are based are not even regarded as sound.

Mr. Gorst: I thank the hon. Lady for her endorsement of an issue to which I shall, I promise, turn in a moment.

It was once famously said that what we see depends mainly on what we look for. In the case of Edgware general hospital, it seems that answers were decided long before questions were formulated and certainly long before opinions were canvassed. All the public hearings that have taken place have had the appearance of trying to justify a predetermined, inflexible decision from which there would be no subsequent departure. One is reminded of the words of the queen in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland". "No! no!" said the queen. "Sentence first—verdict afterwards." That is how it has all sounded. It is little wonder that my constituents have been so enraged by the semblance of a show trial in which the verdict for the prosecution has preceded the hearing in court. The proposals to close Edgware hospital are clearly unpopular, but they are more than that: they are misguided.

Residents in north Hendon are not opposed to change in itself. No one welcomes disruption with open arms, but provided that it leads to a betterment in the quality of life, the residents of north Hendon, like everyone else, will accept it with good grace. But the proposals do not offer

any betterment; they do not offer any quid pro quo. Something is removed, but nothing tangible is being put in its place.

To be fair to the Barnet health authority, there is talk of a shift to primary care and of replacing care in hospital with care in the community. It is obviously prudent to prepare our health care for the realities of the 21st century, but to disguise a disinvestment in secondary care as an investment in primary care seems nothing more than a sleight of hand. Robbing Peter to pay Paul is not a straightforward or viable way to run a health service. It is far from clear that Barnet's primary health care system will be able to cope with any additional work load.

In the longer term, there are pitfalls in believing that technology and primary care can have more than a marginal effect; they can do only a certain amount. It is rather like what used to be known as the penicillin trap. In 1948, when penicillin was first invented, it was believed that from then on, sending people to hospital would become a thing of the past. Of course, it did not; penicillin did not stop people from becoming ill. In the same way, day care or out-patient treatment will not remove the need for hospitals.

Behind all the plans lies a false assumption that Barnet is over-bedded, which is far from true, as has already been said. Since 1982, Barnet has suffered a 37 per cent. cut in the total number of beds and a 46 per cent. cut in the number of acute beds. Indeed, the North West Thames region already has the lowest per capita number of acute beds anywhere in the country. That has been confirmed by the recent reports by Professor Brian Jarman, who has pointed out that Greater London does not have an overprovision of beds. Therefore, it is not only unwarranted, but highly debatable to propose further cuts. Where, for example, would last year's 100,000 or more accident and emergency cases in Barnet have gone? Where would last year's 44,000 self-referrals at Edgware general have gone to? Would it not have been a dangerous underprovision of resources to have had only three quarters of the beds required for a worst-case scenario?

There is yet another objection to the proposal to close Edgware, which in many ways causes most worry among my constituents—accessibility. The proposal to close Edgware general hospital and to rely, in its place, on one hospital on a site that can be more than an hour away by public transport, creates real problems, especially, but not uniquely, for people without cars. The most deprived localities are those that are nearest to Edgware general. They are the places that use its services the most, yet, should Edgware general close, those will be the very people with the furthest to travel to reach their hospital and who are the least able to afford to do so.

Visiting sick relatives or friends will require a nightmare journey across a borough sliced in half by a major motorway. Such an imposition on patients—who may be elderly—or on their relatives is hardly likely to help their recovery process. That transport difficulty, which is compounded by London's radial rather than cross-town transport system, has been treated dismissively by the health authority planners.

That is extraordinary for another reason. The health authority recognises that the greatest need for, and use of, hospital services occurs in the Colindale and Burnt Oak areas, so why is it siting the hospital for my constituents at the other end of the borough, where people are affluent and comparatively have less need of those medical resources? Cross-borough travel is far from simple. A hospital is not like a shopping centre. One cannot expect an out-of-town hospital to be a success, as though it were a well-endowed supermarket.

All those circumstances and considerations lead inexorably to one conclusion—Edgware general must remain open for the foreseeable future. It should be a principle in reform, in all sectors affecting basic feelings of security, where vulnerable people are concerned, that Governments and their agencies do not play havoc with people's fear of illness and infirmity. Faced with the outcry that the threatened closure of Edgware general has caused, it behoves the Government to tread softly; to plan the way ahead with reassuring moves; not to engage in disruptive innovation.

It is not for Members of Parliament to usurp the function of civil servants, but I need convincing that all possible alternatives have been fully and adequately examined by the Barnet health authority. I strongly urge my hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that that has been done before irreversible, draconian solutions such as a hospital closure are given any more consideration. If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has boxed in her agents—the Barnet health authority—let her, like some 20th century Pandora, release those geniuses from the confines and constraints of their box. Then, at the very least, some hope will remain for a more acceptable solution to the dilemma of the Department's accountancy problems.

In short, I am asking for my constituents to be freed from the present agonies of impending deprivation. There is a real danger of making a huge irreversible decision, affecting the lives of thousands of people, on the basis of a half-baked, pseudo-scientific manipulation of figures devised by a team of over-educated boffins. As no less a figure than Sir Winston Churchill said, we must beware of needless innovation, especially when guided by logic.

This is neither the time nor the place for experiment, because lives are at stake.

2.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) on the eloquent, portentous, almost Churchillian way in which he made his case for retaining the acute services at Edgware hospital. Clearly, there is enormous concern among his and other hon. Friends' constituents. If I were not aware of that already, I certainly am as a result of this debate.

Anything involving major change in the health service is bound to cause enormous concern and I well understand why my hon. Friend has spoken as he has. At some stage in his speech he gave the health authority some credit. Its intention is to improve health services overall for those who live within the area that it covers. As he knows, it means to invest substantially in improved primary health care to reflect the fact that more care will be delivered in a primary health context.

The health authority certainly means to take a number of steps to bring health care closer to people's homes in the sense that many more people will be treated as out-patients and will recover at home, rather than during long stays in hospital. Most importantly, the health authority will try to ensure that it has the resources available to reduce waiting

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

times for everybody, if possible to an absolute maximum of six months, which would be well in excess of the national standards and guarantees that now prevail.

To do all that, the health authority must live within its means. It has a budget of some £164 million a year, which is spent on local residents' health care. It must therefore decide how to spend that budget in order to deliver some of the aims that I have just enumerated. It must think carefully about whether it wishes to contract with the two acute hospitals within the area. It must take account of the fact that health care is changing. Whereas a few years ago a patient might have spent 10 days or two weeks in hospital, today that patient may spend only two days in hospital or even be treated as a day patient. All over the country, including in Barnet, the proportion of surgery, particularly elective surgery, being carried out as day cases is rising rapidly. It must be understood that demand is also rising.

However, the acceleration of day surgery and day treatment generally is having a dramatic effect on the demands for beds and we cannot ignore that. Barnet health authority has clearly arrived at the conclusion that it would like to concentrate the acute services on one site and it appears that it has agreement with the trust that that would be the proper way in which to proceed. Therefore, over a period of time, it would put all acute services at Barnet and, on the Edgware site, it would invest in a number of services including those for minor injuries, a great range of out-patient consultations, out-patient rehabilitation and therapy services, diagnostic services and a number of day-care services. It is its belief that that is the best way in which it can offer a complete range of health care to all those living in their area.

I must preface all that by saying that no decisions have been taken. An intention has been expressed by the health authority and if it is to make any major changes in service of that sort and there are statutory objections to such a scheme, Ministers would have to decide because the case would before them. In that eventuality, we would want to be certain that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North said, all alternatives had been examined thoroughly. We would want to see a major improvement in primary care for everybody in the area. That would be a prerequisite.

If there were a concentration of the acute services on one site from the present two acute hospitals, we would want to see that the services available at the other hospital, which would cease to be acute, would cover the needs of the population living in that area as much as is possible. We would want to see a well-worked out plan for services across the whole area.

I stress that that matter will have to be decided by Ministers if there are objections and we will take all factors in the case into account. The comments of my hon. my hon. Friends the Members for Hendon, North, for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) will form a substantial part of our considerations.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 7 March 1994

TRANSPORT

Roads (Costs)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost per mile for *(a)* porous asphalt road surface material and *(b)* concrete surfaces for (i) single carriageway road, (ii) two-lane dual carriageway roads, (iii) three-lane dual carriageway roads and (iv) four-lane dual carriageway roads.

Mr. Key: The approximate costs per mile of surfacing the various standards of road are shown in the table:

	£k	
	Porous asphalt	*Typical concrete road*
Single carriageway	90	450
2 lane dual—all purpose	180	900
—motorway	220	1,100
3 lane dual—all purpose	250	1,260
—motorway	275	1,380
4 lane dual—all purpose	—	—
—motorway	345	1,750

These figures are indicative only because both site and choice of pavement design will cause them to vary. Further, the figures for porous asphalt are based on limited experience.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the average costs of constructing one mile of dual three-lane motorway *(a)* in a tunnel and *(b)* on the surface.

Mr. Key: The cost of building roads and tunnels varies considerably dependent upon location, topography and ground conditions. At current prices the average total cost of building one mile of dual three-lane motorway on the surface would be between £6 million and £10 million. Building the same length in tunnel would probably cost at least £60 million and possibly as much as £150 million.

Road Construction

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent investigations have been carried out into the relationship between link road and motorway buildings and employment and prosperity.

Mr. Key: Among recent United Kingdom studies into this issue of which I am aware are a study commissioned jointly by Glasgow development agency and Scottish Enterprise National on the "Economic Benefits of the M74 Norther Extension"—Kennedy McTavish Ltd., Oscar Faber TPA, and Cambridge Systematics Inc, August 1993; one by E. T. Judge on "Regional Issues and Transport Infrastructure: some reflections on the Lancashire—Yorkshire Motorway" published in 1983; and an investigation by P. J. Mackie et al of the institute of transport studies, Leeds University into the likely effects of the second Severn crossing, 1986. The centre for transport studies of the university of London is currently embarking upon a study into the impact of the new A14 M1-A1 link road for the British Road Federation. There are a number of other recent studies carried out in the United States and Netherlands.

Vehicle Congestion

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies have been made by his Department of work done by the Oxford university transport studies unit concerning the effect on congestion of vehicle mileage increases.

Mr. Key: I am aware of work on this topic carried out by the TSU. I am concerned about the impact of traffic growth on congestion. Failing to invest in road improvements will cause congestion to increase, which will damage the economy. It has been suggested that road improvement may itself make some contribution to traffic growth. The extent of this effect is being studied by the Department of Transport's standing advisory committee on trunk road assessment, which is due to report later this year. It is, however, clear that economic growth rather than road provision is the main determinant of demand.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide figures for the amount his Department has been reimbursed by the Department of Social Security in respect of statutory sick pay provision for each of the past three years.

Mr. Norris: A figure for 1990-91 is not available. The sums reimbursed in 1991-92 were approximately £706,000; and £1·04 million in 1992-93. Reimbursements in the current financial year are expected to remain around £1 million.

Consultancies

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *496*, what was the network referencing listed under the column headed "Service Required"; and what KPMG provided.

Mr. Norris: The network referencing project concerned the review and possible re-development of the existing computer-based model of the trunk road and motorway network. This model is used by the Department's computerised network information system, which helps decisions on highway investment.

KPMG was commissioned in September 1992 to review the Department's business requirements for network-based data and to recommend an effective referencing system. KPMG's report in May 1993 recommended the simplification of the current network model, and provided a business case to justify the re-development.

Mrs Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) of 31

January, *Official Report*, column *496*, what duties the temporary finance director, hired from Coopers and Lybrand, carried out; and for how long that director was employed.

Mr. Norris: The purpose of this appointment between 3 August 1992 and 31 January 1993 at the Transport Research Laboratory was to cover the delay in appointing a permanent finance director from the private sector; and to assist in developing a culture of service that would encourage a more commercial orientation in the finance department.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *496*, what was the study of EC directives under the column headed "Service Required"; and what service Coopers and Lybrand provided.

Mr. Norris: The study by Coopers and Lybrand was into directive 91/440/EC on the development of Community railways. Coopers and Lybrand provided recommendations on, among other matters, accounting separation, track charging and mechanisms for access to the railway network arising from this directive.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *496*, what was the OPRAF consultancy under the column headed "Service Required"; and what service Ernst and Young provided.

Mr. Norris: The OPRAF consultancy was commissioned to identify the business objectives, business processes and information requirements of the rail regulator and the director of rail franchising, and to consider and evaluate these and future IT requirements. Ernst and Young performed this study, producing a formal report, and subsequently developed an implementation plan, more detailed specifications and recommendations for technical strategy options.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *496*, what was the DISC network policy under the column headed "Service Required"; and what service KPMG provided.

Mr. Norris: The DISC network policy project was set up to develop a technical strategy for wide area computer networking provision and network management services. KPMG provided business and technical expertise, and assistance in the preparation of policy guidance for the departmental information systems committee—DISC.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *496*, if he will set out in detail the type of financial advice provided by Capita in 1993.

Mr. Norris: Capita Management Consultants was asked to review the financial and management information systems used to plan, monitor, control and report expenditure on accommodation and office services; to develop proposals for a computerised management accounting system; to advise on time and activity recording systems; to calculate the full economic costs of each service; and to assist in developing service level agreements and baseline costings for market testing services.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *496*, what was the senior staff review under the column headed "Service Required"; and what service Price Waterhouse provided.

Mr. Norris: The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency reviewed and revised its senior structure in order to further improve the management of its organisation. Price Waterhouse gave advice and assistance in that process.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *496*, what duties were carried out by the temporary accountant hired from Michael Page Finance; and how long the accountant was employed.

Mr. Norris: The purpose of this appointment was to cover staff absence during the period 5 May 1993 to 27 August 1993; and to assist in the preparation of the first set of commercial accounts for the Transport Research Laboratory.

Fewston Transport

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many lorries from Fewston Transport of Skipton have been employed on motorway building or maintenance contracts; whether Fewston's vehicles have ever been checked or prosecuted for safety infringements; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will exclude Fewston Transport of Skipton from all future and present motorway contracts;

(3) what requirements on vehicle safety are imposed on contractors and subcontractors on motorway projects; what inspection procedures are in place for vehicle safety; and what sanctions are imposed on firms found running unsafe vehicles.

Mr. Key: All vehicles which use public roads must meet the relevant legal requirements, the enforcement of which is a matter for the police and the Department of Transport's vehicle inspectors.

The vehicle inspectorate has conducted annual roadworthiness tests and roadside spot checks on vehicles belonging to Fewston Transport; the operator has not been prosecuted under his current licence for any vehicle roadworthiness defects or for being overweight.

The Department has no contracts directly with Fewston Transport although the firm may have been engaged as haulage contractors by other contractors or suppliers working on the Department's trunk roads and motorways.

The Department's contracts require compliance with the law generally. We are considering the practicality of a specific requirement that main contractors ensure all goods vehicles using the site are covered by a valid operator's

licence. Persistent failure to do so would be a factor taken into account in offering future opportunities to tender for departmental contracts.

The Department has also formed a joint working group on illegal operations to address the problem of illegal operators and to coordinate enforcement action against them.

A27

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the price *(a)* paid to those who have to sell their property in connection with the development of the A27 in the Worthing area because of urgent personal problems and *(b)* of their or similar properties before the A27 schemes were announced; and if he will now purchase properties whose owners need to move because of urgent personal problems under the blight conditions.

Mr. Key: The purchase price is the full market value of the property as agreed with the district valuer, calculated as if the scheme had never been proposed. The valuation basis is therefore the same as would have applied before the proposals were announced.

The Department has already agreed to purchase, under discretionary powers, more than 90 properties in the Worthing area whose enjoyment would be seriously affected by the proposals and whose owners need to move because of urgent personal problems. It will continue to do so where the discretionary purchase criteria are met.

Seat Belts

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been undertaken into the effectiveness of seat belts in preventing injury in coach and minibus crashes, with particular regard to the relative merits of lap-only belts and three-point belts.

Mr. Key: My Department has carried out a good deal of research on seat belts, primarily in connection with cars, much of which can be used to inform policy decisions on seat belts on public service vehicles.

Both lap and three-point belts are effective in preventing ejection from the vehicle which is a major cause of injury in accidents involving coaches and minibuses.

British Rail

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each year since 1979 *(a)* British Rail line closures and *(b)* British Rail passenger and freight service reductions.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1981 and 1994 British Rail passenger services were discontinued on the lines listed. There were no closures in 1979 and 1980. There have of course been a number of new services introduced in this period.

1981
Kentish Town junction—Engine shed junction (north London)
New Holland to New Holland pier (south Humberside)

1982
Dore West—Dore South junction (south Yorkshire)
Norwood Fork junction—Selhurst junction (south London)
Blaydon junction—Newcastle West junction (Tyne and Wear)
March East junction—Spalding South junction (Cambs/Lincs)
Sleaford South junction—Sleaford North junction (Lincs)
Greetwell West junction—Pyewipe junction (Lincs)

1983
Glasgow—Kilmacolm (Strathclyde)
Woodside—Selsdon (south London)
Clayton West junction and Clayton West and Denby Dale and Sheffield Nunnery junction (west and south Yorkshire)
Bidston junction—Seacombe junction (Merseyside)

1985
Tunbridge Wells West—Eridge (Kent)
Tottenham Hale—Stratford (east London)

1986
Broad Street—Dalston junction (east London)
Balloch Central to Balloch pier (Strathclyde)

1987
Gooseshill—Wath Road (west Yorkshire)

1988
Agecroft—Brindle Heath (Greater Manchester)
Burton Lane—Rowntree Halt (north Yorkshire)

1989
Vale of Rheidol Line (Dyfed)

1990
Wortley Curve (west Yorkshire)
Methley junction—Altofts junction (west Yorkshire)
Mexborough junction—Aldwarke junction (south Yorkshire)
North Pole junction—Old Oak Common East junction (west London)

1991
West Parade North junction—Anlaby Road junction (north Humberside)

1992
Tilbury East and West junctions—Tilbury Riverside (Essex)
Camden junction—Camden Road junction and Navarino junction—Reading Lane junction (north and east London)

1993
Castleford-Milford junction (west and north Yorkshire)

1994
Philips Park No. 1 junction—Ashburys West junction and Denton junction—Ashton Moss junction (Greater Manchester)

Comparable information is not available for freight-only lines, which have not been subject to statutory closure procedures.

Details of alterations to levels of service on individual passenger and freight lines between 1979 and 1994 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Commercial Vehicles (Accidents)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take urgent action to seek a change in the law to make directors of firms, whose neglect of maintenance of commercial vehicles is the cause of road deaths, personally responsible for manslaughter.

Mr. Key: The Law Commission is currently reviewing the law on manslaughter and expects shortly to publish a consultation paper.

Minibus Drivers

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the current licensing requirements for minibus drivers; and what plans he has to review them, with particular regard to those drivers transporting children.

Mr. Key: Passenger-carrying vehicle driving entitlement is required to drive any minibus over eight passenger seats when driven for hire or reward. A public consultation on changes arising from the second EC directive on driver licensing, which requires stringent medical and driving test standards for drivers of these vehicles, will include proposals for volunteer drivers of minibuses with up to 16 passenger seats.

Under current legislation drivers who hold ordinary car licences have entitlement to drive vehicles of up to eight passenger seats. If they are 21 years of age or over they are also allowed to drive a minibus with up to 17 seats, including the driver's, provided it is not for hire or reward.

Nature Conservation

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he intends to operate the Transport and Works Act 1992 so as to comply with the requirements of the European Union directive 92/43 EEC on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macgregor: Compliance will be achieved by appropriate amendments to the 1992 Act by means of regulations to be made under powers conferred by section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972.

Trunk Road Schemes

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each region all proposals for trunk road widening or construction that are *(a)* now due to proceed in the course of the next three years, *(b)* deferred from the next three years following his recent review of the roads programme, but still due to proceed at some future date and *(c)* originally intended to commence in the next three years but now cancelled completely; and if he will indicate the estimated cost in each case.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 28 February, *Official Report*, columns *565-66*, concerning trunk road schemes due for start of works in 1994-95.

A prioritisation review of the national trunk road programme is currently under way, the conclusions of which will be published shortly.

Coach Crashes (Children)

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all coach crashes involving the transport of children for the period since 1984, together with a breakdown of fatalities, serious injuries and lesser injuries.

Mr. Key: The table shows the number of coach accidents in which a child occupant was injured, and the consequent number of child occupant casualties in each of the three injury severity groups.

Coach accidents in which a child occupant was injured, and consequent child occupant casualties: GB 1984-1992

Accidents/casualties

		Child casualties by severity			
	Accidents	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total
1984	1,067	1	129	1,418	1,548
1985	999	2	87	1,311	1,400
1986	978	1	86	1,248	1,335
1987	824	0	70	1,173	1,243
1988	929	0	63	1,256	1,319
1989	1,015	2	93	1,472	1,567
1990	926	2	70	1,369	1,441
1991	850	1	65	1,117	1,183
1992	879	1	49	1,303	1,353

New Roads and Street Works Act

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of whether the groups employed by Nynex Cable Comms in Bolton are working in accordance with the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991; when he intends to respond to the representations from local authorities concerning this Act; what plans he has to change the current legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Assessments in relation to particular local roads are a matter for the local highway authority rather than for me. I have received a number of representations about the operation of the Act, including two letters from my hon. Friend to which I shall reply shortly. We have no plans to change the Act itself but much of its detailed effect is contained in regulations which we are reviewing at present and will change if it is appropriate to do so.

Road Construction Programme

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each year since 1979 *(a)* the proposed schemes in the Government's road forward construction programme and *(b)* any deletions or additions to the forward construction programme; and which of those schemes were at the planning stage, at the consultation stage, in construction or to be completed by April 1994.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the information contained in the following White Papers and road reports, copies of which are in the Library:

Policy for Roads: England 1980—(Cmnd 7908).
Policy for Roads: England 1981—(Cmnd 8496).
Roads in England 1982.
Policy for Roads in England: 1983—(Cmnd 9059).
National Roads England 1985.
Policy for Roads in England: 1987—(Cm 125 I-II).
Roads for Prosperity (1989)—(Cm 693).
Trunk Roads, England: Into the 1990s (1990).

A prioritisation review of the national trunk road programme is currently under way, the conclusions of which will be published shortly.

Channel Tunnel Link

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has now checked that all information given by him in the House in relation to the Ashford section of the channel tunnel link, was accurate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Since my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 24 January, Union Railways has suggested that a route through the barracks to the west of Ashford may now be practicable. Consultation is taking place on this new route option in addition to the two options mentioned in the statement.

Railtrack

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the basis upon which grants to local authorities in connection with section 20 of the Transport Act 1968 to meet increased track charges to be levied by Railtrack for passenger railway operations will be reduced in the year 1995-96 as compared with 1994-95;

(2) what is the basis upon which grants to local authorities in connection with section 20 of the Transport Act 1968 will be increased in the financial year 1994-95 to meet increased track access charges to be levied by Railtrack for passenger railway operations;

(3) what proportion of the increased track charges to be levied by Railtrack for passenger railway services operated under the provisions of section 20 of the Transport Act 1968 will be met by locally-raised revenue, including the council tax;

(4) whether grants to local authorities under section 20 of the Transport Act 1968 to meet increased track access charges to be levied by Railtrack for passenger railway operations will be made directly to passenger transport authorities or to their constituent metropolitan authorities.

Mr. Freeman: Special grants will be paid in 1994-95 to the six English passenger transport authorities, PTAs, to cover the additional costs of maintaining existing service levels of metropolitan passenger rail services resulting from the restructuring of the railway and the introduction of new charging systems for the use of track and rolling stock. In Scotland the extra costs arising in 1994-95 will be paid direct to Strathclyde regional council through the Scottish Office.

These grants will cover the difference between the costs that the passenger transport executives, PTEs, would have incurred under the existing regime and the revised costs once the new charging systems are in place, less amounts being paid to the PTEs in respect of past investment that they have financed through capital grant.

It is our intention to cover the additional costs in 1995-96 and beyond through enhancing the rail "bolt-on" within metropolitan districts' standard spending assessment. The Government will be reviewing the formula for establishing the "bolt-on" in the light of the new charges. In Scotland, the additional costs will be covered in future local government finance settlements.

The proportion of the cost of supporting local rail services by locally raised revenue can be expected, therefore, not to increase.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that grants awarded to local authorities in PTA areas, for the purpose of meeting additional charges imposed by rail operators and resulting from access charges set by Railtrack should be ring-fenced for that purpose beyond 1994-95.

Mr. Freeman: As I explained in my letter to the chairman of the public transport committee of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities of 30 September 1993, special grants will be paid to the six English passenger transport authorities in 1994-95; thereafter the additional costs resulting from the introduction of new charging systems following the restructuring of the railway will be recognised by enhancing the rail "bolt-on" within metropolitan districts' standard spending assessment.

In Scotland the additional costs arising in 1994-95 will be paid direct to Strathclyde regional council through the Scottish Office. Thereafter, the additional costs will be covered in future local government finance settlements.

A1-M1 Link

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to *(a)* commence and *(b)* be completed on the Doncaster metropolitan borough council section of the A1-M1 link road servicing the Dearne valley area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The two schemes proposed by Doncaster borough council are on the A635 and would bypass Marr and Hickleton. The council hopes to begin both schemes in 1996 for completion in 1997.

Roads

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects any major trunk road schemes in Suffolk and Norfolk to be progressed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: A great deal is currently being progressed. I recently announced a start of works on two schemes in Norfolk, A11 Besthorpe-Wymondham and A47 Walpole Tilney-Tilney High End. Construction also continues on the A140 Scole-Dickleburgh improvement. The eastern relief road in Lowestoft Market to Saxmundham were published on 1 March and a public inquiry into draft orders for A12 Hopton on Sea was held in January this year. Progress on other schemes is dependent upon the outcome of the review of the road programme. I hope to make an announcement on that soon.

Crossrail

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *124* concerning the cost of the crossrail project, what he meant by the base cost: and whether it included the alterations to the project contained in the additional provision deposited in January 1993.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* The base cost estimate of the crossrail project is the estimate believed to be as close as possible to the likely value of contracts to be awarded for the works in a competitive tendering climate when the relevant industries are neither in recession nor over-extended; the £1,703 million base cost estimate referred to in my answer of 11 January includes the cost of the works defined in the additional provision deposited in January 1993.

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *124* concerning the cost of the crossrail project, how the estimated sum of £259 million for property purchases and compensation for loss and disturbance to property was arrived at; how much of this sum relates to the purchase of rights in property required for the building of crossrail; and how much relates to compensation for loss and disturbance to property owners.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* The estimated sum of £259 million for property purchases and compensation for loss and disturbance to property was a

preliminary estimate of the compensation payable in respect of properties which would need to be purchased; it is intended to cover both the market value of the property and compensation for disturbance. The figure is necessarily an overall approximation; the final figure will depend on the outcome of detailed future negotiations between the crossrail Bill promoters and the owners and tenants of the properties affected.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the occasions since 1979 when overseas aid has been made conditional on trade deals.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* The provision of overseas aid is not conditional on trade deals. Bilateral aid is largely tied to the procurement of United Kingdom goods and services for projects or programmes supported which we and the recipient Government have agreed as developmental priorities.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the level of aid given to *(a)* Bangladesh, *(b)* Ecuador, *(c)* India, *(d)* Indonesia, *(e)* Jordan, *(f)* Malaysia, *(g)* Nigeria, *(h)* Oman, *(i)* Pakistan and *(j)* Thailand in each year since 1980.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* The levels of gross bilateral aid disbursements to the countries specified were as follows:

Gross public expenditure on bilateral aid
1980 to 1992-93

£ thousands

	Bangladesh	*Ecuador*	*India*	*Indonesia*	*Jordan*	*Malaysia*	*Nigeria*	*Oman*	*Pakistan*	*Thailand*
1980	66,190	945	86,080	11,190	4,682	10,547	4,921	384	22,245	4,736
1981	33,383	762	168,550	15,350	7,086	10,124	4,231	452	24,613	7,791
1982	23,537	1,046	54,204	17,219	3,308	6,381	4,913	663	18,738	4,008
1983	24,728	783	127,600	12,358	2,747	3,872	5,480	641	16,612	5,553
1984	35,656	916	146,537	28,292	6,105	4,992	5,584	570	18,016	20,036
1985	41,173	909	106,466	33,649	2,332	7,454	6,240	500	16,569	7,437
1986	38,321	836	143,481	8,898	5,641	55,494	5,580	610	20,715	4,215
1987	31,634	2,560	78,464	12,223	4,809	9,779	6,584	457	22,475	5,358
1987-88	31,265	1,707	99,097	14,660	4,495	12,524	8,163	740	22,599	4,924
1988-89	48,161	1,473	84,647	17,366	2,822	8,300	6,310	773	28,183	23,879
1989-90	55,827	1,135	87,652	21,616	5,105	8,026	67,703	815	30,478	11,575
1990-91	51,629	5,682	100,815	24,854	10,925	27,907	35,470	825	43,476	9,383
1991-92	57,731	1,233	136,386	34,425	3,122	15,850	14,460	1,044	37,239	4,002
1992-93	65,717	3,435	115,370	33,164	14,717	20,995	15,855	750	34,483	34,321

Note: After 1987, British Aid Statistics were produced on a financial year basis.

Malaysia

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the contract awarded to Biwater or companies connected with Biwater in 1986 for a water supply system in Malaysia, supported by United Kingdom Government financial assistance, was the subject of competitive tender.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* No. Biwater secured the project under a negotiated contract with the client, the Malaysian Ministry of Public Works.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Electoral Register

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the Home Office has taken to ensure that *(a)* people with learning disabilities and *(b)* people with sensory disabilities are registered to vote.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Last year we provided guidance for electoral registration officers on the registration of people with learning disabilities. We have also circulated guidance prepared by the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Spastics Society. As part of our post-election review, the RNIB and the Spastics Society were invited to a meeting to discuss the difficulties faced by disabled electors. Their concerns are reflected in the reports of the working groups concerned with particular aspects of the review, copies of which are being placed in the Library.

Drug Offenders

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were convicted of drug offences in the Greater London area during 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The 1993 court proceedings data will not be available until the autumn 1994.

In 1992, within the Metropolitan police district and the City of London, 4,828 males and 521 females were convicted of drug offences.

Blakenhurst Prison

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were held at Blakenhurst prison on 28 February; and what category has been given to this prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Terry Davis, dated 7 March 1994:

HM Prison Blakenhurst

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking about the number of prisoners at Blakenhurst prison on 28 February, and what category has been given to the prison.

On 28 February 574 prisoners were held in Blakenhurst, which is a category B local prison.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is the Home Office representative at Blakenhurst prison; what is his job title; and what are his responsibilities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Prison Service representative at Her Majesty's prison Blakenhurst is a controller appointed under section 85(1)(b) of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. The controller is a governor III and he is supported by a deputy controller and a secretary. Responsibilities of controllers are set out in section 85(4) of the same Act.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken by his Department to ensure that Mr. Bernard Higgins is a suitable person to be director of Blakenhurst prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under section 85(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 every contracted-out prison has to have a director who must be a prisoner custody officer specially approved and appointed by the Secretary of State. A person may not be appointed as a prisoner custody officer unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that the applicant is a fit and proper person to perform the relevant functions and has received training to the standard appropriate for the performance of those functions.

The Secretary of State was so satisfied in the case of Mr. Higgins, who was formerly a governor in the Prison Service, and gave approval for his appointment as director in October 1993.

Ms Ruddock To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report,* columns *738-40,* how many units of accommodation are temporarily unusable;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report,* columns *738-40,* how many prisoners have been transferred to other prisons; and if he will name the prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 7 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about Blakenhurst prison.

No cell accommodation at Blakenhurst was made unusable as a result of the incident there on 24 February but a control room and office accommodation, which are essential for control purposes, were damaged. The certified normal accommodation (649) has therefore been temporarily reduced to 590 to enable repairs to be carried out and to ensure that control is maintained. The normal occupancy level will be resumed in the week beginning 7 March.

61 prisoners were transferred following the incident to other prisons. The establishments concerned were Pentonville, Highdown, Wormwood Scrubs, Norwich, Elmley, Bullingdon, Belmarsh, Shrewsbury, Winchester and Birmingham prisons.

Protection of Pet Animals

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many communications he has received during the consultation on deregulation on the European convention No. ETS 125 for the protection of pet animals; how many were in favour and how many against; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received to *(a)* raise the age at which a child can buy an animal from a pet shop to 16 years and *(b)* license animal sanctuaries, in order that the United Kingdom can sign and ratify the European convention No. ETS 125 for the protection of pet animals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Department has received 14 responses to its consultative letter on the European convention for the protection of pet animals. Nine were in favour of the United Kingdom ratifying the convention and five argued against.

In addition to responses to the consultative exercise, the Department has, since January 1992, received one letter from the public arguing that the minimum age at which someone may be sold a pet animal should be raised to 16 years; and one letter proposing that animal sanctuaries should be licensed.

Prisoners (Funerals)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance is given to prison governors in dealing with requests from prisoners to be allowed to attend funerals under escort; and if he will place a copy of this guidance in the Library.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Terry Davis, dated 7 March 1994.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about prisoners' escorted absences to attend funerals.

Guidance for Governors is contained in Standing Order 7E, its accompanying Circular Instruction (43/1990), and the Security Manual, section 59.

Copies of these documents are already in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people detained at Blakenhurst prison were allowed to attend family funerals under escort *(a)* in January and *(b)* in February;

(2) how many requests from prisoners at Blakenhurst prison to attend funerals under escort were refused *(a)* in January and *(b)* in February;

(3) how much money is paid to United Kingdom Detention Services for the cost of escorting prisoners at Blakenhurst prison to funerals and other important family events.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Terry Davis, dated 7 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about prisoners at Blakenhurst prison attending funerals and other important family events.

Two prisoners at Blakenhurst were allowed to attend family funerals under escort in January and none in February. No prisoners were refused attendance at funerals in January and three prisoners were refused in February.

UKDS tendered to provide the service set out in the contract for the whole operation of the prison, including escorting prisoners to court and elsewhere, and are paid an agreed sum for this total service.

Prison Governors

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the entitlement of prison governors to time off work to attend family funerals.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Terry Davis, dated 7 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the entitlement of prison governors to time off work to attend family funerals.

Special leave for this purpose is not an entitlement. Wherever possible, however, subject to the operational needs of establishments, governors would be allowed time off, with pay, to attend the funeral of a close relative or dependant.

Voter Registration

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve voter registration amongst 17 to 25-year-olds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We carry out an annual advertising campaign to encourage people to complete and return the electoral registration form, and provide posters and leaflets aimed at young people. We also commission research into the working methods of electoral registration officers which is used to inform guidance to assist them in their task of drawing up a comprehensive register.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the proportion of those eligible to vote in this year's European Parliament election who are aged between 18 and 25 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his Department spent on encouraging 17 to 25-year-olds to put their names on the electoral register in *(a)* 1979, (b) 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: (a) No breakdown of advertising expenditure figures showing expenditure targeted at 17 to 25-year-olds is immediately available.

(b) 1984-85—£12,226 was spent on a public information film.

(c) 1989-90—£5,300 was spent on specific leaflets. This was in addition to a £452,000 advertisting campaign aimed at all adults aged 16 plus.

(d) 1993-94—£4,000 was spent on specific posters. This was in addition to a £620,000 advertisting campaign aimed at all adults aged 16 plus.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's advertising in persuading young people between 17 and 25 years to go on to the electoral register.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Research undertaken following the 1993 television advertising campaign showed the following:

(1) that awareness among 16 to 24-year-olds, of the need to do something to be registered, rose during the campaign period from 22 per cent. to 40 per cent.

(2) that awareness among 16 to 24-year-olds, of the need to put their name on a form to register, rose during the campaign period from 33 per cent. to 49 per cent.

(3) recognition of electoral registration advertising in 1993 by the 16 to 24 age group reached 50 per cent.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proportion of people who were between 18 and 25 years at the 1987 general election *(a)* were registered to vote at that election and *(b)* actually voted at that election;

(2) what proportion of those on the electoral register in each year from 1986 to 1993 were aged between 17 and 25 years;

(3) how many people of those currently eligible to vote are aged between 18 and 25 years; and what proportion of this is of the total number eligible to vote;

(4) what percentage of *(a)* those registered to vote in Britain and *(b)* those who voted in Britain during the 1992 general election were aged between 17 and 25 years;

(5) what proportion of people who were between 18 and 25 years at the 1992 general election *(a)* were registered to vote at that election and *(b)* actually voted at that election;

(6) what percentage of *(a)* those registered to vote in Britain and *(b)* those who voted in Britain during the 1987 general election were aged between 17 and 25 years;

(7) what proportion of 17 to 25-year-olds are currently on the electoral register; and what proportion of British citizens as a whole are currently on the electoral register.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available.

Parole

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what means his Department ensures that offenders on parole in the care of the probation service, who are required to attend a forensic consultant psychiatrist as a condition of their parole, actually do so.

Mr. Maclean: The responsibility for ensuring that offenders on parole comply with their licence conditions rests with local probation services. The Home Office has recently reminded all probation services of the importance of giving prompt effect to licence conditions.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of probation keeps the performance of all services under review.

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to provide disclosure of parole dossiers and reasons for parole decisions to those prisoners who were sentenced before the early release provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1992 came into force on 1 October 1992.

Mr. Howard: I propose to provide openness in the parole process to those prisoners sentenced before 1 October 1992 who have a parole eligibility date—PED—or its anniversay, of 1 October 1994 and beyond. Under the openness arrangements the parole timetable takes about 26 weeks from start to finish; prisoners should receive their parole dossiers about four months before their PED, be

interviewed about their parole case by a parole board member about three months before PED, and receive reasons for the parole decision about three weeks before PED. On this timetable, the review process will begin in early April for those prisoners who become parole eligible from 1 October.

I shall continue to take decisions on the release on parole licence of such prisoners, after taking into account the recommendations of the parole board.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department spends on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if he will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Howard: In the current financial year the Home Office will be spending £311,800 on the provision of subsidised child care for staff at a variety of locations throughout England. This provides 104 nursery day care places for 128 children under five and 503 holiday play scheme places for children between five and 12-years-old. In all instances subsidised child care provision is made available only where it can be shown to be justified in value for money terms.

Mr. Sammy Davis

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letters sent to him by Mr. Steve Haywood, 57 Medusa road, Catford, SE6, dated 8 June 1993 and 7 February 1994, regarding the case of Mr. Sammy Davis.

Mr. Charles Wardle: An official reply has now been sent to Mr. Haywood about the case of Mr. Sammy Davis. I have arranged for a copy of that letter to be forwarded to the hon. Member.

Closed Circuit Television Systems

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether funding is available from his Department for local authorities to establish closed circuit television systems to reduce crime.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are no specific funds available for local authorities for this purpose. Funding for the capital costs of closed circuit television systems has been made available to some local authorities and others through the Home Office safer cities programme. It is also open to local police authorities to contribute towards the provision of CCTV systems from their capital allocation which is supported by 51 per cent. Home Office grant.

New Prisons

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of building each of the last four new prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been passed to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 7 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the cost of building each of the last four prisons in England and Wales.

The costs of these prisons are as follows:

Prison	*Cost £ million*
Highdown	91·2
Lancaster Farms	73·1
Blakenhurst	91·0
Doncaster	94·4

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Chemical Weapons Convention

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made as to the implications of the United Kingdom Government failing to implement the chemical weapons convention prior to July 1994; and what these would be.

Mr. Needham: There are unlikely to be any significant implications for the United Kingdom if the Government do not implement the chemical weapons convention by July 1994 as the earliest that the convention can enter into force internationally is 13 January 1995.

Rover Group

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report,* column *830,* if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the letter to him from BMW; and to what extent the assurances therein have been affected by subsequent developments.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. Copies of the letter were placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 31 January.

Honda has stated that it intends to continue current and planned collaborative programmes with Rover subject to negotiations on the commercial terms.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 9 February, *Official Report,* column *319,* whether he expects the amount of research and development on Rover cars, other than Land Rover, to increase solely as a result of the takeover by BMW.

Mr. Sainsbury: The amount of research and development expenditure on Rover cars will be a commercial matter for BMW.

Competitiveness Unit

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people work in the DTI's competitiveness unit; and if he will list their grades and main responsibilities.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on 9 February, *Official Report,* column *314.*

Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he plans to take to ensure that the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority *(a)* seeks competitive tenders from outside contractors to bid for its ICL mainframe operation based at Risley and *(b)* advertises this tender in the EC *Official Journal.*

Mr. Eggar: These matters are for the AEA.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Eggar: The President is responsible for making the following appointments in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993":

Radiocommunications Agency Steering Board
National Physical Laboratory Steering Board
National Weights and Measurements Laboratory Steering Board
National Engineering Laboratory Steering Board
Laboratory of Government Chemist Steering Board
Warren Spring Laboratory Steering Board
Insolvency Service Agency Steering Board
Companies House Steering Board
Patent Office Agency Steering Board
Accounts Services Agency Steering Board
Insurance Brokers Registration Council
Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment
Director General of Fair Trading
Director General of Telecommunications
Director General of Electricity Supply
Director General of Gas Supply
Energy Advisory Panel

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Wena Hotels

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Egyptian authorities during the arbitration process involving Wena Hotels.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker raised the experience of Wena Hotels when she met the Egyptian Prime Minister, Dr. Atef Sidqi, and the Minister for the Public Business Sector, Dr. Atef Ebeid, in Cario on 13 November 1993. Our embassy in Cairo has kept in close contact with both Wena Hotels and the Egyptian authorities on this issue.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will reconsider United Kingdom aid to Egypt following the experiences of Wena Hotels' investment in Egypt.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no such plans.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he proposes to take to protect and promote the interests of United Kingdom companies which invest in Egypt following the experiences of Wena Hotels.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are concerned at Wena Hotels' experience and will continue to do what we can to help it and other British investors, the overwhelming majority of whom experience no difficulty in their dealings in Egypt.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Egyptian authorities in respect of the United Kingdom company Wena Hotels' investment in Egypt prior to the arbitration process involving that company.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We raised the question of Wena Hotels with the Egyptian authorities on a number of occasions. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs did so with the Egyptian Foreign Minister during President Mubarak's visit to London in the spring of 1993, urging the Egyptian authorities to encourage the Egyptian party to the dispute to go to arbitration as soon as possible.

Inhumane Weapons Convention

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urge a total ban on the production, sale and use of anti-personnel mines at the review conference on the inhumane weapons convention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom intends to play a full part in the review conference on the 1981 United Nations weaponry convention, which we expect to take place in 1995. We are also participating in the meetings to prepare for the conference, the first of which took place in Geneva from 28 February to 4 March.

The main aim of the review conference will be to consider the strengthening of protocol II of the weaponry convention, which already contains strict rules governing the use of mines. Our priority at the conference will be to encourage greater adherence to the United Nations weaponry convention.

East Timor

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what inquiries Her Majesty's Government made of the Indonesian authorities in regard to the murder of British citizens Brian Peters and Malcolm Rennie, near Balibo on East Timor, on 16 October 1975, during the invasion of East Timor by Indonesian military forces.

Mr. Goodlad: We pressed the Indonesians for information at the time, as did the Australian Government, as Mr. Peters and Mr. Rennie were working in East Timor as part of an Australian television team.

Overseas Domestic Workers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how overseas domestic workers are given the leaflet on their rights in the United Kingdom; if he will ensure this is done without the presence of the employer and that the domestic worker is given time to read the leaflet before rejoining the employer; and whether these leaflets are available in all appropriate languages.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Overseas domestic workers are handed a copy of the information leaflet when interviewed at post for entry clearance, without their employers present.

Leaflets are available in Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Punjab, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Thai and Urdu, as well as English. Where an applicant does not understand, the contents of the leaflet are explained.

Turkey

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government relations with Turkey.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Our relationship with Turkey is good, reflecting our close ties in NATO and Turkey's long-standing association with the European Union.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the human rights situation in Turkey.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The human rights situation in Turkey is worrying. The Turkish Government are aware of our concerns. We recognise the difficulties faced by the Turkish authorities in tackling the PKK terrorist threat in the south-east, but this has to be done within the rule of law and with full respect for human rights.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last made representations to the Government of Turkey regarding the treatment of Kurds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last raised human rights with the Turkish Government during his visit to Ankara on 19 and 20 January.

Iraq

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the United Nations concerning its sanctions of medical supplies and food to Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Iraq is discussed regularly by the Security Council. We remain determined that Iraq must comply fully with all its international obligations as set out in Security Council resolutions.

Medicines have never been subject to sanctions, and food has been exempt since the passage of United Nations Security Council resolution 687 in April 1991.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from hon. Members concerning sanctions on Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have received a number of letters from hon. Members about sanctions against Iraq. On 22 February the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) tabled an early-day motion about the effect of sanctions on the humanitarian situation in Iraq.

We do not believe that sanctions should be lifted until Iraq complies with all its international obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for the views of Her Majesty's Government regarding Iraqi treatment of the Kurds to be conveyed to the Government of Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Kingdom representatives at the United Nations continue to press Iraq to respect the human rights of its population. We are co-sponsors of a resolution at the current session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights which condemns Iraq's continued abuses of the human rights of all citizens, including the Kurds.

We, the United States, France and Russia made a demarche to Iraq on 5 January protesting against Iraqi behaviour including the blockade of the Kurdish area and the cutting off of electricity to Dohuk. The Security Council also took into account Iraq's repression of the civilian population when deciding on 18 January that there were no grounds to lift United Nations sanctions.

Libya

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Nations sanctions on Libya.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions against Libya through its resolutions 748 and 883. The Council has expressed its readiness to review these measures with a view to suspending them immediately if the Secretary-General reports to the Council that the Libyan Government have ensured the appearance of those charged with the bombing of Pan Am 103 for trial before the appropriate United Kingdom or United States court and have satisfied the French judicial authorities with respect to the bombing of UTA 772.

Albania

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has studied the conclusions of the permanent monitors of the European Community regarding border incidents between Serbia/Montenegro and Albania; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* The EC monitoring mission in Albania provides factual reports on incidents on the Serbia/Albania border. We study its reports closely. We believe that the ECMM presence is a valuable confidence-building measure, and we regret that the Serb authorities have refused to allow the EC monitoring mission to undertake independent investigation of particular incidents.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* Albanians and *(b)* Serbs have been killed or wounded near the border of Serbia/Montenegro and Albania since 1 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* According to information provided by the Albanian authorities, two Albanian nationals have been killed near the Albanian border with Serbia/Montenegro. One Albanian national has been wounded. We have no information on the number of Serbs killed or wounded near the border.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken or proposes to take regarding aggression by Serbian forces against Albania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* We understand that a number of border incidents have resulted in Albanian casualties. We condemn any such incidents, which put at risk the stability of the entire region, and call on the leaders of all countries in the region to show restraint.

Kosovo

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken or proposes to take regarding violations of human rights by the Serbian authorities in Kosovo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* We condemn reported Serbian violation of human rights in Kosovo and continue to press for the return of the CSCE monitors expelled from Kosovo in 1993. Members of the British embassy in Belgrade visit the region regularly, and maintain contact with the political parties based there. I met Dr. Rugova in London in December.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received the report of the United States State Department on human rights in Kosovo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* Yes, we have received the State Department report on human rights in Serbia/Montenegro, which includes Kosovo.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the expulsion of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe monitors from Kosovo.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* In July 1993 the Belgrade authorities refused to allow the CSCE missions in Kosovo, Sandjak and Vojvodina to continue their activities and the missions had to withdraw. The United Kingdom had contributed two monitors.

The CSCE continues to press for the return of the missions. Their presence was a stabilising influence and contributed to the prevention of conflict. The CSCE is monitoring developments in the region with the help of diplomats from CSCE embassies in Belgrade.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the number of people of Albanian descent who have fled from Kosovo over the past two years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* We understand that numbers of people, of both Serbian and Albanian descent, have left Kosovo in the last two years, but do not have reliable figures.

Departmental Records

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress with the computerisation of his Department's financial record keeping, drawing attention to any difficulties and stating the arrangements for ensuring continuity of supply of the computer equipment and consumables.

Mr. Goodlad: Following a study of the requirements of a new financial management accounting system—FMAS—a notice of tender was published in the official journal of the European Union in November 1993. Responses from interested parties are currently being evaluated and it is expected that a contract for development of the new system will be let later this year. The FMAS project is being managed in accordance with standard Government methodologies. Contracts exist with outside contractors for the maintenance of existing systems and the supply of consumables. Similar contracts will be put in place for the new system.

Suspense Accounts

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of the suspense accounts referred to in the 36th report of the Committee of Public Accounts 1990-91, HC275, remain unreconciled or have been reconciled in a way that has not wholly satisfied the auditor.

Mr. Goodlad: All the suspense accounts referred to have now been reconciled. The Comptroller and Auditor General did not make any qualifications on the FCO accounts for 1991-92 or 1992-93.

Accounting Officers

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters have been reported to his Department's accounting officer by finance staff following the issue of written instructions in March 1991 referred to in paragraph 9 of the Treasury minute on the 36th report from the Committee of Public Accounts 1990-91, Cm. 1725.

Mr. Goodlad: The March 1991 instructions remain in force. The performance of the accounting systems has been carefully monitored. No reports to the accounting officer have been necessary.

PRIME MINISTER

Northern Ireland

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the main differences between the agreement between the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and Mr. Gerry Adams and the Downing street declaration; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Downing street declaration was the result of work between the two Governments, which began when I first met Mr. Reynolds shortly after he became Taoiseach in February 1992.

I have seen no document purporting to be an agreement between the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and Mr. Adams, save for their published statements.

Quangos

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will hold all paid members of Government quangos liable to surcharge in the same way as elected councillors.

The Prime Minister: The Government have no powers to surcharge paid members of non-departmental public bodies in the same way as elected councillors and have no plans to seek such powers. Public bodies are already able to apply disciplinary sanctions, including seeking prosecutions where appropriate.

Ministers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *770*, if he will list the five Cabinet Ministers who have served in the armed forces.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the President of the Board of Trade, the Lord Privy Seal and the Secretary of State for National Heritage, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland have all done national service.

Jewellery

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 28 February to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) *Official Report*, column *579*, if he will list the items of jewellery on the official inventory of No. 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 3 March, *Official Report*, column *804*.

EDUCATION

LEA Schools

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary local authority-controlled schools in Birmingham he has visited in the last 12 months.

Mr. Patten: I have not visited any schools in Birmingham in the last 12 months. Since becoming Secretary of State I have visited two Birmingham schools: Cockshut Hill secondary school and Small Heath grant-maintained school.

School Buses

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice he issues to the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools in relation to the safety and roadworthiness of public service vehicles that are contracted to convey children to and from school.

Mr. Robin Squire: In 1991 the Department arranged for all schools to receive the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents code of practice on school transport safety. On 21 January 1994, the Department issued guidance on school transport—including safety—to local education authorities, which are responsible for the home-to-school transport of pupils at self-governing schools.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools operate driver safety programmes for their staff minibus drivers.

Mr. Forth: Neither this Department nor the Department of Transport have statistics available—information is not collected centrally.

Further Education

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what guidance he provides to the Further Education Funding Council on the measures to be taken following the refusal of any lecturer employed by an incorporated further education college to sign a new contract;

(2) what statutory powers exist for the Further Education Funding Council to penalise lecturers in incorporated colleges of further education who refuse to sign new contracts;

(3) what statutory powers exist for the Further Education Funding Council to require lecturers employed in incorporated colleges of further education to sign new contracts and render existing contracts invalid.

Mr. Boswell: The Further Education Funding Council is taking no such action. Neither my right hon. Friend nor the FEFC has any statutory powers, either to require lecturers to sign new contracts, or to penalise those who do not. The conditions for the release of grant withheld from the FEFC relate only to contracts of employment for new staff. It is for individual colleges to deal with their staff about contracts of employment.

Birmingham Education Officers

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many meetings he has held with *(a)* Birmingham city council education officers and *(b)* Birmingham city councillors from the controlling group in (i) the last 12 months and (ii) since he came to office.

Mr. Patten: None.

School Transport

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list *(a)* those local education authorities providing free transport to school and *(b)* those charging for all journeys of over three miles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: All local education authorites have a statutory duty to provide or arrange free of charge the transport which they consider necessary for a pupil's school attendance. But since LEAs have discretion to consider each case on its merits, information is not collected centrally.

Special Needs

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to include in the code of practice on special educational needs guidelines on evidence which local education authorities will need to have available in order to make a decision as to whether or not to make a statement, with particular reference to evidence that relevant and purposeful measures have been taken to meet the child's special educational needs in his or her present school and that these have proved to be insufficient.

Mr. Forth: Parts III and IV of the draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs contain extensive guidance to local education authorities on the evidence they should consider when deciding whether to make assessments and statements, including evidence about the special educational provision made by the child's mainstream school. My right hon. Friend will consider all representations received during the consultation process on the draft code and lay a revised code before Parliament.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to establish guidelines in the code of practice on special education needs defining the level of resources which should be normally available, or to designate this more clearly as a responsibility of the local education authorities;

(2) what is his policy on the balance local education authorities should endeavour to achieve between resources allocated to schools to help cater for pupils with special educational needs and resources held centrally in order to provide resources for pupils with statements;

(3) what guidance is given in the draft code of practice on special educational needs, about the proportion of their budgets local education authorities should allocate towards special educational needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: It is and will remain for local education authorities, in the light of local policies and circumstances, to decide what level of resources will normally be available to schools in their area; the proportion of their general schools budgets to be allocated to special educational needs; and the balance between resources delegated to schools and those held centrally for pupils with special educational needs. The Department has recently issued guidance on the local management of schools in circular 2/94. My right hon. Friend will consider all comments received during the consultation process on the draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs. He will lay a revised code before Parliament in due course.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to set up a national representative group to monitor the implementation of the proposed code of practice on special educational needs.

Mr. Forth: None. The Department will, with Office of Standards in Education and others, monitor closely the implementation of all aspects of part III of the 1993 Act, including the code of practice.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he wil list all applications for capital grants from grant-maintained schools that he received which relate to the need to improve or extend accommodation as a result of a change in the ages between which children attend the school.

Mr. Robin Squire: The statutory proposals published under section 89 of the Education Reform Act 1988 relating to changes to age range at grant-maintained schools are as follows:

Grant maintained schools' applications for change of age range

School	*Local education authority*	*Proposal date*	*Decision*	*Decision date*	*Capital funding requested £*
To add or extend sixth form					
Highams Park School	Waltham Forest	14 January 1991	Rejected	11 May 1992	500,000
Chalvedon School	Essex	5 June 1991	Approved	27 August 1991	Nil
The Cornwallis School	Kent	15 November 1991	Approved	5 March 1992	Nil
Baverstock GM School	Birmingham	3 February 1992	Approved	15 June 1992	Nil
Moseley Park GM School	Wolverhampton	30 March 1992	Approved	17 August 1992	Nil
The Maplesden Noakes School	Kent	3 April 1992	Approved	16 July 1992	Nil
West Hatch School	Essex	30 April 1992	Approved	30 July 1992	Nil
Beauchamps GM School	Essex	4 June 1992	Approved	17 August 1992	Nil
Bromfords School	Essex	4 June 1992	Approved	17 August 1992	Nil
Aylesford School	Kent	10 July 1992	Rejected	5 March 1993	Nil
Thamesview School	Kent	15 July 1992	To be republished	—	Nil
Senacre Technology School	Kent	24 July 1992	To be republished	—	Nil
Higham Park School	Waltham Forest	31 July 1992	Approved	2 February 1993	519,236
Wrotham School	Kent	6 August 1992	Rejected	5 March 1993	Nil
Senacre Technology School	Kent	4 September 1992	Rejected	5 March 1993	Nil
Thamesview School	Kent	16 September 1992	Rejected	5 March 1993	Nil
Oldborough Manor Community	Kent	18 September 1992	Rejected	5 March 1993	Nil
Ringwood School	Hampshire	2 October 1992	Approved	16 February 1994	300,000
Small Heath School	Birmingham	19 October 1992	Approved	5 May 1993	Nil
The Queen's School	Cambridgeshire	23 October 1992	Rejected	1 July 1993	410
Queen Elizabeth School, Atherstone	Warwickshire	5 November 1992	Approved	3 March 1993	Nil
The Arnewood School	Hampshire	7 November 1992	Approved	16 February 1994	550,150
The Philip Morant School	Essex	11 December 1992	Rejected	28 July 1993	Nil
St. Augustines Comprehensive School	Wiltshire	15 January 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil
The Burgate School	Hampshire	21 January 1993	Approved	16 February 1994	520,000
Sawtry Village College	Cambridgeshire	3 February 1993	To be republished	11 February 1993	Nil
Sawtry Village College	Cambridgeshire	18 February 1993	Approved	4 June 1993	Nil
Heathside Secondary School	Surrey	8 April 1993	Rejected	24 August 1993	Nil
Meopham GM School	Kent	15 April 1993	Rejected	10 August 1993	Nil
The Merrill Community School	Derbyshire	20 April 1993	Approved	16 February 1994	Nil
Chellaston School	Derbyshire	24 April 1993	Approved	16 February 1994	1,055,000
The Frances Bardsley School	Havering	8 June 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil
The King John School	Essex	12 July 1993	Approved	16 February 1994	491,951
The Thorpe Bay High School	Essex	12 July 1993	Rejected	23 February 1994	Nil
William Farr CE School	Lincolnshire	19 July 1993	Approved	2 March 1994	Nil
Sheringham High School	Norfolk	30 July 1993	Approved	16 February 1994	Nil
The New Wellington High School	Trafford	30 July 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil
Costessey High School	Norfolk	16 August 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil
Noel Baker Community School	Derbyshire	4 November 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil
Gleed Girls GM School	Lincolnshire	26 November 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil

School	Local education authority	Proposal date	Decision	Decision date	Capital funding requested £
Greenwood Dale GM School	Nottinghamshire	16 December 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil
Highcliffe School	Dorset	15 January 1994	Under consideration	—	Nil
Riddlesdown GM High School	Croydon	28 January 1994	Under consideration	—	Nil
Castle Hill GM School	Lincolnshire	28 January 1994	Under consideration	—	Nil
To add or extend nursery provision					
The Manor County First School	Surrey	26 November 1992	Rejected	29 July 1993	Nil
Hawkedale First School	Surrey	17 December 1992	Rejected	18 June 1993	4,000
Wold Newton GM Primary School	Humberside	28 January 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil
Katherines Primary School	Essex	29 April 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil
Alder Coppice GM Primary School	Dudley	10 November 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil
Robinswood Primary School	Gloucester	19 November 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil
Bourne Abbey Primary School	Lincolnshire	9 December 1993	Under consideration	—	83,000
Send CE GM School	Surrey	16 December 1993	Under consideration	—	35-142,000
Other change of age range					
Castle Hall School	Kirklees	8 November 1991	Rejected	21 May 1992	Nil
St. John the Baptist	Surrey	21 November 1991	Approved	4 November 1992	2,404,000
Hardley School	Hampshire	2 January 1992	Approved	19 October 1992	Nil
Wood End Middle School	Ealing	8 January 1992	Approved	3 November 1992	Nil
Guildford County School	Surrey	14 February 1992	Approved[1]	18 June 1992	850,000
Drayton Manor High School	Ealing	8 May 1992	Approved[1]	11 September 1992	70,000
Northolt High School	Ealing	8 May 1992	Approved	11 September 1992	Nil
Greenford High School	Ealing	15 May 1992	Approved[1]	11 September 1992	500,000
Brentside High School	Ealing	15 May 1992	Approved[1]	11 September 1992	2,770,000
De Stafford School	Surrey	23 June 1992	Approved[1]	5 May 1993	Nil
Heathside Secondary School	Surrey	16 July 1992	Approved	2 November 1992	Nil
Oakwood Park Grammar School	Kent	17 July 1992	Approved	2 March 1993	Nil
City of Portsmouth Boys	Hampshire	17 July 1992	Approved[1]	2 March 1993	Nil
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School	Cumbria	5 September 1992	Approved	29 March 1993	Nil
Castle Hall GM School	Kirklees	2 October 1992	Approved	1 April 1993	284,400
Ash Green	Warwickshire	12 October 1992	Rejected	22 April 1993	Nil
Glyn School	Surrey	15 October 1992	Approved	18 June 1993	335,000
Rosebery School	Surrey	21 October 1992	Approved	18 June 1993	1,184,632
Send CE First School	Surrey	23 October 1992	Approved[1]	5 May 1993	Nil
The Beacon School	Surrey	29 October 1992	Approved	18 June 1993	72,400
Collingwood GM School	Surrey	15 December 1992	Approved	18 June 1993	729,000
Epsom and Ewell High School	Surrey	17 December 1992	Approved	18 June 1993	Nil
Avon Valley	Warwickshire	18 January 1993	Approved[1]	25 January 1994	Nil
Wood End First School	Ealing	5 February 1993	Approved	13 July 1993	Nil
Testwood School	Hampshire	5 February 1993	Approved	24 February 1994	977,000
Clifford First	Sheffield	17 February 1993	Rejected	23 July 1993	260,000
Front Lawn Middle School	Hampshire	26 July 1993	Approved	8 October 1993	Nil
Purbrook Park School	Hampshire	14 October 1993	Approved	11 February 1994	455,000
Calmore Middle School	Hampshire	15 October 1993	Approved	24 February 1994	Nil
Queen Elizabeth GM School	Warwickshire	22 October 1993	Under consideration	—	25,000
Abbotswood Middle School	Hampshire	16 November 1993	Approved	24 February 1994	758,000
Park Mead First School	Surrey	19 November 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil
Yattendon Middle School	Surrey	1 December 1993	Under consideration	—	Nil
Lyndhurst Middle Primary School	Hampshire	7 February 1994	Under consideration	—	Nil

[1] Approved with modification.

Note:

Table shows all applications for a change of age range. Where applications requested grant to improve or extend accommodation, a grant figure is listed.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total sum of money made available for meeting applications for capital grants from grant-maintained schools during 1992-93 and 1993-94; and how much was awarded in grants during each year.

Mr. Robin Squire: A total of £28·5 million of grant was available to grant-maintained schools in 1992-93 for expenditure on capital work. For 1993-94 the total grant available is £87·6 million.

The amount of grant paid to schools in 1992-93 was £25·8 million. The final outturn figure for 1993-94 is not yet available.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what criteria he uses for deciding which applications for capital grants from grant-maintained schools to approve.

Mr. Robin Squire: Self-governing schools are eligible for two main kinds of capital grant: a formula allocation grant for all schools for small-scale capital works, which schools may use according to their own priorities; and named project grant, for which schools may bid.

For 1994-95 financial year the priorities set for the assessment of named projects are:

1. Commitments arising from projects already approved and started but unlikely to be finished before April 1994;
2. Major repairs and other work required on priority health and safety grounds;

3. Bids for projects involving work required to implement the national curriculum;
4. New projects to provide additional school places in areas of population growth—basic need—and;
5. Work involving access for the disabled.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list all applications for capital grants from grant-maintained schools made during *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94, indicating the name of the school, the purposes and amount of the application, the amount granted and the purpose of the grant.

Mr. Robin Squire: Applications for capital grant in annual bidding exercises are made in advance of the financial year concerned. I therefore refer the hon. Member to the copies of papers I have previously placed in the Library detailing all applications made during 1992-93 for funding in 1993-94, and all those made during 1993-94 for funding in 1994-95. The papers similarly detail the resulting allocations.

Bids from schools entering the sector between September 1993 and January 1994 are still under consideration.

In addition, all schools are eligible for a formula allocation capital grant.

Children

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make an estimate of the costs involved in raising the primary school starting age to the beginning of the academic year in which they are age six for all children and the introduction of a minimum of two years full-time nursery education for all children.

Mr. Robin Squire: The estimated net additional cost of providing full-time education in nursery classes to all the pupils in the age group identified by the hon. Member would be £1·7 billion in current prices. In addition there would be costs associated with capital, transport, and the training of additional teaching and support staff.

Driving Lessons

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy as to children being taught to drive motor cars as part of their school education; how many children in each of the last three years have been taught to drive; and what has been the cost to public funds.

Mr. Robin Squire: Driving lessons are not part of the national curriculum. I am not aware of any recent representations for such provision to be made by schools nor of any schools which do so.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much his Department spends on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if he will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Robin Squire: London-based staff are able to use the Westminster holiday play scheme, which is organised by the Office of Public Service and Science. The cost of places is shared equally by parents and the Department. In the year ending 31 March 1993 six members of staff used the scheme for their children on one or more occasions, at a cost to the Department of £821.

Darlington-based staff have access to a play scheme which was set up at the instigation of the Department for Education. Places are shared with other civil servants working in the Darlington area. In the current financial year the accommodation cost to this Department will be £2,705, and 73 children of DFE staff will use the scheme.

The Department contributes towards child care facilities as part of its policy of promoting equal opportunities for staff with domestic commitments.

Equal Opportunities (Training)

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which local education authorities have bid for grants for education support and training funding for training in equal opportunities; whether those local education authorities are to receive that funding; and what the total grants for education support and training expenditure will be for 1994-95.

Mr. Robin Squire: There is no provision in the 1994-95 grants for education support and training—GEST—programme for schemes to fund equal opportunities. The Department will be supporting LEA expenditure of some £270·6 million in 1994-95 for a range of educational priorities through the GEST programme.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Earnings Statistics

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what weekly amount of money and what percentage of their gross earnings a single earner couple with two children on average earnings in *(a)* Yorkshire and Humberside, *(b)* north Yorkshire, *(c)* west Yorkshire, *(d)* south Yorkshire and *(e)* Humberside paid in (i) income tax less child benefit, (ii) national insurance contributions and (iii) VAT in 1978-79; and what amount and percentage of their gross earnings each of those average families will have paid in 1994-95.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information for 1978-79 and 1993-94 is shown in the table. Tax payments in 1994-95 will depend on earnings growth in each region.

Yorkshire and Humberside—income tax and national insurance contributions as a percentage of earnings

	1978-79	*1993-94*
Income tax less child benefit	12·6	10·7
National insurance contributions	6·5	7·8

Notes to table

1. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners are assumed to pay class 1 NI contributions at the contracted-in rate.
2. Child benefit is treated as a negative income tax.
3. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males at adult rates with pay unaffected by absence in April of each year.

Bank Charging Arrangements

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what meetings he and his ministerial colleagues have had with the chairmen or representatives of the clearing banks regarding their charging arrangements for small business and personal customers since 1 January 1993.

Mr. Nelson: My ministerial colleagues and I meet the chairmen and representatives of the clearing banks from time to time to discuss a wide range of issues. Most recently, my officials and I have held a series of meetings with the banks to discuss the industrial finance initiative.

Civil Service Pay Delegation

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on civil service pay delegation.

Mr. Dorrell: As set out in the "Citizen's charter: First Report of November 1992", the delegation of pay and grading matters is an important element in the Government's drive to improve quality and efficiency in the provision of public services. By allowing the introduction of pay and grading systems tailored to the objectives and requirements of individual organisations, delegation enhances the ability of managers to manage and develops the Government's policy of linking pay and performance.

By 1 April the 23 home civil service organisations listed in the table below will have taken on responsibility for negotiating the pay and conditions of their own staff. The staff affected—who account for around 55 per cent. of the home civil service—carry out a wide variety of work in locations across the United Kingdom, reflecting the diversity of the organisations concerned. In addition, departments and agencies employing some 40,000 industrial civil servants have decided to take delegated responsibility for pay and grading arrangements. This means that in total over 60 per cent. of the home civil service will be under delegated arrangements by July 1994.

It is clear that there is scope to improve further the delivery of public services by extending the pay delegation initiative. I have therefore invited all remaining executive agencies employing over 500 staff, together with the larger agency candidates, to put forward proposals for taking on pay delegation by 1 April 1995, where this is appropriate to their business needs.

	Staff in post[1]
Agricultural Development and Advisory Service	2,320
HM Customs and Excise	25,170
Defence Research Agency	9,510
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	4,160
Driving Standards Agency	1,780
Employment Service	44,250
Fire Service College	280
Forensic Science Service	630
Health and Safety Executive	4,480
HM Prison Service	38,100
Her Majesty's Stationery Office	2,950
Inland Revenue	59,780
HM Land Registry	8,970
Meteorological Office	2,480
Ordnance Survey	2,220
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	70
Royal Mint	960
Scottish Prison Service	4,610
Social Security Benefits Agency	64,880
Social Security Contributions Agency	9,790
Social Security Information Technology Services Agency	4,220
Valuation Office Agency	4,930
Vehicle Inspectorate	1,660
	298,200
55 per cent. of Total in home civil service	546,340

Source: HM Treasury Quarterly Staff in Post Summary.

[1]As at 1 October 1993. Figures give Full Time Equivalents, with part-timers working for more then 10 hours counted as half-units. Casuals are excluded from the staffing count. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10—this includes totals, rounded after calculation.

WALES

Non-Departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many days per week Sir Geoffrey Inkin is contractually bound to give to each of the three non-departmental public bodies which he chairs or of which he is a member.

Mr. Redwood: The average time commitments of the public appointments held by Sir Geoffrey Inkin OBE are as follows.

Cardiff Bay development corporation—2½ days per week.
Land Authority for Wales —2½ days per week.
He is not on three bodies.

Inward Investment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *415*, what action he will take following his reading of the report on inward investment and industrial innovation in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The report shows that encouraging developments are under way in Wales. Programmes such as Source Wales, and a range of training and innovation support measures, are already in place to address those areas where the report considers that further progress is required. These programmes are kept under constant review. For example, my recent consultation paper, "People and Prosperity—A Challenge to Wales" has elicited an excellent response and I will be publishing a strategy framework for training, education and enterprise in due course.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations expressing opposition to the original scheme for the reorganisation of the milk marketing board he received from within Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Six of the 62 representations I received about the Milk Marketing Board's original scheme of reorganisation expressed opposition to all or part of the proposals.

Research Reports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he published the 20th research report Wales, for 1992-93; how many copies were printed; at what cost; and to whom they have been distributed.

Mr. Redwood: "Research Wales, 20th report", which sets out research supported by the Welsh Office in 1992-93, was published on 1 February 1994; 220 copies were printed at a cost of £230. As well as being made available on request, copies have been sent to national libraries, higher education institutions, the Welsh Affairs Committee, the Libraries of the House and various media organisations.

Languages

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has to increase the use of British languages that belong to the Brythonic and Goidelic families of languages.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There are five indigenous Celtic languages: Welsh and Cornish (which falls into the Brythonic group) and Irish, Scots Gaelic and Manx (which fall into the Goidelic group). Of these, only three are commonly used today. These are Welsh, Irish and Scots Gaelic.

The Government have a long-standing commitment to helping to secure the future of the Welsh language. The Welsh Language Act 1993 is the latest manifestation of this commitment. The Act establishes the principle that in the conduct of public business and the administration of justice in Wales, Welsh and English should be treated on a basis of equality so far as is both appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable. The Act also establishes the Welsh Language Board with the objective of promoting and facilitating the use of Welsh. It is the Government's belief that, as a result of the Welsh Language Act and the work of the Welsh Language Board, a substantial increase in the public services available to the public through the medium of Welsh will be achieved. The goal is to give effect to the Government's long-term aid of allowing people who wish to do so the choice of using Welsh in all aspects of their daily lives.

The Government support the Welsh language in other ways. We are acutely aware of the importance of education and, since 1988, Welsh has been an integral part of the schools curriculum in Wales. It is a core subject in Welsh medium schools and compulsory in all other maintained schools in Wales. Nursery education is particularly important and I was pleased recently to be able to announce a substantial increase in our contribution to Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, the Welsh nursery schools movement, for the coming financial year; £537,000 has been allocated —a 15 per cent. increase on 1993-94—to help Mudiad develop in the less Welsh-speaking areas of Gwent and Deeside.

At the same time I was also able to announce further grants to other voluntary organisations playing a significant part in ensuring that the language flourishes: the National Eisteddford, the Welsh Books Council and Urdd Gobaith Cymru, the Welsh youth movement.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland supports the Gaelic language and culture by providing grants (a) to education authorities to provide Gaelic-medium education; (b) for the making of television programmes in Gaelic; and (c) to cultural organisations committed to maintaining and developing the use of the language. It is hoped that these measures will lead to an increase in the use of Gaelic in Scotland.

The Government recognise that the Irish language is an important part of the cultural heritage of many people in Northern Ireland. The Government manifest respect for the special importance of the language of those people, encourage interest in it and appreciation of it for its own sake rather than any political connotations, and seek to highlight the contribution that the language has made to the cultural heritage of the whole community.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had in relation to the compliance by Cardiff Bay development corporation with the undertaking specified in the code of practice, paragraph 2.3, on the operation of schedule 7 to the Cardiff Bay Barrage Act 1993 that owners and occupiers would be informed individually 28 days before the commencement of construction and 28 days before impoundment.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Member wrote to me on 4 February about certain aspects of the notification procedure and I replied on 27 February. Lord Brabazon of Tara, who chaired the Select Committee in another place, has also written to me following representations from local residents groups. His letter is being considered and I shall be replying in due course. My officials have also discussed related issues with representatives of the local residents group.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Balfour Beatty construction consortium in relation to the provisional awarding of the contract to construct the Cardiff Bay barrage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much his Department spends on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if he will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1993-94 my Department spent £16,703 in support of child care for its staff; £12,246 of this provided 30 full-time nursery places currently being used by 37 children, some part-time and £4,457 supported play schemes for approximately 45 children during the Easter and summer holidays. My Department is committed to providing child care where it is cost-effective in assisting the retention of trained and experienced staff. The cost of support is evaluated annually.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Benefit

Mrs. Clywd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will give a ranking by county of the percentage of women who are claiming child benefit;

(2) if he will provide a ranking by region of the percentage of women who are claiming child benefit.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available. Child benefit take-up is estimated to be nearly 100 per cent. The percentage of child benefit recipients who are women is estimated to be 95 per cent.

Benefits (Overseas Residents)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people living abroad have been receiving benefits under regulation 2 of the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975.

Mr. Scott: The number is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Sickness

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence he has as to the reasons for changes in the number of claims for sickness and invalidity benefits and in periods of sick leave since 1985.

Mr. Scott: This Department has undertaken an extensive programme of research into the factors underlying the growth in caseloads of invalidity benefit. This consisted of five reports which were published last autumn. Copies have been placed in the Library. We have also commissioned research on employers' responses to the 1991 changes in statutory sick pay. The report, which will include an analysis of factors affecting sickness rates and control of sickness absence, will be published shortly.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have been sent assessment forms so far this year by the Child Support Agency; what will the total number of assessment forms by the Child Support Agency in 1993-94; and how many assessment forms will be issued by the Child Support Agency in the following years 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Mike Hall, dated 4 March 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security on the number of maintenance assessment forms sent by the Child Support Agency.

In the period 5 April to 31 December 1993 the Agency issued 711,000 maintenance application forms to parents with care.

It is not possible to give estimates of the expected number of application forms which will be issued in future years, but overall the Agency expects to be dealing with around one million parents with care in each year.

I hope this reply is useful.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average maintenance settlement issued by the Child Support Agency; what is the average maintenance payment collected by the Child Support Agency; and how many of those contacted by the Child Support Agency already paid maintenance under existing arrangements.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Mike Hall, dated 4 March 1994:

I am replying to you recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the Child Support Agency.

You asked about the average maintenance assessment made and collected by the Agency. Initial estimates were that average weekly maintenance assessments by the Agency would be approximately £45-£50 a week. Information gathered on assessments completed to date, and the amounts the Agency therefore expects to collect, is consistent with these estimates.

You also ask about clients with existing maintenance arrangements. To the end of December 1993, the Agency had issued maintenance enquiry forms to 344,000 absent parents. Figures were not kept on the proportion of these cases in which maintenance was not already being paid. We estimate, however, that about 55 per cent. of cases taken-on by the Agency were not already receiving maintenance.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have started to pay maintenance in line with the Child Support Agency assessments.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Mike Hall, dated 4 March 1994:

I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of people paying maintenance to the Child Support Agency.

The Child Support Computer System records clients' details on an individual case by case basis. It is not currently configured to produce the information in the form requested.

It may be helpful, however, if I explain that as at 31 December 1993 the Agency had completed 121,600 assessments of which over half were issued in the last two months.

I hope this reply is useful.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what level of housing benefit was payable to households in *(a)* council tenancies, *(b)* housing association tenancies and *(c)* private tenancies, annually, for each year from 1988.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), on 25 January at columns *185-86*.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much his Department spends on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if he will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Scott: The net cost of providing subsidised child care facilities for staff in this Department is currently around £500,000 a year. This sum is spent on workplace nurseries, 600 places; holiday play schemes, 2,460 places; after school child care and child care referral services.

These initiatives are supported on value for money grounds in helping to recruit and retain staff and in enabling the staff themselves to balance the demands of home and work.

ENVIRONMENT

Government Offices

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 21 January, *Official Report*, column *863*, if he will list any Government accommodation in *(a)* the SW1 postal district of London and *(b)* the remainder of the United Kingdom that is undergoing refurbishment, showing the location of the accommodation being refurbished and the nature and cost of each refurbishment.

Mr. Baldry: Vacant or partially vacant properties on the common user estate with refurbishment schemes in

planning or execution are listed. Refurbishment ranges from minor internal uplift to full-scale replacement of services, modernisation, refitting and improvement to render buildings capable of re-occupation and economic use.

Some schemes are undertaken and funded by occupying Departments or landlords and the cost of providing fully comprehensive information and the costs of each scheme would be uneconomic.

Properties Undergoing Refurbishment
London SW1

FCO Building,
King Charles Street
Marlborough House
11 Belgrave Road
Depot, Chadwick Street
1-19 Victoria Street
Thames House, Millbank

Other Locations
Charles House, London W14
Collyer Place, London SE15
Melbourne House, London WC2
Euston Tower, London NW1
Somerset House, London WC2
122 Thorpe Road, Norwich
Oxford House, Bishops Stortford
Nelson House, Great Yarmouth
Magna House, Bury St. Edmunds
Port Police Station, Felixstowe
31 Red Lion Street, Chesham
Sovereign House, Hertford
St. Andrews House and Triton House, Bury St. Edmunds
Charles House, Norwich
55 Station Road, Clacton
Portcullis House and Alexander House, Southend
Scotland Green House, Tottenham
Harlesden House, Harlesden
SOB London Road, Stanmore
Beeches Road, Chelmsford
DTC Tolcarne Drive, Pinner
Haven House, Ipswich
36-46 The Avenue, Bexleyheath
Westmoreland Road, Bromley
Scottish Union House, Croydon
Apollo House, Croydon
Lunar House, Croydon
Whitgift Centre, Croydon
AMP House, Croydon
Montague House, Croydon
PRO, Kew
Sutherland House, Sutton
Crown Building, Woolwich
Anchorage House, Chatham
The Grove, Gravesend
Medvale House, Maidstone
Gloucester House, Bognor Regis
Roebuck House, Cosham
Wingfield House, Portsmouth
Wynnstay House, Portsmouth
Segensworth Road, Titchfield
Alencon Link, Basingstoke
Coley Park, Reading
Ashdown House, Hastings
Government Buildings, Marston Road, Oxford
Lambert House, Talbot Street, Nottingham
Crown Building 55 Norfolk Street, Boston
Station Road, Kettering
Crown Buildings, 1 Queen Street, Wellingborough
Ladywood House, 45-46 Stephenson Street, Birmingham
Princess House, The Square, Shrewsbury
North Penrallt, Caernarfon
Bridge House, Bristol
Mesnes House, Mesnes Street, Wigan
Ashburner House, Seymour Grove, Manchester
Heron House, Hougoumont Avenue, Crosby
Highland House, Manchester
St. John's House, Bootle
St. Martin's House, Bootle
Graeme House, Liverpool
Moorgate Street, Rotherham
Elvet House, Hallgarth Street, Durham
Benton House, Sandyford Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne
Wellbar House, Gallowgate, Newcastle Upon Tyne
John Rideal House, Barnsley
Steel City House, Sheffield
29 Shambles Street, Barnsley
Montrose House, Glasgow
Argyle House, Edinburgh
52-56 Melville Street, Edinburgh
2A-2B High Street, Dunbarton

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, (1) pursuant to his answer of 12 January to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), *Official Report*, columns *200-1*, regarding the conducting of the investigation of shipments of hazardous waste from the United Kingdom to developing countries *(a)* how much civil service and consultant time the investigation has utilised so far, *(b)* how much civil servant and consultant time the investigation is expected to utilise in total, *(c)* which organisation other than his Department will be involved in the investigation, *(d)* what are the terms of reference of the investigation, *(e)* when and how the investigation was announced and *(f)* which United Kingdom and overseas organisations have been invited to submit evidence;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 12 January to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), *Official Report*, columns *200-1*, regarding the report of the investigation of shipments of hazardous waste from the United Kingdom to developing countries *(a)* when the investigation will be complete, *(b)* how the investigation will make its report and *(c)* when the report will be made public;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 12 January to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), *Official Report*, columns *200-1*, regarding the scope of the investigation of shipments of hazardous waste from the United Kingdom to developing countries *(a)* which countries the investigators will visit and for how long, *(b)* how many hazardous waste recovery facilities the investigators will visit, *(c)* which United Kingdom organisations have been invited to submit evidence and *(d)* what criteria the investigation will use to evaluate whether recovery operations in non-OECD countries are environmentally sound.

Mr. Atkins: The investigation has utilised about 150 hours of civil service time, but no consultant time to date. The time which will be spent upon the investigation will depend upon the findings in the first stage of the inquiry, which is designed to obtain information about environmental standards in receiving countries. The Department will consult representative trade organisations for the industries mainly concerned as well as environmental interest groups.

The announcement of the investigation and its terms of reference, details of the reporting method and its availability and the United Kingdom organisations invited to submit evidence were detailed in my reply of 12 January 1994 to my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), *Official Report*, columns *200-1*. No specific invitations were issued to organisations to submit

evidence, but I shall be glad to take account of any relevant information that United Kingdom or overseas organisations might send me.

The first stage of the investigation will be completed in May 1994. The countries and hazardous waste facilities which will be investigated will depend upon the outcome of the first stage of the inquiry. The investigation will use the technical criteria established by the United Nations environment programme's expert group, the Basel convention technical working group on the environmentally sound management of wastes, when evaluating recovery operations in non-OECD countries.

Landfill

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the outcome of the meeting on 28 February between his Department and the waste industry to discuss compliance with the Environmental Protection Act 1990 relating to landfill.

Mr. Atkins: No meeting was held on 28 February between my Department and the waste industry.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the cost of licences needed to dispose of waste as a result of EC directives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: As the then Minister for the Environment and Countryside explained on 29 November 1993, *Official Report*, column 384, the Government intend to bring the waste management licensing provisions of part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 into force on 1 May 1994. Those provisions will reflect the requirements of relevant EC directives. We have consulted interested parties in stages since August 1992 on our detailed proposals. Building on that consultation, the Department circulated for comment a draft compliance cost assessment and invited comments from industry by 28 February. We have received nine responses from trade associations and individual companies.

On 10 August and 4 December 1992 consultation papers were issued on the charging scheme for waste management licensing which we propose to make under section 41 of the 1990 Act. All of the representations received in response to those consultation papers have been considered and details of the charging scheme which will come into force on 1 May 1994 will be announced as soon as possible.

Housing

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been the average percentage increases over the last three years in *(a)* registered fair rents in private unfurnished lettings, *(b)* house prices and *(c)* commercial rents.

Sir George Young: The latest available information on average yearly percentage increases in registered fair rents in private unfurnished lettings and house prices is given in the table.

England (per cent.)

Year	Fair rents	House prices
1990	+16·8	−1·8
1991	+10·8	−2·1
1992	+13·3	−4·6
1993	n/a	−3·2

For information on commercial rents, I refer the hon. Member to the Valuation Office Agency.

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what communications he has received about the EC proposals for the disposal of waste and a licensing system from farmers and the National Farmers Union.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend's predecessor and other Ministers in the Department have received four letters from the National Farmers Union, and nine from hon. Members writing on behalf of farmers, about the new waste management licensing system and the EC framework directive on waste—91/156/EEC. My officials have also received correspondence, and have met the NFU.

The forthcoming waste management licensing regulations will retain the current exemption for agricultural waste when they come into force on 1 May 1994. However, in order to comply fully with the requirements of the EC framework directive on waste, it will be necessary to make subsequent provision for some types of agricultural waste to be treated as controlled waste. We have undertaken to issue a consultation paper on any such proposals for new controls over agricultural waste, before making any changes.

Council Tax

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will revise his practice notes for councils about the collection of the council tax.

Mr. Baldry: The Department's practice note, "Council Tax Administration", which deals with billing and collection of the tax in England and Wales, will be revised shortly to take into account some minor changes in secondary legislation which will come into effect on 1 April 1994.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to introducing legislation to compensate householders who are sent demands for council tax payments when the council tax has been paid.

Mr. Baldry: The sensible course in these circumstances is for the taxpayer to produce his receipt or proof of payment. If he cannot do so, and the authority remains of the view that he has not paid, such matters would, in England and Wales, eventually come before a magistrates court for a decision. The court has discretion to order costs to either party. These arrangements are fully adequate and we see no reason to change them.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make representations to local authority directors of finance to seek improvements in the accuracy of their council tax billing procedures.

Mr. Baldry: We have no evidence that such advice is necessary to authorities in England.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to safeguard householders who receive erroneous bills for the council tax.

Mr. Baldry: In England and Wales, taxpayers may appeal to a valuation tribunal about disputed liabilities which cannot be resolved with the local authority.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the penalty for delaying payment of council tax for over six months.

Mr. Baldry: If an instalment of council tax remains unpaid, an authority may seek a liability order from a magistrates' court. This enables the authority to employ a range of recovery options, including attachment of the debtor's earnings, deductions from income support, and the levy of distress. An authority can recover from the debtor the costs of obtaining the liability order and the costs of levying distress. Within this framework we do not consider a specific financial penalty for non-payment is necessary.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost of dealing with council tax valuation appeals.

Mr. Baldry: The estimated average cost of processing a council tax appeal in the current financial year in England is £115. This estimate includes Valuation Office Agency and valuation tribunal costs.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many properties in each band *(a)* will and *(b)* will not attract council tax transitional relief in Pendle, Westminster, Wandsworth and Ribble Valley in 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held by the Department.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce more stringent entry controls for foreign toxic waste.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is considering the need for additional provisions to implement the EC Waste Shipments Regulation, and will announce his conclusions in due course.

Council Tax

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the estimated savings to local authorities from the advance payment of council tax by appellants whose appeals have been delayed by the operation of the valuation appeals procedure.

Mr. Baldry: No such estimates have been made.

Living Over The Shop

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many successful schemes have been initiated under the living-over-the-shop scheme; and how many of these have used the services of the living over the shop project at the university of York.

Sir George Young: In 1992-93, 269 new homes were created as a result of the Department's flats-over-shops programme. Of the 132 local authorities who received supplementary credit approvals in respect of this, only one has acknowledged any significant involvement with the living-over-the-shop project. It is of course possible that others may also have had some contact with the LOTS project. In addition, schemes financed by the Housing Corporation created 223 new housing units in 1992-93. Other schemes have also gone ahead using the owner's own resources and other funding mechanisms.

Pennine Bridleway

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to complete the Pennine bridleway.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 21 January, *Official report,* column *869.*

Paris Commission Policy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Government policy on compliance with the Paris Commission's policy agreed in June 1993.

Mr. Atkins: The Paris Commission is a meeting of representatives of the contracting parties to the 1974 Paris convention. A contracting party is bound only by the decisions and recommendations of the Commission that it accepts. It is United Kingdom policy to comply with those decisions and recommendations that we accept. At its June 1993 meeting, the Commission adopted the following decisions and recommendations:

a. *Recommendation concerning the limitation of pollution from existing primary iron and steel production installations (PARCOM Recommendation 93/1):* adopted by a three-quarters majority (Belgium, Portugal and Spain entered reservations); the United Kingdom accepted this recommendation;

b. *Decision on the phasing-out of the use of hexachloroethane in the non-ferrous metal industry (PARCOM Decision 93/1):* adopted by a three-quarters majority (Germany and the United Kingdom entered reservations, as did the Commission of the European Communities); the United Kingdom reservation is because we have not completed the assessment of the cost of complying with the decision;

c. *Recommendation on further restrictions on the discharge of mercury from dentistry (PARCOM Recommendation 93/2):* adopted by a three-quarters majority (France, Portugal and Spain entered reservations); the United Kingdom accepted this recommendation;

d. *Recommendation on the elaboration of national action plans and best environmental practice for the reduction of inputs to the environment of pesticides from agricultural use (PARCOM Recommendation 93/3):* adopted by a three-quarters majority (France and Portugal entered reservations); the United Kingdom accepted this recommendation;

e. *Recommendation on the phasing out of cationic detergents DTDMAC, DSDMAC and DHTDMAC in fabric softners (PARCOM Recommendation 93/4):* adopted by a three-quarters majority (the United Kingdom entered a reservation); the United Kingdom reservation was because evidence that available substitutes are less environmentally hazardous is not available except to the firms that have developed them, and because formal action is unnecessary, given the 90 per cent. reduction in usage in recent years;

f. *Recommendation concerning increases in radioactive discharges from nuclear reprocessing plants (PARCOM Recommendation 93/5)* was adopted by a three-quarters majority (France and the United Kingdom entered reservations, as did the Commission of the European

Communities; Belgium entered a study reserve, which has now been withdrawn); the United Kingdom reservation was because the first limb of the recommendation made no progress beyond the commitment in the 1992 Action Plan, while the second limb both was too vague to provide a proper basis for a PARCOM recommendation and, insofar as it provided for a role for the Paris Commission in the decision process, was inappropriate.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake or commission research into the effects of low-level radioactive waste in west Cumbria over the past 30 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Low-level radioactive waste in west Cumbria is managed and disposed of in accordance with strict regulatory requirements. The west Cumbrian environment has, over many years, been the subject of extensive research and monitoring programmes undertaken by the nuclear site operators, the regulatory authorities and Government Departments.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the source of the calculation in the consultation paper, "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies" that homelessness acceptances accounted for 45 per cent. of local authority lettings in 1992-93; what is the source of the figure of 29 per cent. in the research report accompanying the consultation paper; and what is the comparable figure from housing investment programme returns from local authorities.

Sir George Young: The percentage figure given in the consultation document is based on information provided by local authorities on their 1993 housing investment programme—HIP—returns; it relates to the proportion of new lettings, that is total lettings less transfers of existing tenants and dwellings let through mutual exchanges or mobility arrangements, in 1992-93, both secure and non-secure, that were to homeless households.

The figure in the research report is based on a representative sample of new local authority secure tenancies over the period April to July 1991.

There are a number of differences between the two proportions, including the reference period and the coverage of the sample and the definition of new lettings.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total amount of central Government grant given to each urban programme authority in the years 1980-81, 1986-87 and 1993-94 at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Baldry: The urban programme grant paid to current urban programme authorities is as follows:

Urban programme (UP) funding

£ million

Local authority	*1980-81 adjusted outturn*	*1986-87 Adjusted outturn*	*Estimated 1993-94 outturn*
East Midlands region			
Derby	—	—	0·6
Leicester	5·9	5·2	2·4
Nottingham	5·3	5·9	2·4
London region			
Haringey	—	—	1·0
Greenwich	—	—	0·7
Hammersmith/Fulham	5·1	5·0	1·1
Brent	0·5	4·2	1·4
Hackney	[1]23·9	11·7	2·0
Islington	—	10·2	4·1
Kensington and Chelsea	—	—	0·8
Lambeth	13·9	12·5	4·1
Lewisham	—	—	1·0
Newham	—	—	1·4
Southwark	—	—	1·3
Tower Hamlets	0·5	4·3	1·9
Wandsworth	0·7	4·6	1·4
Merseyside task force			
Halton	—	—	0·7
Knowsley	0·2	4·0	2·1
Liverpool	27·3	25·0	8·7
Sefton	—	—	0·7
St. Helens	—	—	0·8
Wirral	4·1	4·7	1·6
Northern region			
Newcastle/Gateshead	20·0	21·4	7·7
Hartlepool	—	—	0·9
Langbaurgh	—	—	0·9
Middlesborough	4·2	5·9	2·3
North Tyneside	3·4	4·2	1·6
South Tyneside	3·9	5·1	2·4
Stockton	—	—	0·9
Sunderland	4·0	4·8	2·5
North West region			
Blackburn	0·5	4·1	1·4
Bolton	3·2	4·2	1·7
Burnley	—	—	0·5
Manchester/Salford	27·1	25·1	9·7
Oldham	3·8	4·0	1·8
Preston	—	—	0·8
Rochdale	0·8	4·0	1·8
Wigan	—	—	1·2
South west region			
Bristol	—	—	0·8
Plymouth	—	—	0·6
West Midlands region			
Birmingham	26·8	28·7	10·0
Coventry	0·2	4·1	2·2
Dudley	—	—	0·7
Sandwell	1·3	5·0	2·2
Walsall	—	—	0·7
Wolverhampton	4·5	6·3	2·4
Wrekin	—	—	0·5
Yorkshire and Humberside region			
Barnsley	—	—	0·9
Bradford	5·1	3·8	2·2
Doncaster	—	—	0·9
Hull	4·0	5·0	2·3
Kirklees	—	—	0·5
Leeds	5·5	4·4	2·6
Rotherham	—	—	1·1
Sheffield	5·3	6·0	2·9

[1] In 1980-81 the London Boroughs of Hackney and Islington were treated as one UP authority.

Notes:

UP funding figures for 1980-81 and 1986-87 are actual outturn figures adjusted by GDP deflator indices to constant 1994 prices. UP funding figures for 1993-94 are forcast outturns. For all the three financial years grant was paid at 75 per cent. of actual expenditure.

The blank spaces in the table mean that the authority was not a UP authority in that financial year.
The UP partnerships of Newcastle/Gateshead and Manchester/Salford have not been split because historic outturn data was not kept by constituent authority.

Tenancies

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many private sector tenancies were *(a)* available for rent and *(b)* in rented occupation in each year from 1979.

Sir George Young: The Department compiles estimates on the number of private rented dwellings. These are published in the quarterly and annual publication "Housing and Construction Statistics". The information requested about tenancies is not collected by the Department.

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made on the number of residents of Ipswich affected by Government clawback of council tax transitional relief; what is the maximum resultant increase in council tax involved; if he will urgently review the decision to clawback the relief; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Transitional relief grant will fall to be repaid only where taxes are uncollected. The amount to be repaid, and any consequent effect on council taxes, is entirely dependent on the collection performance of Ipswich borough council.

Sheep Dip

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *113*, regarding representations from EU bodies about sheep dip, what was the purpose and content of the formal inquiry; and what was Her Majesty's Government's response.

Mr. Atkins: Correspondence between the United Kingdom and the European Commission is treated in confidence.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether funding is available from his Department for local authorities to establish closed circuit television camera systems to combat crime.

Mr. Baldry: There is no specific funding for this purpose. General funds are made available by the Department to local authorities each year in the revenue support grant settlement and authorities may use these funds to establish CCTV systems. The regeneration plans of several city challenge partnerships have included CCTV schemes in their crime reduction-prevention strategies.

Bed-and-breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of bed-and-breakfast provision for each housing department in 1993.

Sir George Young: *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* I have today placed in the Library a table giving figures on the net costs of housing homeless households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in 1992-93, the latest period for which data are available, as reported by local authorities on their revenue outturn return.

Renovation Grants

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total amount given in renovation grants including *(a)* improvement, *(b)* intermediate and *(c)* repair each year since 1988-89; and what is the latest available information for each authority in the north-west;

(2) what was the total amount of renovation grants including *(a)* improvement, *(b)* intermediate and *(c)* repair for each year since 1988-89; and what is the latest available information on the amounts of grant made in each year by the local authorities in the north west region.

Sir George Young: *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* Information about house renovation grants for England as a whole is shown in the quarterly publication "Housing and Construction Statistics". Information about payments under the Housing Act 1985 (including improvement, intermediate and repair grants) is shown separately from those under the new grants system set up by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Figures for each year appear in the issues and tables listed. Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Year	*Table*	*Issue*
1988-89 to 1989-90	2.18 (1985 Act)	December 1991, Part 2
1990-91 to 1992-93	2.18 (1985 Act)	September 1993, Part 2
1990-91 to 1992-93	2.17 (1989 Act)	September 1993, Part 2
1993-94[1]	2.18 (1985 Act)	September 1993, Part 2
1993-94[1]	2.17 (1989 Act)	September 1993, Part 2

[1] 1993-94 data in the above publications are provisional and cover the second and third quarters of 1993 only.

Latest available figures on the total amounts of renovation grants made available in each local authority area in the north-west region from financial year 1988-89 to 1992-93, and the first six months of 1993-94, are shown in the table.

Total renovation grant payments

	Total amount of grant					
Local authority[1]	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*[2]1993-94*
Blackburn	2,260,253	2,522,674	1,505,573	3,402,386	4,087,794	827,226
Blackpool	798,009	585,865	400,557	674,914	1,160,064	241,169
Bolton	([2])2,841,059	([1])797,161	([1])314,465	3,113,500	4,640,974	740,276
Burnley	1,101,255	([2])556,222	1,350,625	1,223,346	1,701,789	586,344
Bury	([2])1,273,642	([1])403,705	1,185,074	1,279,178	1,324,193	832,270
Chester	([2])664,416	([2])761,559	1,020,059	1,151,406	1,038,590	895,265
Chorley	870,985	1,369,583	688,667	1,069,056	1,357,754	1,012,729
Congleton	478,949	426,836	([2])196,982	237,626	637,517	192,134

Local authority[1]	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	[2]1993-94
Crewe and Nantwich	651,911	599,893	462,755	480,300	485,642	187,769
Ellesmere Port and Neston	—	(2)471,234	313,895	580,712	895,265	349,689
Fylde	626,594	(2)462,374	290,733	914,470	1,243,085	320,472
Halton	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hyndburn	(1)219,275	—	(2)1,124,166	(2)1,751,382	3,045,915	473,381
Knowsley	570,298	548,229	178,757	715,275	687,872	(1)302,507
Lancaster	865,198	972,750	543,804	1,412,370	1,494,955	345,016
Liverpool	8,938,088	(2)5,363,067	(2)5,020,835	(2)1,165,408	4,558,024	2,729,335
Macclesfield	(1)306,912	883,057	(2)285,927	(1)67,726	(2)813,865	492,361
Manchester	(2)3,190,212	4,328,167	3,033,834	2,635,914	5,492,761	3,256,720
Oldham	1,350,494	439,785	556,660	2,981,426	4,712,175	477,607
Pendle	618,201	1,286,545	1,078,515	1,183,159	1,560,541	620,199
Preston	1,613,011	—	(2)2,172,959	(2)2,111,234	(2)1,128,914	608,813
Ribble Valley	155,081	155,600	238,118	229,627	503,309	40,783
Rochdale	(2)2,744,416	1,400,234	1,303,758	(2)1,664,339	2,975,424	353,614
Rossendale	715,299	(2)477,217	662,675	864,256	1,464,297	644,358
St. Helens	1,276,005	1,186,369	1,952,806	(2)1,556,258	(2)1,684,739	2,399,728
Salford	—	2,951,871	1,798,893	2,313,054	2,789,027	1,332,961
Sefton	(1)382,036	—	—	(2)430,503	(1)378,394	—
South Ribble	458,764	427,236	492,338	1,075,967	1,119,365	378,908
Stockport	2,917,404	2,719,685	1,604,521	3,141,931	3,530,594	897,567
Tameside	2,609,551	1,641,745	(2)463,201	3,086,376	2,261,016	314,325
Trafford	1,959,462	(2)1,281,704	1,671,240	(2)903,465	(2)1,294,825	—
Vale Royal	637,886	710,173	309,574	321,266	101,743	75,911
Warrington	1,416,559	—	(2)1,072,923	—	1,591,678	627,790
West Lancashire	943,983	880,903	959,142	798,580	941,701	687,705
Wigan	2,337,466	1,851,928	1,359,576	2,175,538	1,716,072	1,092,650
Wirral	4,861,354	(2)3,892,751	4,114,634	3,640,721	6,310,628	3,717,939
Wyre	(2)232,059	(2)194,951	294,040	651,475	741,303	545,945
North West[3]	65,475,000	61,119,000	47,036,000	57,424,000	75,489,000	31,042,000

[1] As reported to the Department by the local authorities on the quarterly statistical return P1D.
No allowance is made for non-response by individual local authorities.
—=No returns received for that year
(1)=One return received for that year
(2)=Two returns received for that year
(3)=Three returns received for that year

[2] The figures for 1993-94 are for the first six months of the financial year.

[3] The figures for the North West as a whole include Departmental estimates for missing returns. Therefore this total is greater than the sum of values for individual local authorities.

Marine Aggregates Industry

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responsibility his Department has for promoting the interests of the marine aggregates industry.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* My Department has sponsorship responsibility for the construction products and materials industries generally, and including the marine aggregates industry. It provides a first point of contact for the products and materials sectors; acts as the link between Government and the industry; speaks for the industry in Government; and co-ordinates action on environmental issues that affect the products and materials sectors of the industry. My Department also co-ordinates the Government view procedure which is a prerequisite for the licensing of extraction.

Livera Foods plc

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public money was made available for the establishment of Livera Foods plc in Preston Farm, Stockton on Tees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* Details of financial transactions between the Department, sponsored bodies, and private companies are commercially confidential, and I therefore cannot give details of grant, if any, given to Livera Foods.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

8. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the progress of the setting up of the national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: The director general is currently assessing the eight applications for the main section 5 licence to operate the national lottery. I understand that he hopes to be able to make an announcement of the successful applicant in May of this year and formally grant the licence in July.

Play Services

17. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what efforts have been made by his Department for ensuring the future provision of local play services following any reorganisation of local government.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State receives copies of each report prepared by the Local Government Commission and comments, as appropriate, in relation to his areas of responsibility which include children's play.

Sinn Fein (Broadcasting)

22. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to review his broadcasting restrictions on the Sinn Fein/IRA.

Mr. Brooke: The restrictions remain under review in the light of further developments.

Business Sponsorship

23. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to promote business sponsorship of the arts.

Mr. Brooke: The Government seek to promote a partnership approach to arts funding by developing a network of sources of support, nationally and locally. Over the last 20 years, business sponsorship has made an increasingly important contribution to our expanding arts economy. In 1976-77 business support amounted to about £500,000. By 1992-93 that figure had increased to at least £57·7 million.

The Government's own business sponsorship incentive scheme—BSIS—has done much to encourage this welcome trend. Since its inception in 1984, the scheme has attracted £69·2 million in new money to the arts. In recognition of the importance of business sponsorship and of the success of the BSIS I shall increase the scheme's budget for next year by £300,000 to a record £4·8 million. This will enable a new ABSA office to be established to serve the midlands. I will also be modifying the scheme for business sponsors in Wales to allow Welsh arts organisations to make more effective use of it.

Speke Hall

24. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to secure the future of Speke hall in the Liverpool, Garston, constituency.

Mr. Sproat: Speke hall is owned by the National Trust. The hall has been grade I listed by the Secretary of State; the moated site in which it stands is a scheduled monument; and its garden is grade II listed in the "National Register of Historic Gardens of Special Interest in England". Since 1987 English Heritage has provided over £200,000 in grant aid towards repairs to Speke hall.

Film Exports

25. **Mr. Purchase:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what contribution the export of United Kingdom-produced films made to the United Kingdom's annual balance of trade in the last financial year for which records are available.

Mr. Brooke: Export earnings by United Kingdom film companies reached £371 million in 1992, the last year for which figures are available. Some £182 million of this total was earned from the provision of production services, with the remaining £189 million having come from overseas royalties.

Albert Memorial

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about the policy of his Department towards the repair and refurbishment of the Albert memorial.

Mr. Brooke: The restoration of the Albert memorial will start this year. The work will make the memorial sound for at least 60 years and will comprise repair of the ironwork, the lead cladding, the stonework, statues and decorations together with the provision of a visitor centre.

BBC Charter

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many representations he has received regarding the operation of the BBC's regional policy during his review of the BBC's charter in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: During 1993, I received 44 letters about the BBC's regional policy. In 1993, I also received some 2,800 responses to the Government's consultation document about the future of the BBC. A small number mentioned the BBC's regional policy, or the English regions, and 85 letters from organisations commented on the BBC's programmes and services for Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Parliamentary Broadcasting

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has made to the BBC concerning the sound of broadcasting of Parliament on FM; and what response he has had.

Mr. Brooke: None. This is a matter for the BBC.

Film Production

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to encourage United Kingdom-based film production.

Mr. Brooke: There is nothing I can usefully add to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 25 January, *Official Report*, column *135*.

BBC Efficiency Improvements

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the BBC's efficiency improvements in his review of the royal charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Last year, I appointed the independent consultants, Touche Ross, to examine efficiency and economy measures in the BBC, as part of its study on the level of the television licence fee. I welcome its conclusion that the BBC has pursued opportunities to make savings and efficiency improvements in a vigorous and effective manner. The BBC is taking further measures to improve its efficiency. We are taking account of the BBC's continuing efforts to operate more cost-effectively in developing our proposals for the corporation's future.

Sports (Promotion)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action he is taking to link sports clubs with schools to promote games' coaching and team sports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: On 16 February, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State held a consultative conference on sport in schools involving representatives of both sport and education. One of the issues discussed was how to improve the provision of team sports by strengthening the links between clubs and schools, and we are now considering the ideas put forward.

Channel 4 Licence

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will review the conditions which are attached to the licence for Channel 4 to broadcast.

Mr. Brooke: The licence conditions for Channel 4 are a matter for the Independent Television Commission. I have no plans to review the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1990 on the financing of Channel 4.

United Kingdom Broadcasters

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the success of United Kingdom broadcasters in the international broadcasting market.

Mr. Brooke: I congratulate British broadcasters on their success in selling programmes abroad. I hope they will build on these achievements in the years ahead.

SCOTLAND

Cottage Hospital Closures

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what legislation he is consulted before a cottage hospital may be closed; and if he will give details of the procedure laid down.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend is consulted in accordance with the requirements of NHS circular 1975(GEN)4 before a hospital may be closed: the procedure laid down is that the health board should consult all bodies with a valid interest, in time to allow all comments to be considered and taken into account before the board takes a final decision, and before any proposals, revised where appropriate, are submitted to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department first received information from Tayside health board that it wished to close Meigle cottage hospital.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Home and Health Department was first informed of a proposal to close Meigle cottage hospital in 1963, when a review of Meigle's future was undertaken by the Eastern Regional hospitals' board. The first formal submission seeking approval to close was received by the Department in July 1991.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the proposals received by his Department in the years 1987 and 1988 about the plans of Tayside health board to close Meigle cottage hospital.

Mr. Stewart: No formal submission seeking approval to close Meigle cottage hospital was received in this period. The only reference to possible future closure was in the health board's strategic plan "Strategy for Health Care in Tayside for the 90's", published in July 1988.

Women (Statistics)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a ranking by region of the percentage of families headed by a female lone parent.

Mr. Stewart: The information is not readily available in precisely the form requested. However, two closely related statistics have been derived from published 1991 census tables. The information is shown in the table.

The term "female lone parent households" is used here to describe households with one female aged 16 or over and one or more children under 16, not necessarily related. The term "lone parent families" is used here to describe families with dependent children headed by a lone parent —male or female.

1991 Census: Female lone parent households and lone parent families Scotland

Region	*Female lone parent households as a percentage of all households*		*Lone parent families as a percentage of all families*	
	Percentage	*Rank*	*Percentage*[1]	*Rank*
Borders	2·4	10	6·3	11
Central	3·9	4	8·5	5
Dumfries and Galloway	2·8	8	7·1	7
Fife	4·0	3	8·6	4
Grampian	2·9	7	6·4	10
Highland	3·3	6	7·7	6
Lothian	3·8	5	8·8	3
Strathclyde	4·9	1	11·0	1
Tayside	4·3	2	9·8	2
Orkney	2·1	12	6·1	12
Shetland	2·6	9	7·0	8
Western Isles	2·1	11	6·6	9

[1] Based on a 10 per cent. sample of census returns.

Sources: 1991 Census Report for Scotland (tables I, 40 and 89).
1991 Census Definitions Volume.

NHS Help Line

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department has established a help line to assist patients with inquiries relating to the operation of the national health services in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Yes. The NHS helpline was set up in October 1992 to provide the public with a wide range of information about the NHS in Scotland.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made as to whether his Department has assessed how many of those pupils currently covered by the assisted places scheme would have entered private education without the support offered by the scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of such pupils is impossible to assess accurately but they must be very few. Over 80 per cent. of the families of pupils receiving assisted places in 1993-94 have incomes below £18,000 per annum, and about 45 per cent. have incomes below the £9,522 threshold which entitles a pupil to a free place. Such families would not be able to meet school fees without assistance.

Mountain Rescue

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the cost to Grampian, Tayside, Highland and Strathclyde regions in 1979, 1989 and 1992 and the latest available date for police involved in mountain area search and rescue activity;

(2) what was the cost to Grampian and Tayside Health Boards and other Scottish health boards in 1979, 1989, 1992 and the latest available date for ambulance and other emergency services involved in mountain area search and rescue activity.

Mr. Stewart: The cost of ambulance and other emergency services involved in mountain rescue activities does not fall on health boards.

Forestry

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a summary of the report of the forestry review group as a basis for public consultation before reaching his decisions.

Sir Hector Monro: The report of the forestry review group is, and will remain, confidential to Ministers. There will, however, be consultation on the options preferred by Ministers before matters are taken forward. The form and timing of consultation will depend on the conclusions which Ministers draw from the advice which they have received from the review group.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much revenue was received by the Treasury in each year since 1981 from the sale of Forestry Commission land in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales.

Sir Hector Monro: Receipts from the sale of Forestry Commission land during the year ended 31 March 1993 were £5 million, Scotland; £3·1 million, England and £1·8 million, Wales.

A breakdown of the receipts in previous years by country is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The total receipts from sales throughout Britain are as follows:

Year Ended 31 March	*Total Receipts £ million*
1982	6·9
1983	14·6
1984	23·6
1985	22·1
1986	17·0
1987	14·7
1988	13·1
1989	12·4
1990	13·0
1991	12·0
1992	14·5
1993	9·9

All receipts from the sale of Forestry Commission land under the disposals programme are surrendered to the Treasury.

Dounreay

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what level of public consultation there has been or will be into allowing increased levels of radioactive discharge from Dounreay reprocessing plant;

(2) if a full enviromental impact assessment has been made into the consequences of allowing increased radioactive discharge from Dounreay reprocessing plant; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what research has been undertaken and consultation held into the impact on fish and the fishing industry through allowing increased radioactive discharge from the Dounreay reprocessing plant; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: AEA Technology has applied to the chief inspector, HM industrial pollution inspectorate, for revised waste disposal authorisations under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 in respect of the Dounreay site. Copies of the application have been made available to the public in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

The application provides an assessment of the environmental impact of the proposed discharges including the possible effects on marine food stuffs. If, however, the chief inspector considers that he requires further information in order to determine the application he is entitled to seek such information from the applicant or such others sources as he sees fit.

Before granting an authorisation in respect of the disposal of radioactive waste on or from the Dounreay site the chief inspector is required by the Act to consult such local authorities, relevant water bodies and other public or local authorities as appear to him to be proper to be consulted by him.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the levels of radioactive discharge from Dounreay reprocessing plant in the current year; and what are the estimated levels in each of the next five years.

Sir Hector Monro: Information about radioactive discharges from Dounreay is available in a series of statistical bulletins published by the Scottish Office entitled "Radioactive Waste Disposals from Nuclear Sites in Scotland". The most recent bulletin provides information for the period 1988 to 1992 and copies are in the Library. A further bulletin covering the period 1989 to 1993 is in preparation and will be published as soon as possible.

Levels of discharge in future years are dependent on the outcome of the application which AEA Technology has made to the chief inspector, HM industrial pollution inspectorate for revised waste disposal authorisations.

Rail Freight

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with British Rail regarding the sale of freight sidings at Crianlarich and Oban; what is his Department's position on the matter; and if he will make a statement regarding the policy his Department is adopting in order to encourage the development of rail freight in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has had no discussions with British Rail regarding the sale of freight sidings at Crianlarich and Oban. Government policies are designed to encourage freight to transfer from road to rail where it makes economic and environmental sense to do so. The existing freight facilities grant scheme, administered in Scotland by the Scottish Office, provides targeted financial assistance to capital projects which demonstrably help the environment by switching traffic from road to rail. The scheme is being enhanced and the changes will take effect from 1 April 1994.

A new grant scheme to be administered by the Department of Transport on a Great Britain basis is being introduced from 1 April, under which contributions can be

made towards track charges for freight traffic where it can be demonstrated that such traffic could not be attracted to rail without it.

Roads

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums he intends to spend on road improvements between Stranraer and Dumfries over the next three years; and when he expects the remainder of that road to have been improved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As is customary, my right hon. Friend will shortly be announcing those major trunk road schemes on which, subject to completion of statutory procedures and available resources, it is intended to commence construction next year and, provisionally, in the subsequent two years. In recent years more than £85 million has been spent on schemes to improve the A75, including a number of bypass schemes to relieve communities along the route. The recent review of Scotland's key roads confirmed that these improvements have substantially eliminated the operating difficulties on the route.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of vehicles in each different category counted by his Department using the Stranraer-Dumfries road at maximum, minimum and average flows; what is his estimate of the average speed of vehicles on that road; and what were the figures five and 10 years ago.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Automatic traffic counters on the A75 located at Carsluith and Castle Douglas have been used to obtain an estimate of the maximum, minimum and average annual traffic flows in 1993. The traffic flows obtained are indicated in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1, Carsluith, shows that the maximum annual two-way daily flow occurs in August and is 5,825, the minimum daily flow is in January and is 2,897 with an average annual daily flow for this site of 4,241.

Table 2, Castle Douglas, shows that the maximum annual two-way daily flow occurs in August and is 8,185, the minimum daily flow is in January, 5,498, with an average annual daily flow for this site of 6,563.

Information regarding traffic speeds has been obtained from the A75 Carsluith site. This information was retrieved on 28 February and 2 March 1994 and is summarised in table 3. Speed data was not available for five or 10 years ago.

An analysis of the historic traffic flows on the A75 between Stranraer and Dumfries has been carried out. Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7 show how traffic volumes have changes over the period from 1982 to 1992 at various locations along the route. In summary during the period 1982 to 1992 traffic volumes increased by between 18 per cent. and 30 per cent. depending on location.

Table 1
A75 Carsluith

Month	*Pedal cycles*	*Motor cycles*	*Cars*	*Buses*	*LGV*	*HGV*	*All vehicles*
January	0	1	1,979	16	212	689	2,897
February	0	2	2,149	17	251	802	3,221
March	0	2	2,258	19	275	903	3,457
April	0	4	3,027	30	329	961	4,351
May	0	7	3,052	29	315	867	4,242
June	0	7	3,365	37	399	871	4,679
July	0	8	4,080	49	495	813	5,445
August	0	9	4,472	41	477	826	5,825
September	0	5	3,475	39	384	951	4,854
October	0	3	2,967	27	320	929	4,246
November	0	2	2,181	21	280	920	3,404
December	0	3	2,207	20	253	821	3,304
Annual average daily flow	0	5	3,001	30	340	866	4,241

Table 2
A75 Castle Douglas

Month	*Pedal cycles*	*Motor cycles*	*Cars*	*Buses*	*LGV*	*HGV*	*All vehicles*
January	0	10	4,147	17	376	948	5,498
February	0	8	4,483	19	420	1,062	5,992
March	0	7	4,585	20	476	1,172	6,260
April	0	7	5,382	31	517	1,117	7,054
May	0	6	5,126	33	546	1,075	6,786
June	0	10	5,867	37	688	1,282	7,884
July	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
August	0	9	6,274	40	713	1,149	8,185
September	0	10	5,876	38	648	1,310	7,882
October	0	10	5,392	28	536	1,224	7,190
November	0	16	4,423	19	480	1,197	6,135
December	0	14	4,632	21	416	1,062	6,145
Annual average daily flow	0	10	4,877	29	513	1,135	6,563

Table 3

Vehicle Type	Average speed km/hr
Motor cycles	75
Cars	97
LGV	93
HGV	84
Bus	85
All vehicles	87

Table 4: Census Point Location DTP10745 A.75 2-8 km south east of A751

CP Number	DTP10745	DTP10745
Route	A0075	A0075
Year	1982	1992
Pedal cycles	30	7
Motor cyles	25	7
Cars	2,500	2,987
Buses	50	54
LGV	400	408
HGV	400	624
All vehicles	3,300	4,080

CP Number	DTP10745
Route	A0075
Year	1987
All vehicles	3,347
Traffic Growth (per cent.) 1982-1987	1

1982 to 1992 difference in traffic (per cent.)

CP Number	DTP10745
Route	A0075
Year	1992
Pedal cycles	–23
TWMV	–18
Cars	487
Buses	4
LGV	8
HGV	224
All vehicles	780
Traffic Growth (per cent.) 1982-1992	19

Table 5
Census point location: DTP20749, A75, 600m west of B733

CP Number	DTP20749	DTP20749
Route	A0075	A0075
Year	1982	1992
Pedal Cycles	0	15
Motor Cycles	61	53
Cars	1,825	2,353
Buses	30	38
LGV	283	453
HGV	691	611
All vehicles	2,890	3,508

CP Number	DTP20749
Route	A0075
Year	1987
All vehicles	3,466
Traffic growth 1982-87 (per cent.)	17

1982 to 1992 difference in Traffic

CP Number	DTP20749
Route	A0075
Year	1992
PC	15
TWMV	–8
Cars	528
Buses	8
LGV	170
HGV	–80
All vehicles	618
Traffic growth 1982-92 (per cent.)	18

Table 6
Census point location: DTP00740, A75, 1·5km south west of A71

	Number	
CP number	DTP00740	DTP00740
Route	A0075	A0075
Year	1982	1992
Pedal cycles	0	3
Motor cycles	32	14
Cars	2,061	3,432
Buses	34	29
LGV	287	334
HGV	638	560
All vehicles	3,052	4,369

	Number
CP number	DTP00740
Route	A0075
Year	1987
All vehicles	3,326
Traffic growth percentage 1982-87	8

1982 to 1992 difference in traffic

	Number
CP number	DTP00740
Route	A0075
Year	1992
PC	3
TWMV	–18
Cars	1,371
Buses	–5
LGV	47
HGV	–78
All vehicles	1,317
Traffic growth percentage 1982-92	30

Table 7
Census Point Location
DTP10740—A75 2·4 km north east of A712

Route, year and vehicle	DTP10740	DTP10740
Route	A0075	A0075
Year	1982	1992
Pedal Cycles	4	0
Motor Cycles	25	9
Cars	3,223	4,684
Buses	55	46
Light Goods Vehicle	427	746
Heavy Goods Vehicle	807	536
All Vehicles	4,537	6,021

Traffic Growth

Route, year, vehicle and percentage growth	*DTP10740*
Route	A0075
Year	1987
All Vehicles	5,079
1982-1987 (per cent.)	11

1982 to 1992 Difference in Traffic

Route, year, vehicle and percentage difference	*DTP10740*
Route	A0075
Year	1992
Pedal Cycles	-4
TW Motor Vehicle	-16
Cars	1,461
Buses	-9
Light Goods Vehicle	319
Heavy Goods Vehicle	271
All Vehicles	1,484
1982-1992 (per cent.)	25

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department spends on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if he will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Office has its own on-site nursery at East Craigs, Edinburth which is registered for 15 full-time places and operates on a mix of full and part-time attendance. Those using the facility meet its running costs with accommodation costs being met by my Department. The Scottish Office takes occupancy of a major new building at Victoria quay, Leith in the autumn of 1995. Our plans for this building include a 30 to 35-place nursery.

Additionally, staff in my Department can place children in the central holiday play scheme, in Edinburgh. The facilities are available to staff on a full repayment basis although my Department makes a small contribution of around £500 to the play scheme to help with the cost of outings. Discussions are also taking place about a similar play scheme in the Glasgow area.

Prisoners (Criminal Proceedings)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in how many cases a commissioner has been appointed under section 33 of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 in *(a)* the sheriff court and *(b)* the High Court to date; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* There have been no appointments in either sheriff court or High Court proceedings to date.

Imports

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of European imports to Scotland are transported directly by *(a)* sea and *(b)* air to Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1994]:* Imports in 1992 from EC countries to Scotland directly at seaports were 2,736 thousand tonnes, and at airports 2,000 tonnes. Total imports from Europe to Scotland are not available, therefore the requested percentages cannot be derived.

Royal Fine Arts Commission

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the members of the Royal Fine Arts Commission, their place of residence, and the remuneration paid to each.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 March 1994]:* The information is given in the table. No remuneration is paid to members of the commission, but expenses are payable.

Hon. Lord Prosser, QC, *(Chairman)*—Edinburgh
Professor Gordon Benson—London
Miss Kirsteen Borland—Cardross, Dumbarton
Mr. William A. Cadell—Linlithgow, West Lothian
Mrs. Kathleen Dalyell—Linlithgow, West Lothian
Dr. Deborah Howard—Cambridge
Mr. Gerald Ogilvie-Laing—Conon Bridge, Ross and Cromarty
Mr. Allen S. Matheson—Glasgow
Professor Tom Ridley—West Linton, Borders
Mr. Robert R. Steedman—Cupar, Fife
Professor Robin G. M. Webster—Aberdeen
Mr. H. Roland Wedgwood—Edinburgh

Consultants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of *(a)* finished consultant episodes and *(b)* private patient finished consultant episodes in Scotland in each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* Activity in Scotland is not recorded in the form of finished consultant episodes. The number of discharges for finished consultant episodes in Scotland is therefore not centrally available.

The following table sets out acute sector hospital discharges for NHS patients. Figures on private patients are not routinely collected.

	Patient category		
Financial year	*Private*	*Other*	*Total*
1989-90	1,301	868,743	870,044
1990-91	1,430	898,013	899,443
1991-92	1,567	929,852	931,419
1992-93	1,209	995,572	996,781

Private Health Treatment

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the total income from private patients in the NHS in Scotland in each year since 1989-90;

(2) what was the income from private treatment of each trust hospital in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply about the total income which I gave to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 10 February 1994 at column *340.*

The first two NHS trust hospitals in Scotland were set up from April 1992 and the income from private patients was as follows:

NHS Trusts	*1992-93* £
South Ayrshire	89,000
The Royal Aberdeen Hospitals	531,000

Figures are not available for 1993-94.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in slaughterhouses in each year since 1985.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* The information requested, for the years available, is set out in the table:

Year	*Employees in employment in Slaughterhouses*
1984	1,500
1987	1,400
1989	1,200
1991	1,500

Source: Census of Employment, NOMIS

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy that section 28 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 shall no longer be used as a reason for not disclosing information to the public; and if he will make a statement on the implications for the Health and Safety Executive of the Environmental Information Regulations 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) would not normally withhold information where it is allowed to disclose it. Section 28 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 prohibits the disclosure of information without the consent of the person providing it, except where disclosure would be for the purposes of the functions of the HSC, the Health and Safety Executive or other enforcing authorities. The HSC makes full use of these exceptions to the prohibition.

Under the provisions of the Environmental Information Regulations 1992 the HSE is obliged to make available environmental information in those areas where it has environmental responsibilities, subject to withholding any information that falls within one or more of the exempted categories in regulation 4.

Northumberland Training and Enterprise Council

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what Government grants were given to the Northumberland training and enterprise council in each year since 1990.

Miss Widdecombe: The table lists funding given to Northumberland training and enterprise council since 1990.

Year	*Budget* £ million	*Additional performance-related funding* £ million
1990-91	[1]7	n/a
1991-92	15·3	n/a
1992-93	14·9	2·0
1993-94	14·2	0·5

[1] TEC operated from September 1990.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fish Farms (Pollution)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list those pesticides, including dichlorvos, she has so far identified as major toxic chemicals polluting the North sea from United Kingdom fish farms; and if she will make a statement on their control and their effect on the biodiversity of the North sea.

Mr. Soames: All veterinary medicines and pesticides are subject to strict approval arrangements which take into account their potential effect on the environment. All direct discharges, including from fish farms, containing potentially toxic substances are controlled through a system of consents.

We have no evidence of chemicals used in fish farms affecting the biodiversity of the North sea. In line with ministerial North sea agreements, the United Kingdom is acting to reduce the discharge of the most toxic and polluting substances, including dichlorvos, to the North sea. A full quality status report on the North sea will be published by the Oslo and Paris Commissions later this year for the North sea conference ministerial meeting in 1995.

In addition, the Ministry carries out a programme of monitoring of the aquatic environment for a range of metals and organic compounds in fish, shellfish, seawater and sediments. The results are published annually.

Blackcurrants

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she is taking to ensure a level playing field in the market for blackcurrants in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: The main competition for United Kingdom blackcurrant growers comes from Eastern Europe. Trade is governed by agreements between the European Community and Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria. These provide for minimum import prices for fresh and frozen blackcurrants from these countries and were initially the subject of faulty implementing legislation by the Commission. Following strong pressure from the United Kingdom, including an intervention by my right hon. Friend the Minister with Commissioner Steichen, the legislation now reflects the Europe agreements and gives the Commission the power to manage the market as provided for in them.

Regional Flood Defence Committees

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of the current chairmen of the regional flood defence committees of the National Rivers Authority are farmers and landowners.

Mr. Jack: All nine current chairmen of the regional flood defence committees in England have farming or landowning interests.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she will select the chairmen for appointment to the regional flood defence committees of the National Rivers Authority who will serve from July.

Mr. Jack: It is expected that chairmen-designate of the nine regional flood defence committees in England will be appointed within the next two months.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria she will use to select the chairmen for appointment to the regional flood defence committees of the National Rivers Authority who will serve from July.

Mr. Jack: Under section 10 of the Water Resources Act 1991 those responsible for appointing the chairman or a member of a regional flood defence committee are required to have regard to the desirability of appointing a person who has experience of, and has shown capacity in, some matter relevant to the functions of the committee. These criteria will be used in selecting the chairmen of the nine committees in England.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how the appointments she makes to regional flood defence committees of the National Rivers Authority reflect the priorities set out in the flood and coastal defence strategy.

Mr. Jack: All members of the NRA's regional flood defence committees in England are expected to take account of the priorities set out in the MAFF-Welsh Office flood and coastal defence strategy in their work on the committees.

Essex Coast Environmentally Sensitive Area

Dr. Spink: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she expects to implement the Essex coast ESA; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I plan to launch the Essex coast ESA on 16 March.

Pigs

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what progress has been made with the implementation of the Welfare of Pigs Regulations 1991;

(2) how many dry sows in the United Kingdom are currently housed in sow stalls or tethers; what plans she has to phase out such systems by 1 January 1999; and what action will be taken against producers who fail to comply with this deadline.

Mr. Soames: The Welfare of Pigs Regulations 1991 prohibit the keeping of sows in close confinement stalls or tethers on agricultural land unless the stalls and tethers were in use on that land before 1 October 1991. This temporary exemption will end on 1 January 1999 when the use of all such stalls or tethers will be prohibited. The regulations are enforced by the state veterinary service and producers who fail to comply can expect to be prosecuted.

It is estimated that approximately two thirds of the indoor breeding heard of 640,000 sows is now housed in alternative systems. To assist the industry, this Department is funding a programme of research into alternative systems of husbandry. It has also contributed to the work of the pig welfare advisory group and financed the publication of a series of nine booklets and associated workshops on alternative systems.

Sheep Exports

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if all sheep exported from the United Kingdom to Spain for further fattening are subsequently killed in EC-approved abattoirs.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Council directive 64/433/EEC as amended, on health conditions for the production and marketing of fresh meat, requires member states to ensure that meat placed on the market for human consumption has been obtained from premises which meet the conditions laid down in that directive. This means that sheep which are exported to Spain for further fattening and subsequently placed on the market for human consumption must be slaughtered in approved abattoirs.

Family Food Bills

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will estimate by how much the average food bill of the average family of four is inflated as a direct result of the common agricultural policy, giving figures separately for *(a)* dairy products, *(b)* sugar, *(c)* beef, *(d)* cereals, *(e)* rice, *(f)* fruit and vegetables, *(g)* potatoes, *(h)* oilseeds, *(i)* linseed, *(j)* olive oil, *(k)* wine and *(l)* tobacco;

(2) if she will estimate by how much the average food bill of the average family of four is inflated as a direct result of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on 11 January, at columns *65-6*. For the reasons given, it is not possible to estimate the effect of the CAP on the food bill for individual commodities.

Farmers Charter

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representation she has received concerning the preparation of a farmers charter.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answers which I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) on 2 February, *Official Report*, column *735*, and 3 February, *Official Report*, column *861*.

Potato Producers

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will set out the material available to her on the information on state aid provided to potato producers in other European Union member states.

Mr. Jack: Since November 1991 the EC Commission has published in the C series of the *Official Journal* brief details of the state aids, including our own potato marketing scheme, to which it has raised no objection. Those in other member states are summarised:

Aids to potato processors and producers in the EC

Denmark

1. 1988 expenditure and 1990 draft budget for potato trade association funds.

Adopted: 30 October 1991. Published: OJ C 18/8 of 24 January 1992.

2. Aid for potato quality control.
Adopted: 25 March 1992. Published: OJ C 155/7 of 20 June 1992.

Italy

1. Aid to support the horticulture sector (potatoes).
Adopted: 21 January 1992. Published: OJ C 185/6 of 22 July 1992.

2. Special intervention by AIMA for new potatoes for consumption.
Adopted: 31 August 1992. Published: OJ C 286/9 of 4 November 1992.

3. AIMA national programme for private storage of potatoes for consumption 1992 marketing year.
Adopted: 15 October 1992. Published: OJ C 316/6 of 3 December 1992.

4. AIMA programme for the implementation of the inter-branch agreement on the processing of potatoes (1992 programme).
Adopted: 19 January 1993. Published: OJ C 104/5 of 15 April 1993.

5. Implementation of the inter-branch agreement on the processing of potatoes (1993 marketing year).
Adopted: 2 July 1993. Published: OJ C 256/11 of 21 September 1993.

Luxembourg

1. Assistance to farmers suffering from natural disasters in 1991 (including potato producers).
Adopted: 11 March 1992. Published: OJ C 185/6 of 22 July 1992.

France

1. Aid to compensate producers of new potatoes who have agreed to keep part of their harvest off the market.
Adopted: 24 November 1993. Published: OJ C 42/15 of 12 February 1994.

2. Aid for producers of potatoes for human consumption.
Adopted: 24 November 1993. Published: OJ C 42/17 of 12 February 1994.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much her Department spends on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if she will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Jack: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is committed to making every effort to help with the provision of child care provided a value for money case can be made to support the need for such facilities. Currently, there are some 48 nursery places for children aged between six months and five years, and some 100 holiday play scheme places for children aged between four and 14 years.

The Ministry has a purpose-built 40-place nursery at its Guildford site and a 30-place nursery is due to open at its new King's Pool site in York this autumn. Also, a 33-place nursery is under construction at the central science laboratory's new site at Sand Hutton, near York, which is due to open in 1996.

In addition a survey is being carried out at all offices in the Ministry currently without child care facilities to assess the level of demand. All options for child care will be considered including general advice on facilities available locally and participation in nurseries and play schemes run by other organisations.

The amount spent on child care is not available centrally.

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of public appointments made by her Department in 1993 were of women; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* The percentage of appointments made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food held by women has increased from 10 per cent. in 1991 to 18 per cent. in 1993. Our aim is to increase this to 25 per cent. in 1996. If achieved, this would represent an increase of just under 40 per cent. compared to 1993 figures.

Group Actions

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what stage the fundamental review of the rules governing group actions has reached; and when he expects the report and recommendations arising from the review to be published.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On 16 December last year the Lord Chancellor announced the terms of reference for his Department's fundamental review of expenditure. This will cover all areas of the Department's business, including civil litigation, and will report to the Lord Chancellor in June. As any conclusions and recommendations resulting from this review will clearly have implications for group actions, procedures with regard to such actions are being examined as part of the review.

The results of fundamental reviews are not commonly made public. Any action which the Lord Chancellor decides to take as a result of the review's conclusions will, however, be preceded by public consultation in the usual way.

Magistracy

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps he is taking to ensure that the magistracy is made more representative in terms of gender, race and social class.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster seek, through central initiatives and through their local advisory committees, to ensure that, so far as possible, candidates who are put forward for appointment to the magistracy reflect the local community they will serve in terms of such factors as age, gender, ethnic origin, political affiliation and employment background. Notices are placed in the press and local initiatives are undertaken such as letters to organisations and court open days to encourage suitable men and women from all walks of life to put themselves forward.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the political balance of magistrates within west Yorkshire.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The political balance of magistrates within west Yorkshire on the latest information available is as follows:

	West Yorkshire
Conservative	572
Labour	397
Liberal/Democrat	220
Independent/Not known	163

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the members of the committees responsible for recommending magistrates in west Yorkshire.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The members of the eight advisory committees responsible for recomending candidates for the magistracy in west Yorkshire are as follows:

BRADFORD
Chairman:
M. Bendig, Esq., JP

Members:
M. Spooner, Esq., JP
Mrs. M. S. Barker, JP
J. D. Birrell, Esq.
J. D. Godward, Esq., JP
Mrs. K. M. Lee, JP
R. Singh, Esq.
J. Heslop, Esq., JP
P. Clough, Esq., JP
Miss S. F. A. Walker, JP
Mrs. P. Wilson, JP

KEIGHLEY
Chairman:
K. Davy, Esq., OBE, JP

Members:
Mrs. S. R. Montague, JP
J. Oldfield, Esq., JP
D. L. Wilberforce, Esq.
A. Sharpe, Esq., JP
D. Hanson, Esq., JP
Mrs. S. O. Duckitt, JP
Mrs. B. M. L. Collins, JP
Mrs. S. Morton
W. I. Thompson, Esq., JP

CALDERDALE
Chairman:
Mrs. M. Berry, JP

Members:
Dr. B. P. Fernandez
D. R. Marshall, Esq., JP
Mrs. J. Braithwaite, JP
K. Edmonson, JP
Mrs. P. Sheerman, JP
E. Crossley, Esq., JP
J. C. Webster, Esq., JP
Mrs. E. M. Bavidge, JP
G. R. Lawrence, Esq., JP
Mrs. M. E. Sykes, JP

BATLEY AND DEWSBURY
Chairman:
Mrs. B. A. Ripley JP
Members:
D. Popplewell Esq. JP
J. D. Williams Esq. JP
Mrs. K. J. Robinson JP
D. Green Esq. JP
Dr. A. R. Rajpura Esq.
J. B. Atkinson Esq. JP
Mrs. E. Wildey JP

HUDDERSFIELD
Chairman:
D. A. Wright Esq. JP
Members:
A. M. Pearson Esq. JP
J. R. Rotchell Esq. JP
Mrs. R. J. Neary JP
Mrs. J. M. Netherwood JP
S. Haigh Esq. JP
J. Akhtar Esq. JP
Mrs. C. Shepherd JP
Mrs. S. M. Nutbrown JP
P. S. Blakey Esq. JP
B. Hebblethwaite Esq. JP
Mrs. N. M. Wise

LEEDS
Chairman:
H. Swain Esq. JP

Members:
M. T. Elliott Esq. JP
Mrs. C. M. Thomas JP
Mrs. M. R. Johnson JP
R. A. Smith Esq.
K. M. Brumfitt Esq. JP
Mrs. E. A. Taylor JP
Miss A. Caffoor JP
Mrs. B. Lyons
Mrs. N. Jacobs JP
D. Tempest Esq. JP

PONTEFRACT
Chairman:
R. Bailey Esq. JP
Members:
J. Moody Esq. JP
J. T. K. Hopwood Esq. JP
B. Crosland Esq. JP
Ms M. Woffinden JP
Mrs. B. J. Macaskill JP
Miss A. Limbert Jp
G. W. Smith Esq.

WAKEFIELD
Chairman:
R. Young Esq. JP
Members:
H. Asquith Esq. JP
B. Wren Esq. JP
Mrs. S. A. Richards JP
Mrs. M. A. Holmes JP
Mrs. J. M. Eyles JP
G. Beaumont Esq. JP
R. A. Pritchard Esq.

Benzodiazepine Cases

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received, and from whom, concerning the handling of Benzodiazepine litigation cases by the Legal Aid Board.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have received numerous representations about decisions made by the board in the Benzodiazepine litigation from other Members of Parliament, members of the public and from solicitors on behalf of their clients.

Pepper *v.* Hart

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what consideration Her Majesty's Government have given to the implications, including cost of litigation, of the ruling in the case of Pepper *v.* Hart.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The implications of the decision have been considered in detail by an inter-departmental working group, and a number of practical steps for the avoidance or correction of mistakes or ambiguities arising out of ministerial statements during the passage of legislation are being put into practice, for example by guidance to Departments on legislative procedures. Issues concerning the cost of litigation are being taken up with legal practitioners' governing bodies throughout the United Kingdom.

County Courts

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action he will take to ensure that cases, listed for county court hearings on a

particular day, are heard on that day; if he will consider a system of compensation in circumstances of failure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has no specific plans to alter the present system of listing cases in the county court. During the last few years, 82 county court trail centres have been established which have concentrated resources and provided better listing systems. Listing officers in those centres are expected to remain in post for at least a year. Listing, however, is reliant on the accuracy of time estimates provided by the parties, the number of door-of-the-court settlements and the priority which must necessarily be given to any urgent applications, particularly in the family area. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the trial centres are continuing their efforts to find more efficient ways of dealing with cases.

Departmental policy on compensation was set out in a parliamentary answer on 28 January 1987, *Official Report*, column *246*, and remains unchanged. The Lord Chancellor is prepared to consider claims for ex-gratia payments if a party has suffered loss as a result of the negligence of court staff. This does not, however, cover the failure of a case to be heard as a result of the listing process which is carried out under judicial direction.

Legal Aid

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many solicitors' firms have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* been granted legal aid franchises.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There have been 1,425 applications for franchises. No franchises will be granted until 1 August 1994.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has for amending the rules governing legal aid franchises; and if he will publish the proposed new rules.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Before franchising comes into effect, changes will be needed to the legal aid regulations. These will be laid before Parliament in the usual way. The terms of the contract between the Legal Aid Board and those who are granted franchises are still the subject of discussion between the Legal Aid Board and the Law Society.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to restrict legal aid provision to those solicitors' firms which have successfully applied for legal aid franchises.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many solicitors' firms have ceased to take on legally aided clients for *(a)* criminal matters and *(b)* civil matters in each of the last five years; and what representations have been made to him as to the reasons for the cessation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Figures on the number of solicitors' firms which have ceased taking on legally aided clients are not available. The table shows the number of offices receiving payment from the Legal Aid Board for each of the last five years, broken down into criminal matters and civil matters. The number of offices does not equate to the number of solicitors' firms.

The Lord Chancellor has received representations from the Law Society and from a number of solicitors arguing that low fee rates for legal aid work are causing solicitors to cease undertaking this work. However, the number of offices which do receive payment for legal aid work has risen as a proportion of all solicitors offices from 68 per cent. in 1988-89 to 82 per cent. in 1992-93.

Table 1—Number of offices receiving payment for legal aid[1]

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Criminal Matters					
Magistrates Courts	8,350	8,247	7,745	7,417	7,011
Court Duty Solicitor	3,601	3,569	3,429	3,383	3,302
Police Station Duty Solicitor	5,389	5,392	5,327	5,368	5,385
Civil Matters					
High Courts					
Matrimonial	3,229	2,725	2,597	2,584	2,539
Other	5,427	5,459	5,527	5,870	6,629
County Courts					
Matrimonial	8,779	8,524	8,422	8,396	8,584
Other	8,253	8,143	8,159	8,262	8,647
Magistrates Courts	6,817	6,760	6,500	6,407	5,866
Green Form	9,796	9,785	9,390	9,341	9,502
Total	11,558	11,455	11,125	11,060	11,317

[1]These figures exclude the number of offices receiving payment in respect of criminal legal aid in the higher courts, where the information is not collected and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many employees of the Manchester legal aid board have been *(a)* made redundant or *(b)* asked to take voluntary redundancy this year and in each of the previous three years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: *(a)* None and *(b)* none. There are, however, 11 redundant posts at the Manchester area office and volunteers are being sought for redundancy up to that number.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many of the total number of legal aid boards employees have been *(a)* told that they will

be made redundant or *(b)* asked to take voluntary redundancy this year and in each of the previous three years; if he will list the names of the relevant boards and the numbers involved in categories *(a)* and *(b)* at each; and what is the total number affected nationally.

Mr. John M. Taylor: *(a)* Nil. *(b)* The board is looking for 139 volunteers across all area offices as follows: London 40, Brighton three, Reading three, Bristol 10, Cardiff four, Birmingham six, Manchester 11, Newcastle 15, Leeds eight, Nottingham three, Cambridge nine, Chester nine and Liverpool 18. There have been no voluntary redundancies in the previous three years in area offices.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the job titles and the civil service grades of all the Legal Aid Board employees who have either been told that they will be made redundant or have been asked to take voluntary redundancy at *(a)* Manchester legal aid board and *(b)* other legal aid boards.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No Legal Aid Board employees have been told that they are redundant. Volunteers have been asked for in a range of jobs from grade 7 to administrative assistant.

(a) In the Manchester area office the grades from which volunteers have been requested are grade 7, SEO, higher administrative officer and secretary. *(b)* In the rest of the country the grades from which volunteers have been requested are from grade 7 to administrative assistant, but the grades affected vary from office to office.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many representations he has received and from whom, concerning redundancies among the staff of legal aid boards.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what costing procedures his Department has carried out as regards a possible increase in costs to the legal aid fund as the result of a reduction in the number of legal aid appeals certifying committees, due to more applications being allowed by legal aid certifying officers; and what plans he has for publishing the results of those costing procedures.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No costing has been carried out as no reduction in the number of area committees dealing with appeals against refusals of legal aid is anticipated. The frequency with which area committees meet fluctuates from time to time in accordance with the numbers of appeals made.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to close down any of local legal aid offices; and in relation to how many of these offices he has such plans.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board has no such plans.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether instructions have been issued to *(a)* Manchester legal aid board or *(b)* other legal aid boards concerning a reduction in the numbers of legal aid appeals certifying committees; to how many legal boards such instructions have been issued; what representations he has received in response; and how many such committees he is seeking to dispense with nationally.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No instructions have been issued to the Manchester area office of the Legal Aid Board, or to any of the board's other area offices, to reduce the number of area committees dealing with appeals against refusals of legal aid.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he or any of his officials have suggested the closure of *(a)* some or *(b)* all local legal aid offices as part of legal aid policy.

Mr. John M. Taylor: *(a)* No and *(b)* no.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Orthopaedic Surgery

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were on the waiting lists for orthopaedic surgery for each health board area in each year since 1988; and what is the current figure.

Mr. Ancram: The information is not held in the form requested. In-patient treatment in the trauma and orthopaedic surgery specialty is available only in the Eastern and Western board areas. It is not possible to give a breakdown of the total numbers waiting by their board of residence. The total number of people on the waiting lists for treatment in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty in Northern Ireland is as follows:

	Ordinary[1] admissions	*Day cases[2]*
March 1988	4,604	—
March 1989	5,119	36
March 1990	3,603	33
March 1991	3,738	22
March 1992	3,607	30
March 1993	3,127	728
December 1993	3,190	765

Note:

Information relating to waiting times for day cases was not collected centrally until 1 April 1988.

[1] The ordinary admissions totals may include some patients waiting for day case admission, which cannot be separately identified.

[2] Increase in day case figures between March 1992 and March 1993 was as a result of Musgrave Park Hospital first being able to identify day cases separately.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were on the waiting lists for their first appointment with an orthopaedic surgeon in each year since 1988, in each health board area; and what are the current figures.

Mr. Ancram: The information is not held in the form requested. The total number of people on the waiting lists for their first out-patient appointment in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty in Northern Ireland is as follows:

	Number
31 March 1993[1]	10,838
31 December 1993	12,545

[1] Information relating to waiting times for first out-patient appointments in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty was not collected centrally until 1992-93.

It is important to view the numbers waiting for their first appointment against the numbers seen for the first time in a 12-month period. A total of 26,699 first appointments were seen in hospitals in the Eastern board area in 1992-93 and 5,307 in hospitals in the Western board area.

Power Failures

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the electricity power failure in Northern Ireland on 3 February; and what steps are being taken to ensure that such an incident does not recur.

Mr. Tim Smith: The causes of the failure are being investigated by Northern Ireland Electricity plc. The director general of Electricity Supply for Northern Ireland and I have asked the company for a report on the matter and on the measures being taken by Northern Ireland Electricity plc to prevent a recurrence.

Glass-fronted Fires

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the cost of maintaining glass-fronted fires, including chimney relining in Housing Executive homes, in the Greater Belfast area, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Tim Smith: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I understand from the chief executive that the information which is readily available is as follows:

£ million

Year	Greater Belfast area	Belfast region
1988-89	[1]—	0·392
1989-90	[1]—	1·066
1990-91	[1]—	1·035
1991-92	2·025	1·471
1992-93	2·859	2·082

[1] Information prior to 1991-92 on the Greater Belfast area which includes Housing Executive, Belfast districts 1 to 7, Castlereagh districts 1 and 2, Lisburn districts 2 and 3 and Newtownabbey district 1 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Road Projects

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by start date the major road building and road improvement schemes in each roads division in Northern Ireland in the current year and for the next five years, indicating his estimate of the cost.

Mr. Tim Smith: The information is as follows:

1. Major works schemes: 1993-94

	Start Date	Estimated cost (£ million)
Ballemena Division		
Killead By-Pass	September 1993	0·9
B58 New Line	January 1994	0·9
Coleraine Division		
Greenmount Link: Stage 3 and 4	September 1993	0·4
Craigavon Division		
Newry By-Pass: Stage 2	November 1993	4·4
Newry By-Pass: Stage 3 Bridge	March 1994	2·1

2. Major works 5 year programme 1994-99

Ballymena Division		
Northern Distributor Ballymena	1996-97	2·2
A26 Antrim-Ballymena: Stage 2	1996-97	2·7
A2 Silverstream/Ravenhill, Carrifergus	1997-98	2·8
A8 Belfast-Larne Road Dualling: Stage 1	1997-98	2·5
Belfast Division		
Forster Green Belfast	1995-96	1·6
Purdysburn Road, Belfast: Stage 1	1995-96	0·8
Ballymaconaghy Road, Belfast: Stage 2	1996-97	0·6
Balmoral Avenue/Malone Road, Belfast	1996-97	0·4
Purdysburn Road, Belfast: Stage 2	1997-98	1·6
Belfast Inner Ring Road (Southern Section)	1997-98	3·0
A2 Shore Road, Belfast: Stage 4	1997-98	0·9
Coleraine division		
Strand Road, Londonderry: Stage 2	1997-98	1·5
A2 Limavady By-pass: Stage 1	1997-98	3·0
Craigavon division		
Newry By-pass: Stage 3 (Roadworks)	1994-95	5·5
Downpatrick division		
Church Street/Scotch Street, Downpatrick	1995-96	1·7
Balloo Road, Bangor: Stage 3	1996-97	0·7
Comber By-pass: Stage 2	1997-98	2·9
Omagh division		
Omagh Through-pass: Stage 2A (Bridge)	1994-95	0·4
A5 Burndennett	1994-95	1·3
A5 Magheramason	1994-95	0·6
Omagh Through-pass: Stage 2B	1995-96	3·2
Anne Street/Thomas Bridge, Dungannon	1996-97	0·8
A29 Carland Bridge, Dungannon	1996-97	2·2
A5 Leckpatrick	1996-97	0·8
A5 Garvaghy	1997-98	0·4

	Year in which work is due to start	Total estimated cost (£ m)

The implementation of those schemes is subject to the continued availability of finance and the completion of the statutory processes.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the road bridges which are to be improved and the bridge strengthening and replacement programme, giving the start dates and costs.

Mr. Tim Smith: An annual programme of work is developed on the basis of the continuing assessment of bridges. The current programme for the 1994-95 financial year is:

Location by Roads Service Division	Estimated Cost (£000's)
Ballymena	
Downshire Bridge, Carrickfergus	790
Widdel Bridge	35
Mills Engines Bridge	85

Location by Roads Service Division	Estimated Cost (£000's)
Gallwilly Bridge	55
Belfast	
Ballyregan Water Culvert	54
Millvale Flyover	72
Jordanstown Railway Bridge	235
Monkstown Halt Bridge	185
Irish Hill Road Bridge	13
Castle Road Culvert	13
Tillysburn Subway B	13
Tillysburn Subway A Victoria Park Subway Ballylinney Burn Bridge	20
Connswater River Bridge	2,020
Summerhill Road Bridge	17
Ballygomartin Bridge/Forth River	81
Whitehouse Park Bridge	103
Windsor Park Footbridge	104
Loop River Culvert	60
Coleraine	
Swanns Bridge	1,450
Mullarts Bridge	20
Coshquin Bridge	20
Cahery Bridge	15
Park Bridge	20
Big Drain Bridge	30
Ballyrathan Bridge	10
North Ballinteer Bridge	40
Owenbeg Bridge	15
Macosquin	20
Faughanvale Bridge	8
Milltown Bridge	12
Dunderg Bridges	15
Two Bridges Bridge	25
Mettican Bridge	25
Gelvin Bridge	270
Kilrea Bann Bridge	40
Craigavon	
Aghagallon Bridge	22
Drumatine Bridge	15
Coolsallagh Bridge	26
Drumgaw Bridge	20
Connolly's Bridge	10
Clay Road Retaining Wall	20
Chapel Road Retaining Wall	13
Bridges Nos. 27, 29, 140, 1198 and 1398	172
Bridges Nos. 51, 73, 83, 316 and 2020	290
Downpatrick	
Tullybrannigan Road Bridge, N'castle	120
Ballyskeagh Bridge	845
Dunmurry Lane (M1) Bridge Gleanvy Bridge	220
Omagh	
Burndennett Bridge	450
Minnowburns Bridge	180
Cordromedy Bridge	65
Ardtrea Bridge	250
Bridge No. 742	80
Bridge No. 1432	40
Green Bridge	30
Carrs Bridge	65
Pollenroe Bridge	30

Housing (Design Guide)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he intends to take to consult district councils on his Department's design guide on housing.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Department wrote to district councils among other interested bodies when it started work on the rural design guide last year. The letter explained the purpose of the proposed guide and asked for comments. Seven councils have replied and their comments are being taken into account in the production of the guide.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Postgraduate Scientists

31. **Mr. Coe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to implement the new arrangements for training postgraduate scientists outlined in the science and technology White Paper.

Mr. David Davis: Last month, the Office of Science and Technology published a consultation paper on arrangements for making a master's year the normal starting point for research students supported by the research councils. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster also announced extra funding for industrially orientated co-operative awards in science and engineering studentships in his allocation of the science budget for 1994-95.

Citizens Charters

37. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the success of the charters for which he is responsible.

Mr. David Davis: Delivering charters is the responsibility of individual public service providers. But details of achievements in health, education, housing, transport and many more public services will be published in the citizens charter second report later this month.

Open Government

38. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many constituency visits he has made concerning open government.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he has taken to ensure that the ombudsman has the resources necessary to discharge his functions under the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is important that the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration should be properly resourced to oversee the implementation of the code of practice. Subject to parliamentary approval, the PCA's current provision is planned to be increased by 14·75 per cent. in 1993-94 and then an additional 85·5 per cent. in 1994-95. This increased provision, which has been broadly carried forward into 1995-96 and 1996-97 as part of the 1993 public expenditure survey, also covers additional staff, their accommodation and administrative costs to match the increasing work loads for the PCA and health service commissioners as more complaints are being referred by MPs and received direct from members of the public.

Civil Service

39. Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the practice of fast streaming in the civil service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I announced a review of the fast-stream entry on 18 February, *Official Report*, columns *1010-11*.

Science Research

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures are proposed to ensure equitable geographic distribution of science research facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Decisions on the siting of publicly funded research facilities are taken on their individual merits.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans his Department has to encourage private sector partnerships with university science departments and university research institutes.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the 2 February debate in the House on the research council orders, during which I set out my immediate plans for encouraging private sector partnerships with the science and engineering base, *Official Report*, column 895, through, for example, the "realising our potential" awards —ROPA—grants scheme and the industry-led CASE postgraduate studentship awards.

At my request, the Director General of the Research Councils is embarking on a fundamental examination of the research council programmes in order to advise on the overall health of the science and engineering base, and on the action required to take forward the policies set out in the White Paper "Realising our Potential: A Strategy for Science and Technology"—Cm 2250, May 1993.

Human Gene Technology

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about Government control of human gene technology.

Mr. Waldegrave: Certain aspects of human gene technology are controlled under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Contained Use) Regulations 1992, which are designed to protect human health and safety and the environment from genetically modified organisms used in contained conditions such as laboratories or industrial facilities. Under these regulations, all persons undertaking such work must conduct a risk assessment of the activity. This assessment will determine the risk classification of, and the safety precautions required for, the work. The independent Advisory Committee on Genetic Modification is regularly consulted on higher risk projects.

All premises where work with genetically modified organisms takes place must be registered with the Health and Safety Executive. The regulations also contain provisions for inspection and enforcement under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974.

All proposals for gene therapy research on human subjects are considered by the Gene Therapy Advisory Committee, established in 1993 by United Kingdom Health Ministers in response to the recommendation of the Committee on the Ethics of Gene Therapy. It advises on the acceptability of such proposals on ethical grounds, taking account of the scientific merits of proposals and potential benefits and risks.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to the answer by the Prime Minister on 13 December, *Official Report*, column *700*, what assessment he has made of the effects of subsidiarity on the EC acquired rights directive and the Government's market-testing and competitive tendering programme.

Mr. David Davis: The Government welcome the European Commission's review of the directive, under subsidiarity, and hope that this will remove the damaging effects it can have on competitiveness and jobs—in particular where it has been inappropriately applied to contracting out.

However, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 which implement the directive in United Kingdom law have not prevented Departments from market testing or otherwise examining around £1·1 billion-worth of services, to the end of December 1993.

Agencies (Management)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place a copy of the Trosa report into the setting up of executive agencies and the evaluation of the civil service reforms in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I did so on 1 March and I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), *Official Report*, columns *671-72*.

HEALTH

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of the public appointments she is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Sackville: In addition to those listed in "Public Bodies 1993", my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, or Ministers acting on her behalf, appoints the chairman and members of the following bodies:

Central Research and Development Committee for the NHS;
Research and Development Strategy;
Dental Vocational Training Authority;
National Advisory Body (which guides and co-ordinates the Confidential Enquiry into Stillbirths and Deaths in Infancy in England, Wales and Northern Ireland);
NHS Supplies Authority;
National Breastfeeding Working Group;
Nutrition Task Force;
Pharmacists' Review Panel;
Vocational Training Appeal Body.

My right hon. Friend appoints chairmen of the London implementation group, the joint supervisory board of the NHS centre for coding and classification and the national case mix office.

In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for appointing the expert members of the steering group on the microbiological safety of food. Some appointments to the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine and the General Dental Council's dental auxiliaries committee are made jointly with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Appointments are also made to the three main "Health of the Nation" advisory groups. These are the wider health working group, The Chief Medical Officer's "Health of the Nation" working group and the chief executive's NHS implementation group.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State also appoints 26 bodies of special trustees to administer the trust funds of various pre-1974 boards of governors and university hospitals which chose to keep their individual funds.

Pacemaker Leads

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients with *(a)* Siemens and *(b)* Medtronic pacing leads which have been subject to warnings have had the leads replaced or inactivated.

Mr. Sackville: According to information sent to the national pacemaker database, 224 Siemens pacing leads, and 39 Medtronic pacing leads subject to warnings, have been replaced or inactivated in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been implanted with *(a)* Sorin 580T silicone pacemaker leads, *(b)* Talectronics 330258158 pacemaker leads, *(c)* Talectronics 033301 pacemaker leads, *(d)* Medtronic 4004 pacing leads, *(e)* Medtronic 4004M pacing leads, *(f)* Medtronic 4082 pacing leads, *(g)* Siemens 1010T pacing leads, *(h)* Siemens 1050T pacing leads and *(i)* Siemens prototype T93 since 1987; and how many have died in each category, in each year since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: There is no 580T pacemaker lead made by Sorin Biomedica, and no records exist of pacemaker leads with the model numbers 330258158 and 033301.

Information requested for the Medtronic and Siemens pacemaker leads, based upon data returned to the national pacemaker database, is shown in the table.

Information based upon data returned to the national pacemaker database

Pacemaker lead	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Number of pacemaker lead implants								
Medtronic 4004	0	0	18	60	32	3	0	0
Medtronic 4004M	0	2	19	7	192	196	30	0
Medtronic 4082	0	0	0	142	619	515	1	0
Siemens 1010T	84	332	591	989	679	19	7	0
Siemens 1050T	3	2	56	745	1,235	13	0	0
Siemens T93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of deaths of patients treated with pacemaker lead								
Medtronic 4004	0	0	7	11	5	0	0	0
Medtronic 4004M	0	0	0	5	14	21	1	0
Medtronic 4082	0	0	0	12	35	16	0	0
Siemens 1010T	7	34	62	74	68	0	0	0
Siemens 1050T	0	0	0	11	68	64	1	0
Siemens T93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note: None of the deaths given above for either the Siemens or Medtronic pacemaker leads was lead-related. (Information based upon data returned to the National Pacemaker Database).

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recommendations her Department has made to pacing centres and follow-up centres about the incidence of failures in polyurethane leads.

Mr. Sackville: Advice issued is contained in pacemaker technical notes Nos. 48, and 49, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been given regarding the purchase of polyurethane leads by *(a)* her Department and *(b)* the medical devices directorate.

Mr. Sackville: The medical devices directorate, a division of the Department of Health, gives no specific advice on the purchase of polyurethane leads. However, purchasers are strongly recommended to buy medical devices only from companies registered under the Department's manufacturer registration scheme.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what review her Department has conducted of the use of polyurethane in pacing leads; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: No formal review has been conducted. The Department is continually up-dated by the national pacemaker database which analyses statistics on the use of all types of implantable pacemaker leads.

Faulty Medical Devices

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last had discussions with the Food and Drug Administration in the United States of America on the subject of faulty medical devices; and which devices were discussed.

Mr. Sackville: No formal discussions have been held with the Food and Drug Administration in the United States of America on the subject of faulty medical devices. No central record is kept of the frequent informal contacts which are made about a variety of subjects associated with a wide range of medical devices.

Pacemaker Database

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimation she has made of the accuracy of the national pacemaker database.

Mr. Sackville: Overall data capture was last estimated by the national pacemaker database to be 88·8 per cent. in 1992, based upon an annual nation-wide audit. Data accuracy is dependent upon that supplied, on a voluntary basis, by the implanting and follow-up centres. The database has a system for data validation, which has recently led to a re-classification of some of the data.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *618*, listing pacing and pacing follow-up centres, what information she has on hospitals not on the pacemaker database, carrying out pacing or pacing follow-up.

Mr. Sackville: Hospitals are encouraged to inform both the national pacemaker database and the Department of Health, when either pacing or follow-up activities are initiated. Information held relies upon this notification.

Hammersmith and Charing Cross Hospitals

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to move or relocate the Hammersmith hospital.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to discourage a merger between Hammersmith hospital and Charing Cross hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Members to the statement my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made on 10 February.

Oncology

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many hospitals comply with the target of radical radiotherapy involving complex treatment planning within two weeks laid down in the guidelines of the Joint Council for Clinical Oncology;

(2) how many hospitals comply with the target of urgent palliative radiotherapy within 48 hours laid down in the guidelines of the Joint Council for Clinical Oncology;

(3) how many hospitals comply with the target of urgent radiotherapy or chemotherapy within 24 hours laid down in the guidelines of the Joint Council for Clinical Oncology;

(4) how many hospitals comply with the target of intensive chemotherapy within one week laid down in the guidelines of the Joint Council for Clinical Oncology.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally.

Private Prescriptions

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will publish guidance on private prescriptions.

Dr. Mawhinney: The rules governing the issue of private prescriptions by general practitioners are set out in the NHS (General Medical Services) Regulations 1992.

Staff Sickness

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the number of days lost to the NHS through staff sickness in each region in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. The control of absenteeism is a local management responsibility.

General Psychiatric Wards

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ensure that the number of beds on general psychiatric wards in London is increased as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Bowis: The number of beds on general psychiatric wards in London is a matter for each local district health authority. They are responsible for assessing the needs of their local populations and ensuring that a range of services are in place to meet those needs.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Horam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will consult with the Home Office and the police about the need for further development of proper training about mental health for police officers; and if she will provide additional funding for the course already run for police officers by the National Schizophrenic Fellowship.

Mr. Bowis: These are matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. Our Departments work closely together on the co-ordination of services in this area.

Market Testing

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of contracts market tested *(a)* by health authorities and *(b)* by health trusts in 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 21 January at column *887*.

Secure Units

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost of providing a place on a secure unit for a child per week.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally, but may be obtained from the local authority providing the secure accommodation.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average length of time spent by a child on remand in a secure unit.

Mr. Bowis: Table 11 of the annual publication "Children Accommodated in Secure Units During the Year Ending 31 March 1993 England" provides information on the number of young people discharged from secure accommodation, by legal status, sex and length of stay. Copies of this publication are held in the Library.

Engagements

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list her engagements for Tuesday 22 February and Tuesday 15 February.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: On Tuesday 15 February, I had a regular meeting with Ministers; addressed the National Asthma Campaign conference; attended a meeting chaired by the President of the Board of Trade on the White Paper on competitiveness, had meetings with officials on proposed legislation for the next session and mental health services; met officers of the Back-Bench health committee and then the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett).

On Tuesday 22 February, I had a regular meeting with Ministers; officially launched the Sainsbury centre for mental health; attended first order questions; had separate meetings with Claire Rayner and the Conservative party chairman; met a delegation of hon. Members for Birmingham and attended a dinner being held in honour of the Egyptian Minister of Populations and Family Welfare.

WRVS

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to meet representatives of the Women's Royal Volunteer Service to discuss the impact of food hygiene regulations on WRVS pensioners' lunch clubs; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the Baroness Cumberlege, who has ministerial responsibility for food safety, will be meeting my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) and the Women's Royal Voluntary Service on 14 March.

We will be happy to discuss the sensible application of the regulations.

Nuffield Report

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions are taking place with the Association of British Insurers on the Nuffield report on genetic screening; and if he will make a statement on progress.

Mr. Sackville: The report was raised during a meeting in December 1993 between officials of the Department of Health and the Department of Trade and Industry and representatives of the Association of British Insurers. I also wrote to the hon. Member on 25 February; a copy of my letter is available in the Library.

Health Management Trust Ltd.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement concerning the establishment by West Midlands regional health authority of the Health Management Trust Ltd., with particular reference to the transfer to the trust of Crown copyright software and the licence fee paid for this.

Dr. Mawhinney: The financial information project—FIP—was set up in 1979 and was jointly funded initially by the Department and West Midlands regional health authority and later by an association of regions. The association was subsequently disbanded. In order to ensure the further development of the software, a charitable trust called the health management trust was set up and a licence was granted to it by the Department to use, develop and distribute the software for the benefit of the national health service. As the trust is a non-profit-making charity and the software is made available to NHS users at beneficial rates, there was no licence fee.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what amount was granted by the West Midlands health authority to Health Management Trust Ltd.; what were the reasons for this; how much of this amount the company has repaid; and what representations her Department has made to West Midlands health authority on this matter;

(2) what amount was lent by the West Midlands health authority to Health Management Trust Ltd.; what were the reasons for this; what were the repayment terms of the loan; and what representations her Department have made to the West Midlands regional health authority on this matter.

Dr. Mawhinney: The amount granted by West Midlands regional health authority to Health Management Trust Ltd. is £101,700: in addition loans amounting to £930,000 have been made by West Midlands regional health authority to Health Management Trust Ltd. The grant was not repayable and was made as part of a total package of financial assistance to enable the trust, on behalf of the regional health authority, to research and develop computer-based systems to improve organisation and management within the NHS. The loan was made to enable the trust to continue development of the financial information project—FIP—software products, consisting of software systems on ward nursing, paramedic and theatre systems and community nursing and is repayable, with interest, by quarterly instalments beginning on 28 February 1994. The Department has been in contact with West Midlands regional health authority about this matter on a number of occasions.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what authority the West Midlands regional health authority was able to establish the Health Management Trust Ltd. as a separate company with charitable status; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health Management Trust Ltd. was established by a number of individuals, some of whom were national health service employees, acting in a personal capacity, with assistance from the West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in the level of charges levied by Health Management Trust Ltd. on the users of software, including other health authorities, for which it has the Crown copyright.

Dr. Mawhinney: The level of charges is a matter for Health Management Trust Ltd. to determine.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from other national health service bodies about the conduct of Health Management Trust Ltd. in pursuing legal action against the users of the software for which it has the Crown copyright.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department is not aware that Health Management Trust Ltd. has taken legal action against any national health service users.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what settlements have recently been concluded between *(a)* the South Western regional health authority and *(b)* North West Thames regional authority and Health Management Trust Ltd.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1992, the Department mediated successfully in a dispute between South Western regional health authority and Health Management Trust Ltd. In 1993, the Department was similarly successful in mediating between North West Thames regional health authority and the Health Management Trust. The terms of the respective settlements are confidential between the parties concerned.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has made to West Midlands health authority or Health Management Trust Ltd. about these settlements.

Dr. Mawhinney: None, as settlement was reached by all the parties concerned.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the relationship between the West Midlands health authority and Health Management Trust Ltd. and FIP Ltd.;

(2) what is the status of Health Management Trust Ltd. and FIP Ltd. within the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: Financial information project—FIP—was set up in the mid 1980s as a consortium of district health authorities to develop and use a series of financial information systems. In July 1989 the West Midlands regional health authority agreed a proposal to transfer the activities of FIP to an independent trust—Health Management Trust—which was registered as a charity. Focus Information Systems, the new name for the company previously known as FIP, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Health Management Trust Ltd.

Dental Health

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the potential dental risks associated with the use of soya-based baby milk.

Mr. Sackville: Soya-based infant formulas have been developed for the particular needs of infants who are allergic to cow milk protein or who are lactose intolerant or who are being reared on a vegan diet. In order to meet all of these needs in one product they are formulated with carbohydrates which are more cariogenic than lactose. Parents feeding their infants with soya-based formulas should therefore pay particular attention to good weaning practices. Oral hygiene procedures should be started as soon as teeth emerge and parents may wish to seek medical and dental advice on the provision of fluoride supplements.

Abortions

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give a breakdown by regional health authority of the numbers of abortions performed in the latest year for which figures are available in pregnancies of more than 24 weeks' gestation; if she will indicate the grounds upon which those abortions were performed; and, specifically, if she will indicate where appropriate the nature of any possible handicap from which the baby might have been suffering.

Mr. Sackville: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on 29 June 1992 at columns *437-38*.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been issued by her Department about the nature of those handicaps which might be considerd to be so severe as to fall within the provision of the existing legislation that abortions might in those cases be performed up until birth; and, specifically, whether dwarfism or acondraplasia might reasonably be considered as grounds for such late abortions.

Mr. Sackville: Decisions as to what constitutes "substantial risk" and "serious handicap" within the ground specified in the Abortion Act 1967, as amended, are matters for the clinical judgment of the doctor concerned taking into account all of the facts and circumstances of each case.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has yet received a formal notification of the abortion in a pregnancy of 35 weeks' gestation, performed at St. George's hospital, Tooting over the weekend of 5 and 6 February; and if she will indicate the name of the doctor performing that abortion and the grounds upon which it was authorised.

Mr. Sackville: Information provided to the chief medical officer on abortion notification forms under regulation 4 of the Abortion Regulations 1991 may not be disclosed because of restrictions set out in regulation 5.

Formula Milk

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce new regulations to regulate the advertising of formula milk for babies.

Mr. Sackville: Draft regulations to implement two European Community directives covering the composition, marketing and export of infant formula and follow-on formula have been the subject of a public consultation exercise carried out by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The closing date for receiving comments was 4 March. The regulations will be finalised once we have considered carefully the comments received.

Advertising

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *212*, what were the actual costs for publications and advertising in 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The costs for publications and advertising in 1992-93 were:

Publications – £10·110 million
Advertising – £5.053 million

NHS Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been spent by her Department since April 1992 on formal analysis and review of NHS services in London.

Dr. Mawhinney: The analysis and review of national health service services in London has been undertaken as a normal part of the duties of the Department's officers working within the NHS Management Executive. Additionally, since April 1992, approximately £1·6 million has been spent by the Department on specific studies including the Tomlinson inquiry.

Grants

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was given to *(a)* the Centre for Living Foundation, *(b)* the Centre for Accessible Environments, *(c)* the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People and *(d)* the Terrence Higgins Trust in grants under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, at current prices, in each year since financial help under the section was first approved.

Mr. Bowis: The information will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was given to the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation in grants under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, at current prices, in each year since 1979; and what grants are planned in each of the next four financial years.

Mr. Bowis: This information will be placed in the Library.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much her Department spends on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if she will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Sackville: The Department expects to spend £93,000 this financial year on the provision of child care. This includes purchasing 35 nursery places; holiday playschemes catering for 61 children in total each half term and major school holidays; a child care co-ordinator seconded from Leeds city council to provide members of staff who relocated with the National Health Service Management Executive with advice on local childcare facilities; and a subscription to Childcare Solutions, an information service on child care facilities available nationally.

DEFENCE

Pilots

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many pilots there were *(a)* under training but not on training courses and *(b)* under training and on training courses in (i) 1985, (ii) 1990 and (iii) 1993; and what is planned in 1995.

Mr. Hanley: At 1 April 1985 and 1 April 1990, the overall total numbers of pilots under training were 881 and 633 respectively. A break-down between those on training courses and those not on training courses, could be provided only at disproportionate cost. At 1 April 1993 there were *(a)* 247 pilots under training but not on training courses and *(b)* 423 under training and on training courses. The forecasts for 1 April 1995 are 228 and 342 respectively.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many pilots there were in RAF front-line sqadrons in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1990; and what is planned in 1995.

Mr. Hanley: It is not our practice to disclose information on this kind as it relates to operational capability.

Royal Air Force

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircrew below the rank of group captain there were in the RAF in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1993; and what is planned in 1995.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of RAF aircrew—including trainees—below the rank of group captain for the years requested were as follows:

1 April for each year	*Number*
1980	7,783
1985	8,009
1990	7,601
1993	7,233

The current forecast for 1 April 1995 is around 6,460.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of the RAF in 1993 prices in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990, *(d)* 1992 and *(e)* 1993; and what is projected in the current year, and in 1995 and 1996.

Mr. Hanley: The costs of each of the services are not separately calculated and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many reconnaissance aircraft there were in RAF front-line squadrons in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1990; and what is planned in 1995;

(2) how many close air support aircraft there were in RAF front-line squadrons in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1990; and what is planned for 1995;

(3) how many air defence aircraft there were in RAF front-line squadrons in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1990; and what is planned in 1995;

(4) how many maritime patrol aircraft there were in RAF front-line squadrons in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1990; and what is planned in 1995;

(5) how many strike/attack aircraft there were in RAF front-line squadrons in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1990; and what is planned for 1995.

Mr. Hanley: The details requested on aircraft in RAF front line squadrons, not including in-use reserves or those on operational conversion units are:

	1980	*1985*	*1990*	*1995 (planned)*	*Role*
Nimrod MR1/2	28	28	28	21	MP
Vulcan SR2	8	—	—	—	R
Canberra	22	3	3	3	R
Nimrod R	3	3	3	3	R

	1980	1985	1990	1995 (planned)	Role
Jaguar	[1]108	[1]60	36	36	CAS/R/A
Vulcan B2	48	—	—	—	S/A
Buccaneer	60	24	24	—	S/A/CAS
Harrier	52	48	48	39	CAS/R
Tornado GR1 a/b	—	100	120	96	CAS/R/S/A
Lightning F3/F6	24	24	—	—	AD
Phantom FG1	31	31	5	—	AD
Phantom FGR2	57	55	34	—	AD
Phantom F4J	—	12	10	—	AD
Tornado F3	—	—	70	80	AD

Note 1. Includes aircraft designated for the strike role.
KEY MP (maritime patrol), R (reconnaissance), CAS (close air support), A (attack), S (strike), AD (air defence).

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many new aircraft were delivered to the RAF in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991, *(c)* 1992 and *(d)* 1993; and what is planned in the current year and in 1995.

Mr. Aitken: I refer my hon. Friend to the RAF forward equipment tables in the statement on the defence estimates 1991, 1992 and 1993 for the statistics requested for the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93. The information for the current and next two financial years is as follows:

	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
VC10 tankers[1]	4	9	3
Chinook Mk2[2]	8	16	11
Tucano	2	—	—
Harrier T10	—	8	4
Sea King HAR3	—	—	6

[1] Conversion of existing aircraft to tanker role.
[2] 32 RAF Chinook Mk1s are being updated to a new Mk2 standard. In addition three new-build Chinook Mk2s will be delivered during 1995-96.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ground crew there were on RAF front-line squadrons in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1990; and what is planned for 1995.

Mr. Hanley: This information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircrew there were on RAF front-line squadrons in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1993; and what is planned in 1995.

Mr. Hanley: It is not our practice to disclose information of this kind as it relates to operational capability.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officers of air rank there were in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1993; and what is planned in 1995.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of RAF officers of air rank in the years requested were as follows:

Year	Number
1 April 1980	182
1 April 1985	174
1 April 1990	174
1 April 1993	163

The current forecast for 1 April 1995 is some 124.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total strength of the RAF in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1993; and what is planned for 1995.

Mr. Hanley: The total strength of the RAF, including trainees, for the years requested was as follows:

Year	Number
1 April 1980	89,641
1 April 1985	93,425
1 April 1990	89,685
1 April 1993	80,909

The current forecast for 1 April 1995 is around 70,000.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many pilots below the rank of group captain there were in the RAF in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1993; and what are the figures projected for 1995.

Mr. Hanley: The number of pilots, including trainees, below the rank of group captain in the RAF for the years requested were as follows:

	Number
1 April 1980	3,146
1 April 1985	4,059
1 April 1990	3,570
1 April 1993	3,429

The current forecast for 1 April 1995 is around 3,050.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total amount spent on RAF pensions at 1993 prices in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1993; and what is projected in 1995.

Mr. Hanley: Total expenditure on RAF pensions, at 1993-94 prices, in the financial years in question was:

	£
1980-81	300,730,000
1985-86	400,797,000
1990-91	519,904,000

Current forecasts for financial years 1993-94 and 1995-96 are:

	£
1993-94	638,843,000
1995-96	639,409,000

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF stations there were in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* 1993; and what is planned for 1996.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Service Personnel (Pensions)

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total amount spent on pensions for armed service men in 1993 prices in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1993; and what is planned in 1995.

Mr. Hanley: Total expenditure on armed forces pensions, at 1993-94 prices, in the financial years in question was:

	£
1980-81	[1]959,034,000
1985-86	1,273,780,000
1990-91	1,629,837,000

[1] Does not include expenditure on terminal grants for Army other ranks, records of which are not available for financial year 1980-81.

Current forecasts for financial years 1993-94 and 1995-96 are:

	£
1993-94	2,067,587,000
1995-96	1,890,198,000

Defence Expenditure

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total amount spent on defence, in 1993 prices in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990, *(d)* 1992 and *(e)* 1993; and what is projected in the current year, and in 1995 and 1996.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is as follows:

	£
1980-81	23,784
1985-86	27,837
1990-91	25,438
1992-93	24,387
1993-94	23,440
1994-95	22,583
1995-96	21,037
1996-97	20,610

Notes:

1. All figures are in £ million and are at 1993-94 constant prices.
2. Figures are adjusted for technical changes in the treatment of Armed Forces and civilian pensions described in the 1992 autumn statement, Cmnd. 2096, and other classification changes.
3. Figures include expenditure on the Falklands and Gulf conflicts and redundancies but exclude Gulf burden-sharing contributions from other Governments.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many public interest immunity certificates he, or his predecessors, have been asked to sign in each year since 1979; how many he or his predecessors decided not to sign; and if he will make a statement on his policies in respect of signing public interest immunity certificates.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The policy of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence in respect of signing such certificates is to be found in his evidence to the Scott inquiry. It is for the court in any particular case to weigh the public interest asserted in the certificate against the competing public interest in the due administration of justice.

14MU RAF Carlisle

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column 66, what contractural conditions govern the disposal price of the 14MU RAF Carlisle site in the event of former owner interest in the site; and how far this possibility was reflected in the investment appraisal.

Mr. Hanley: Any sale of land at 14MU RAF Carlisle under the former owner offer-back criteria would be at an open market price reflecting the most favourable planning permission achievable for the future potential development of the site. The investment appraisal reflected the estimated open market value of the establishment which assumed that the land would be used for similar purposes as at present.

Search and Rescue Operations

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the occasions, within the past three years, when the Royal Navy or RAF have engaged in search and rescue operations within the territorial waters of the Irish Republic; and what was the cost of such operations.

Mr. Hanley: During the period 1 January 1991 to 31 December 1993, there were 13 occasions on which either RN or RAF aircraft have been engaged in search and rescue operations within the territorial waters of the Irish Republic. The total cost of these operations was approximately £388,500 at full cost.

Maternity Leave (Armed Forces)

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maternity leave entitlement for women serving in the armed forces.

Mr. Hanley: Service women are eligible for a maximum of 48 weeks maternity leave, of which 14 weeks may be on full pay depending upon length of service and other conditions.

Redundancies

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the process whereby the selection recommendations were made regarding officers and soldiers for the redundancy notices that were sent out on 24 February.

Mr. Hanley: The selection process involved impartial boards made up of experienced officers, who carefully considered the age, skills and experience of individuals who fell within the redundancy categories which were promulgated in August 1993. Where possible, volunteers were selected in preference to non-volunteers. In the third phase of Army redundancies, 85 per cent. of those selected were voluntary.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria have been used in selecting the officers for compulsory redundancy.

Mr. Hanley: The primary aim of the Army redundancy programme was to ensure that the Army would retain the proper structure and balance of age, skills and experience necessary for the future. Selections were based on these principles.

Malaysia

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the extra training on military strategy and other defence items promised as part of the arms deal negotiated with Malaysia between 1985 and 1988; who was to provide it; how many military personnel were involved; and for what purpose such training was provided.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has provided only technical training under the terms of the 1988 memorandum of understanding signed with Malaysia. This training has taken place both in the United Kingdom and Malaysia, and has included the provision of loan service personnel. Further details, including costs, are confidential between the two Governments.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the difference between the normal commercial rate and the concessionary rate offered by the United Kingdom for the purchase of arms to Malaysia under the 1988 memorandum of understanding; how much was actually paid to make up this difference, under what heading of expenditure this was paid; and what assessment he has made of the consistency of such concessionary rate with the Washington convention on export credits and other international agreements.

Mr. Aitken: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 21 February, *Official Report*, column *69*.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *69*, who heads the special unit set up inside his Department in support of the arms deal to the Malaysians under the 1988 memorandum of understanding; what are its functions: and to whom it is accountable.

Mr. Aitken: A director heads the Malaysian project office. The MPO exists to provide advice and support to the Malaysian Government in their procurement of defence equipment from United Kingdom suppliers; the director is accountable through the head of the Defence Export Services Organisation to Ministers.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what way Her Majesty's Government fulfilled their offer to the Malaysians, under the 1988 memorandum of understanding, to assist in fixing easier terms; if there was any shortfall in the funding by the Malaysian Government; and what are the precedents for making such provisions.

Mr. Aitken: All defence purchases by Malaysia under the 1988 MOU have been made on a cash basis. As to precedents, at that time Malaysia was eligible under OECD conventions for export credit at consensus rates.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spends on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if he will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Hanley: No central records are maintained of total departmental expenditure on providing child care facilities, or the number of children catered for. It is departmental policy, however, to increase the provision of child care facilities for staff wherever possible; budget holders are encouraged to set up new child care facilities for staff where there is sufficient demand.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *240*, with which third parties the possibility of their clearing minefields in the Falklands is being explored.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have been asked to reply. We have not explored with any third parties the possibility of their clearing minefields in the Falkland Islands.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 8 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the latest projected spending in 1993-94 on *(a)* criminal legal aid, *(b)* civil legal aid and *(c)* the total legal aid budget.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is estimated that the total net cost of legal aid this year will amount to £1,225 million. Of that, £527 million will be spent on criminal legal aid and £698 million on civil legal aid. Estimates for each category of legal aid are as follows:

	£ million
Criminal legal aid	
Criminal Magistrates	192
Criminal Higher	235
Duty Solicitors Schemes	79
Criminal Green Form	21
Civil legal aid	
Civil legal aid	552
Green Form	126
Assistance By Way of Representation	20
Total legal aid	1,225

Family Law

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the Government's response to the recommendations in the Law Commission's report "Family Law: Matrimonial Property"—Law Comm 175.

Mr. John M. Taylor: After careful consideration the Government have decided not to implement this report. The Lord Chancellor is, however, grateful to the Law Commission for the valuable contribution which the report has made to the development of this area of the law.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tobacco Taxation

Mr. Barron: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column 666, what contribution to Treasury finance is made by VAT from tobacco consumed by children under 16 years of age in the United Kingdom.

Sir John Cope: It is estimated that around £15 million is raised in VAT on tobacco smoked by children between the ages of 11 and 15 in the United Kingdom.

Earnings Statistics

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what weekly amount of money and what percentage of their gross earnings a single earner couple with two children on average earnings in London paid in (i) income tax less child benefit, (ii) national insurance contributions and (iii) VAT in 1978-79; and what amount and percentage of their gross earnings each of those average families will have paid in 1994-95.

Mr. Dorrell: It is not our practice to produce estimates at the sub-regional level as they are not, in general, reliable.

Alcohol

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how he proposes to protect British off-licence shops from the importation of duty-free wines, beers and spirits from France; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: For offences involving illegal disposal of imported alcoholic drinks, the law provides for seizure of the goods and penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment. Customs is acting vigorously to protect the legitimate trade by seeking out offenders. In the 12 months to December 1993, 1,175 detections were made. Most of these cases were dealt with by seizure of the goods and sometimes the vehicles involved. Fifty-one prosecutions involving 76 defendants were completed and have resulted in fines and in some cases imprisonment. More are in the pipeline. This firm action will continue.

Savings Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made with the review of savings taxation.

Mr. Dorrell: I am examining the impact of tax and other Government policies on savings and the flow of funds through the economy. This work covers a range of issues and will extend over a number of months.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will specify the nature of the publicity regarding public access to land that was agreed for those properties in Lancashire benefiting from conditional exemption from inheritance tax.

Mr. Dorrell: The owner of land which is conditionally exempt from inheritance tax is required to publicise the agreed public access arrangements. The heritage advisory agencies will discuss with each owner the appropriate level of publicity. Each case is cconsidered individually and all relevant factors, including the existing level of publicity, are taken into account. Although the extent of public access may already be widely known, for example where substantial public access is already given, the owner will generally be required to take specific steps to publicise the public access arrangements, for example by advertising the access arrangements in a local tourist office or town hall.

Gross Domestic Product

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects national gross domestic product, excluding North sea oil revenues, to reach the same level as in the second quarter of 1990.

Mr. Nelson: Latest data for non-oil GDP in 1993, and the growth forecast in last November's "Financial Statement and Budget Report", imply that non-oil GDP will pass its second quarter 1990 level some time in mid-1994.

BT3 Share Offer Campaign

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, columns *271-72*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the results of any market research relating to the BT3 share offer campaign.

Mr. Dorrell: The market research into the advertising campaign on the BT3 share sale was carried out on a commercial in confidence basis. The research commented on the relative strengths of the creative ideas of competing advertising agencies; it would not be appropriate to make it public.

Taxation (Construction Workers)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to alter the system of taxation and national insurance for self-employed construction workers.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 10 February, *Official Report*, column *382*.

Low-wage Earners

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of Government policies on the economic well-being of the poorest 10 per cent. of wage earners.

Mr. Dorrell: The real income of a family with two children at the lowest decile of male earnings has risen by almost 24 per cent. since 1978-79.

Private Health Insurance

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would be raised if income tax were collected on the value of all health insurance benefits given to employees; and what is the amount actually collected.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* All directors, regardless of their earnings, and all employees earning at a rate of £8,500 a year or more—including the value of their benefits in kind—are taxed on any health insurance provided by their employers. An estimate of the tax collected on this basis was given in my answer to the hon. Member on 14 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *308*. Information is not available about the numbers of employees earning at a rate of less than £8,500 a year who are provided with health insurance benefits by their employers.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions the Treasury has had with officials or Ministers from the Department of Health about *(a)* extending tax relief on private health insurance to those aged under 60 years or *(b)* abolishing tax relief for those aged over 60 years.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* Internal discussions within the Government are confidential.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Prime Minister how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

The Prime Minister: Disaggregated information of this sort could be otained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

The Prime Minister: Such purchases are included within my Office's overall administration expenditure, which is published every year in the annual report.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 March.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Official Gifts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *162*, what happened to those gifts of small value presented to former Prime Minister Baroness Thatcher and not required by her on leaving office.

The Prime Minister: Gifts of small value are the property of the Prime Minister, not the Government. The retention or disposal of such items is therefore a matter for the Prime Minister concerned.

Malaysian Protocol

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister how many Cabinet meetings were held between the signing of the Malaysian protocol in March 1988 and 28 June 1988.

The Prime Minister: It remains the Government's practice not to give details of Cabinet or Cabinet Committee meetings.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister on what date he was first made aware of the references to civil aid and arms' sales in the Malaysian protocol of March 1988.

The Prime Minister: On 12 May 1988, in my capacity as Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Parliamentary Broadcasting

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to introduce legislation to clarify the BBC's existing obligation to carry a daily sound broadcast report of Parliament by stating the

wavelengths on which the broadcast shall be carried; and what plans he has for legislation to extend the BBC's existing obligation in respect of sound broadcasts to television.

Mr. Brooke: None. The BBC is responsible for deciding how to use the frequencies allocated to it, including the editorial content and scheduling of its programmes, under the terms of its royal charter and licence and agreement. I am sure that the BBC will have taken note of the concern which has been expressed in Parliament about its daily reports of proceedings.

Television Licences

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans the Government have to raise the cost of the television licence during the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Brooke: I announced on 4 November 1993, *Official Report*, columns *309-10*, that, from 1 April 1994, the fee for a colour television licence would increase to £84·50 and that for a monochrome licence to £28. I have today laid before the House the regulations necessary to bring these fees into force.

ENVIRONMENT

Building Projects

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being or have been wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Cambridge in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(2) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being or have been wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Swindon in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(3) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being or have been wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Newcastle upon Tyne in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(4) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Plymouth in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(5) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being or have been wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Bristol in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(6) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Leeds in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(7) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Brighton in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(8) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in York in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* this financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(9) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Birmingham in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* this financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(10) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Sheffield in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(11) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Nottingham in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(12) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Leicester in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(13) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Coventry in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(14) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Manchester in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(15) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Hull in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(16) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Liverpool in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* this financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(17) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Dewsbury in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(18) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Norwich in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* this financial year and *(c)* the next two years;

(19) what major building projects, valued at over £3 million, are being wholly or partly financed by Her Majesty's Government in Oxford in *(a)* the past five years, *(b)* the current financial year and *(c)* the next two years.

Sir George Young: I am replying with information on projects undertaken by my own Department. The Department of the Environment holds details of projects included in its own direct spending and projects undertaken by local authorities and non-departmental public sector bodies, such as urban development corporations, which may be wholly or partially financed by Her Majesty's Government.

Projects over £3 million are as listed:

	Past five years	Current financial	Next two years
Cambridge	None	None	None
Swindon	None	The Prinnels	None
Newcastle	Cowgate Housing Renewal St. Peters Basin Housing Development Newcastle Central Business and Technology Park (Offices) Closegate (Copthorne) Hotel Pandon Quays Housing Development Newcastle Business Park (Offices) Walker Technology Park (Industrial) Callaly Way Housing Development Ryehill Central Cruddas Park Loadman Street North Kenton Buddle Road Cowgate	Bath Lane Triangle Industrial Estate at Whitehouse Road John Marley Training Workshops Ryehill Housing Refurbishment Abercorn Road/Fergusons Lane Estate Scotswood Neighbourhood Renewal Area Family and Elderly Accommodation – Fergusons Lane Newcastle East Quayside Phase 1 (Offices) Closegate Office Development Jubilee Estate Ben Church Street	Newburnhaugh Newcastle East Quayside Phases 2 and 3 (Office/Retail/Hotel) Newcastle Arena (Leisure) St. Peters Basin Phase 2 (Housing) Lower Scotswood
Plymouth	Crown Hill Crown Building Rendell Street, Devonport Pembroke Street, Devonport Notre Dame Conservation Site	Coxside/National Marine Aquarium Car Park, Plymouth	None
Bristol	Avon Valley Urban Village Meadowsweet, Trendlewood Park	Quay Point, Temple Meads Spine Road Barton Hill Blaise, Lawrence Weston Orlebar Gardens, Lawrence Weston Hartcliffe and Withywood 1 Hartcliffe and Withywood 2	Bishport Multi-Storeys, Hartcliffe Gatehouse, Withywood Rockingham House
Leeds	Marriott Hotel Embankment (office development) Takare Nursing Home Granary Building Wimpey Homes Phase 1 – Hunslet Green Belle Isle N developing II The Deane, Halton Moor Ebor Gardens, Halton Moor Hunslet Green Stonegate A	Royal Armouries Museum Gipton South Belle Isle N	None
Brighton	Preston Barracks	Lynchett Close	None
York	None	Foxwood Lane	None
Birmingham	Birmingham Factory Centre Garrison Lane Waterlinks Jewellery Business Centre Arcadian Centre Bordesley Village Browning Street IMI Holford Phase 2 Trafalgar Road, Moseley Waterlinks House Cockhill Bloomsbury The Firs Phases 3 and 4 Pool Farm Ladywood (includes Central Area and Phases 1 and 2) Newtown Phases 1 and 2	Bloomsbury The Firs Phases 3 and 4 Pool Farm Ladywood (includes Central Area and Phases 1 and 2) Newtown Phases 1 and 2	Five Ways Tower Castle Vale Housing Action Trust Bloomsbury The Firs Phases 3 and 4 Pool Farm St. Lukes Ladywood (includes Central Area and Phases 1 and 2) Newtown Phases 1 and 2
Sheffield	Badger Estate Phases 1 to 3 Bard Street Phases 1 and 2 Hyde Park Walk and Tower Phases 1 and 2 Hyde Park Block C Manor Estate Phases 1 to 4 Lower Manor Phase 1	Steel City House Grain and Terminal Buildings – Victoria Quays North West Inner City Action Plan Broomhall	Norfolk Park

	Past five years	Current financial	Next two years
Nottingham	Speinton High Rise Radford Flats Crabtree Farm II	St. Anns Bridgeway, Meadows Speinton Railway Lands Boots Island Site Speinton Square Helston Drive Phase 2	The 4 Bs
Leicester	Mowmacro St. Matthews C St. Matthews East St. Marks Kirby Frith	Saffron Lane Leicester City Football Club Technology Transfer Centre Bede Island North, Housing Helston Drive, Phase 2	St. Andrews Housing Estate Pex Poly Refurbishment Bede Island North, Science Park
Coventry	Cofa Court Crown Building Harnall Lane Estate Parkside Office Development Ernesford Grange Phases 1 and 2 Wood End Phases 4 and 5	Ernesford Grange Phases 1 and 2 Wood End Phases 4 and 5	Ernesford Grange Phases 1 and 2 Wood End Phases 4 and 5
Manchester	Langley Collyhurst South Hulme St. Georges Benchill Waterloo Road Gail House Castlequay Grand Island Piccadilly Undercroft 1830 Warehouse Orient House Granada Hotel Piccadilly Village Granby Village Lancaster and Dominion Castlefield Hotel National Cycling Centre Victoria Indoor Arena Housing Association new build, Hulme 2, 3 and 4 Albert Grove, Longsight	Alexandra Park (Moss Side) Monsall Platt Lane Newbank Street Woollam Place Cambridge Street Concert Hall National Cycling Centre Victoria Indoor Arena Hulme 5 and District Centre Demolition Housing Association new build, Hulme 2 and 3 Great Bridgewater Initiative (Concert Hall)	Wilbraham Chorlton-on-Medlock Hacking Street National Cycling Centre Victoria Indoor Arena Housing Association new build, Hulme 2, 3 and 5
Hull	Old Bilton Grange Phases 1 and 2 The Danes, Orchard Park Greenwood Estate North Hull Housing Action Trust Louis Pearlman Centre	Old Bilton Grange Phase 3 The Garths Phase 1 Derringham Bank North Hull Housing Action Trust Louis Pearlman Centre	Old Bilton Grange Phase 4 The Garths Phase 2 North Hull Housing Action Trust Louis Pearlman Centre
Liverpool	Phythian Belle Vale Chatsworth Netherley Norwood Princes Park Queens Road Everton Park Queens Dock Gregson Street Phase 1 and 2 Boundary Street, Liver/Lightbody Street Chatsworth Street St. Andrews Gardens Eldonians	Sedgemoor (Norris Green) Baycliff/Southdean (Dovecot) Dingle Business Grants Block Johnsons Controls Central Bus Station St. Georges Hall Project Rosemary Renshaws Expansion Town Hall Wavertree Tech Park Liverpool Housing Action Trust	Sedgemoor Phase 2 Baycliff/Southdean Phase 2 Dingle Phase 2 Telegraph House St. Georges Hall Project Rosemary Renshaws Expansion Town Hall Wavertree Tech Park Liverpool Housing Action Trust St. John's House, Bootle
Dewsbury	None	None	None
Norwich	None	None	None
Oxford	Blackbird Leys	Blackbird Leys	None

Grants, Northumberland

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total of Government grants given to each district council in Northumberland last year.

Mr. Baldry: The available information is as follows:

Government Grants [1] to District Councils in Northumberland 1993-94 budget

	£000's
Tynedale	4,193
Castle Morpeth	3,173
Wansbeck	5,883
Blyth Valley	7,129
Alnwick	3,830
Berwick Upon Tweed	2,349

[1] Revenue grants as reported to the Department by the local authorities. This comprises revenue support grant and specific and special grants.

Wind Farms

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *555*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the letter relating to wind farms to which he refers.

Mr. Baldry: Yes.

Listed Buildings

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *536*, if he will list the grade 2* listed buildings for which consent to demolish has been given.

Mr. Baldry: Grade 2* listed buildings for which consent to demolish was given during the period 1 January 1982 to 31 March 1993 are:

Allanby house, Maryport, Cumbria
Dogmersfield park, Hampshire
2 Lansdown crescent, Cheltenham
Old Farmhouse, Manor House farm, Crawford, Lancashire
Campsall hall, South Yorkshire
Welton grange, Humberside
Clayhouse barn, Halifax
Kerswell priory, Devon
Oakfield, Sulhampstead Bannister, Berkshire
Coachman's cottage, Studley, Warwickshire
Old hall, Manor road, Bishop Auckland
Ditchett hall, Shepton Mallett, Somerset
9 Queen street, Droitwich, Worcestershire
Port East warehouses, North Quay, West India docks, London
Hinxton hall, Hinxton, Cambridgeshire—curtilage buildings listed in their own right
Hammerhead Crane, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear

Details of buildings for which consent was given prior to 1982 are not readily available.

Mobile Homes

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to give greater protection to tenants in mobile home parks; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: We have no plans at present to introduce further legislation concerning mobile homes. However, the two major industry bodies have recently launched a charter for mobile home residents which aims to help residents and site owners understand their existing legal right, and extends the responsibilities of site owners. Members of the industry bodies will be obliged to follow the charter.

St. Andrew's Gardens, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what time scale he how puts on the completion of the city challenge flagship project at St. Andrew's gardens project in Liverpool; and what funding will be made available for the project in the present financial year and the next;

(2) when he expects to hold the public inquiry into the Russell street-Berry street link road, Liverpool; and when it is likely that a decision will be available;

(3) what assessment he has made as to the effect of the public inquiry into the Russell street-Berry street link road, Liverpool on the city challenge flagship project at St. Andrew's gardens.

Mr. Baldry: I cannot say at this stage, when the public inquiry into the Russell street-Berry street link road might be held or when a decision will be issued. Arrangements for the inquiry will be put in hand once the planning and listed building consent applications and related documents requested from Liverpool city council on 16 February have been received.

The original time scale projected for the completion of the St. Andrew's gardens project was June 1966. My officials are currently discussing with Liverpool City Challenge and Merseyside Improved Houses what steps need to be taken to avoid significant delays as a result of the call-in and public inquiry.

Funding for the vacant stock initiative element of the project, through Liverpool City Challenge, is as follows:

	£ million
1992-93	2·400
1993-94	[1]1·047
1994-95	[1]1,354
1995-96	[1]0·703

[1] Estimated.

City Challenge funding for the houses for sale element —in addition to private sector investment is:

	£ million
1995-96	[1]0·420
1996-97	[1]0·280

[1] Estimated.

Leeds Development Corporation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out by industrial sector the number of jobs *a)* created and *(b)* saved by the Leeds development corporation in each financial year since its inception.

Mr. Baldry: Leeds development corporation does not analyse employment numbers within its areas by standard industrial classification. Nor does it keep records of the number of jobs saved. The numbers of gross jobs created within its area for each financial year since its inception are as follows:

Year	Numbers
1988-89	1,526
1989-90	2,458
1990-91	2,320

Year	Numbers
1991-92	210
1992-93	830

Plymouth Development Corporation

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress regarding the urban development corporation established in Plymouth in part to deal with redundant assets at Devonport; what assets have been transferred to the UDC from the MOD; on what basis this transfer took place; how many of these assets have been sold or developed; how many jobs have been created in the initiative; how much investment has been carried out by the Government to date; what is the total cost of the initiative to the Government to date; and what is the projected total.

Mr. Baldry: Plymouth development corporation was set up in April 1993. Since then it has encouraged the private sector to offer solutions to the redevelopment of its ex-MOD sites. Royal William yard in particular was a part of the DOE private finance initiative announcement in November last year.

Two sites, Mount Wise—seven acres—and Royal William yard—32 acres—have been transferred to PDC. Mount Batten—55 acres—will be transferred this month. All are being transferred at open market value, although the purchase cost is part of the MOD contribution to the development corporation.

PDC is still examining the potential for redevelopment of the ex-MOD sites so no assets have yet been sold or developed. No direct jobs, other than two permanent staff of the development corporation, have been created but the corporate plan indicates the potential to create over 1,300 new jobs and to lever in some £50 million of private sector money.

The Government money spent by PDC so far is in the region of £7 million including land purchase. Over the five-year life of the development corporation it is anticipated that the Government will contribute some £45 million towards the redevelopment of their sites. However, all such long-term commitments are subject to the annual public expenditure survey.

Water Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of *(a)* water supply and *(b)* sewerage services for the average home in the areas covered by *(a)* Wales Water, *(b)* Severn Trent, *(c)* North West England and *(d)* Thames in 1992-93 and 1993-94; and what was the cost of the water supply for the average home in each area in each year.

Mr. Atkins: Information on water and sewerage companies' average charges is published annually in the Centre for the Study of Regulated Industries statistics series publication "The UK Water Industry—Charges for Water Services", copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the price per thousand gallons of water for the areas covered by *(a)* Wales Water, *(b)* Severn Trent, *(c)* North West England and *(d)* Thames in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Atkins: Information on water and sewerage companies' unit costs for water delivered in 1992-93 is contained in the Office of Water Services publication "The Cost of Water Delivered and Sewage Collected", a copy of which is available in the Library. The report for 1993-94 will be available towards the end of the year.

Gipsy Sites, Essex

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what implications the recent policy announcement on gipsy sites will have for Essex county council's proposal to establish a gipsy site at Barnards farm, East Hanningfield, Chelmsford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Essex county council's application for approval in principal to develop this site has already been received by the Department. Provided that the county council wishes to proceed, and that the scheme meets the grant criteria, it will continue to be considered for approval under the existing system.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress there has been on the review of the arrangements for dealing with contaminated land which was announced on 24 March 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I am glad to report that the contaminated land review, set up in March 1993 under the chairmanship of my Department, has made good progress. Establishing where liability should fall for dealing with damage resulting from historic pollution is complex and the subject is not conducive to easy answers.

Many interested organisations and individuals have set out their views to the review. Such participation has been extremely helpful in drawing out the key issues and options. To build on that, I have agreed that it would be appropriate to issue a consultation paper, giving all interested parties an opportunity to comment on the preliminary conclusions.

The consultation paper "Paying for Our Past" has been published today—I have placed a copy in the Library of the House. We have invited comments by 3 May. Those views will be taken into account before we reach our final conclusions.

The consultation paper makes clear that we support a "suitable for use" approach to dealing with contaminated land. That is that contaminated land should be treated to deal with unacceptable actual or perceived threats to health, safety or the environment, taking account of the actual or intended use of the site; and, where practical, we should keep or bring such land back into beneficial use. That helps us to minimise pressures on green-field sites.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the spending plans for Department of the Environment, PSA Services, the Office of Water Services and Ordnance Survey for the years 1994-95 to 1996-97.

Mr. Gummer: Yes. I have today published the Department of the Environment annual report for 1994

—Cm 2507. This sets out in detail the outcome of the public expenditure survey announced in the Budget statement on 30 November 1993. The report provides an overview of the departments' discharge of their responsibilities over the past year, providing background to each spending programme and policy with more detailed information on performance targets, output measurements and value for money.

The report sets out our recent achievements and our plans for taking forward policies for the protection and enhancement of the natural and man-made environments. With their wide range of functions, my departments have a leading role to play in this and in ensuring that we see the wider picture of what we are doing, so that we pursue policies of sustainable development. The report contains many examples of how this is being achieved.

The report is also an important part of my departments' accountability to the public, in line with citizens charter principles.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the chairmanship and deputy chairmanship of the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased to inform the House that I have appointed Sir Brian Pearse to be chairman of the Housing Corporation from 1 April 1994. I am also appointing Mr. Peter Cooke to the post of deputy chairman. Both appointments will be for three years. As well as welcoming this excellent new team to head the important work of the Housing Corporation, I should like to express my gratitude to their predecessors, Sir Christopher Benson and Sir Norman Wakefield, for their outstanding contributions during their term in office.

North Sea

Mr. Illetson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the main findings and conclusions of the recent quality status report on the North sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The North sea quality status report has not yet been published. The Oslo and Paris Commission and the International Council for Exploration of the Sea are working jointly on preparations for publication at the end of March.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update figure K3, tax revenues from the main local taxes as percentages of total tax revenues of local governments, selected countries, of Cmnd 9714—"Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Gummer: No.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the total amount of central grant given to Brent, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth, Blackburn, Burnley, Knowsley, Liverpool, Manchester, Preston, Rochdale, Salford, Middlesbrough, Birmingham, Coventry, Sandwell, Wolverhampton, Leicester, Nottingham, Bradford and Kingston upon Hull in the years 1980-81, 1986-87 and 1993-94 at constant 1994 prices;

(2) what was the total amount of central Government grant given to each local authority in England in the years 1980-81, 1986-87 and 1993-94 at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* I have arranged for the information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department spends on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if he will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* In the current financial year 1993-94 my Department—excluding the Property Services Agency—has spent £60,250 on subsidy for nursery and holiday play scheme provision for 132 children. Start-up costs for additional places in two new inter-departmental nurseries in Westminster and Bristol amounted to £30,000.

Nuclear Recycling

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what considerations underpinned the decision not to include nuclear recycling at Sellafield or Dounreay in chapter 23 on waste and recycling, at pages 148 to 157 of Her Majesty's Government's sustainable development strategy report published on 25 January.

Mr. Atkins: Chapter 23 of "Sustainable Development: the UK Strategy"—Cm 2426—concerns non-radioactive waste.

"Watch Your Waste"

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what part his Department plays in the Open university book "Watch Your Waste" to which reference is made at page 153 of the report on the Government's sustainable development strategy, released on 25 January.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of the Environment funded the production of the book.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Common Agricultural Policy

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise at the next meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers the decision of the President of the Commission not to publish the report of experts on the future of the common agricultural policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We have no plans to do so.

Embassies and High Commissions

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column 29, how he assesses the

savings made to his budget as a result of reductions in Ministry of Defence personnel in embassies and high commissions in the absence of estimates of related expenditure; and if he will publish an estimate of the per capita additional net costs to his budget of a service attaché of colonel or equivalent rank in post in *(a)* a western European country, *(b)* a middle eastern country and *(c)* a Commonwealth third-world country.

Mr. Goodlad: Savings resulting from reductions in Ministry of Defence personnel in embassies and high commissions cannot be identified precisely. Direct savings from residential accommodation will be known but other savings arising from, for example, utilities and office space would need to be estimated pro rata after taking account of any direct support provided by the Ministry of Defence.

The additional direct annual per capita cost—residential accommodation without utilities—of a service attaché of colonel or equivalent rank in *(a)* Paris *(b)* Amman and *(c)* Islamabad would be about £18,700, £11,000 and £6,500 respectively. Other costs would have to be estimated in the same way as for savings.

Western Honduras

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with RTZ-Kennecott Mining Company on the environmental consequences of mining in Western Honduras.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have had no such discussions. My officials and RTZ are in touch from time to time.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1036*, what information he can provide concerning public interest immunity certificates signed from 1994 and moving in reverse chronological order, without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is not immediately available. I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Colonies (Police)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which colonies and overseas dependencies and territories have police forces which are under the control of the governor; and if he will list their establishment.

Mr. Goodlad: All the police forces of the dependent territories are under the control of the governor. Their establishment is as follows:

Dependent territory	*Police establishment*
Anguilla	85
Bermuda	414
British Virgin Islands	142
Cayman Islands	251
Gibraltar	214
Falkland Islands	14
Hong Kong	34,000
Montserrat	93
Pitcairn Islands	[1]
St. Helena and its dependencies	37
Turks and Caicos Islands	120

[1] Part-time.

Malaysia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if *(a)* the fax links and *(b)* the telephone between Kuala Lumpur and his Department were operational throughout the period of the negotiations of the protocol with Malaysia in March 1988; if duty officers at the Foreign Office were available at this period; and what rules apply to their contacting Ministers or Ministers' private office staff outside normal office work hours.

Mr. Goodlad: Normal communications facilities and duty officer arrangements were available throughout the period. Arrangements also exist for contacting Ministers' private secretaries out of normal office hours.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) of 25 January, *Official Report*, columns *145-46*, if he will give the reasons for the time taken after the signing of the Malaysian protocol in March 1988 for a letter to be sent saying that aid could not be linked to arms sales.

Mr. Goodlad: When the text of the protocol became available in London at the end of March, Ministers immediately recognised that the aid-defence sales link would have to be disentangled. Extensive consultations between Ministers followed in which we decided that we should make clear to the Malaysian Government that a link was not possible.

Hong Kong

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 17 January, *Official Report*, column *353*, what is the lower limit of costs of the draft schemes prepared for consultation with the Association of Members of Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service.

Mr. Goodlad: Consultations between Her Majesty's Government and the Association of Members of Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service in Hong Kong on a proposed package of benefits are taking place this week. The cost of the package will be known after it has been finalised.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the annual report on Hong Kong will be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Goodlad: The report is being published and laid before Parliament today. Copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

TRANSPORT

Transport Research Laboratory

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on the future status of the Transport Research Laboratory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend hopes to announce his decision shortly. He recently announced, in evidence to the Transport Select Committee, his provisional view that TRL should transfer to the private sector. Copies of the consultants' report on the feasibility of privatisation, made available to the Committee, are being placed in the Library of the House.

Contingencies Fund

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to seek an advance from the Contingencies Fund.

Mr. MacGregor: Further to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 24 February, *Official Report*, column *324*, pending parliamentary approval of the revised spring supplementary estimate on the administration and transport services vote—class VI, vote 2—sought to provide for a payment to the United States Government, expenditure estimated at £20,000,000 will be met by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

Driving Tests

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he would accept a bid, either from the in-house team or the private sector, which would mean that the booking of driving tests for Wales would no longer be undertaken in a Welsh location;

(2) if he would accept a bid, either from the in-house team or the private sector, which would mean that the booking of driving tests for Scotland would no longer be undertaken in a Scottish location.

Mr. Key: "The Government's Guide to Market Testing" makes it clear that restrictions which limit contractors' abilities to give the best value for money should not be included in market tests other than for operational reasons. Moreover, geographical constraints on the supply of goods and services are not, in general, permitted under EC competition law. The conduct of driving tests and the location of driving examiners in Wales and Scotland will not be affected by the market test. The requirement to continue to provide the present Welsh language service is to be included in the invitation to tender for the driver test booking service.

Driving Standards Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the work currently undertaken by the traffic area offices for the Driving Standards Agency is part of the current market test of DSA booking services.

Mr. Key: As shared occupiers of the buildings that they share with seven of the 10 DSA booking offices, traffic area offices currently supply DSA with a variety of office support and property-related services. These might not be required if DSA work were relocated as a consequence of the market test of the DSA booking services. Bidders for the DSA booking service will also be free to choose whether to continue the current arrangements under which three traffic area supply finance services to DSA booking offices.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he would accept a bid for the DSA booking services if that resulted in the centralisation of all booking services in one location.

Mr. Key: In order to ensure security of supply it is envisaged that the Driving Standards Agency will award up to four contracts to provide a booking service for separate geographical areas. Bids to run the service as a whole will also be considered if the contract will be managed with the same degree of security.

British Rail

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in real terms, for each year from 1979 to 1995 the *(a)* public service obligation grant awarded to British Rail and *(b)* external financing limit awarded to British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Public service obligation grant in real terms

£ million

	[1]*1993-94 prices*
1979	1,253
1980	1,246
1981	1,454
1982	1,474
1983	1,463
1984-85	[2]1,724
1985-86	1,257
1986-87	1,024
1987-88	1,071
1988-89	701
1989-90	615
1990-91	969
1991-92	974
1992-93	1,191
1993-94	[3]930
1994-95	[4]—

[1] Adjusted using GDP deflator.
[2] 15-month year.
[3] Estimated outturn.
[4] There are no figures available for 1994-95 and 1995-96. From 1 April 1994 Government support for socially desirable but unprofitable rail services will be provided through a grant from the franchising director. This sum is yet to be decided.

(b) External Financing Limit awarded to British Rail £ million, 1993-94 prices[1]

	EFL	*Outturn*
1979-80	2,177	2,177
1980-81	1,649	1,649
1981-82	1,751	1,827
1982-83	1,640	1,506
1983-84	1,618	1,377
1984-85	1,504	[2]1,690
1985-86	1,407	1,395
1986-87	1,163	1,153
1987-88	1,057	[3]767
1988-89	988	494
1989-90	783	877

	EFL	Outturn
1990-91	812	1,249
1991-92	1,647	1,584
1992-93	2,170	2,137
1993-94	1,495	[4]1,495
1994-95	1,262	—

[1] Adjusted using GDP deflator.
[3] 15 month year.
[3] [illegible] 1987-88 EFL included movements in payroll creditors.
[4] Estimated outturn.

New Car Registrations

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of new car registrations for each of the last eight quarters for *(a)* Birmingham, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Key: The requested information is shown:

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
1992				
Birmingham	20,960	22,058	26,362	15,067
West Midlands	27,364	29,575	37,304	29,662
United Kingdom	424,743	376,987	548,248	313,896
1993				
Birmingham	18,370	16,107	27,906	20,442
West Midlands	31,218	29,323	40,788	28,255
United Kingdom	470,971	398,297	630,770	345,657

EC Funding

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those transport projects involving European social and regional funds which have been given the go-ahead since *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. MacGregor: Lists of transport projects in England approved to date under the European regional development fund since 1979 and 1989 have been placed in the House of Commons Library today. Since 1979, 1,306 projects have been approved and their total value is around £626 million.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the amount of EC social and regional funds available for transport projects over the past 13 years; and what amount was not taken up during that period.

Mr. MacGregor: The total value of transport projects in England approved under the European regional development fund since 1981 to date is almost £605 million. Funds are available for a wide range of infrastructure projects and no specific allocation is made for transport projects. Any shortfall in expenditure is reallocated to other projects.

Market Liberalisation

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's progress since 1989 in further liberalising air and other transport markets both inside and outside the European Union.

Mr. Norris: Good progress has been made since 1989 in liberalising international transport markets.

The third air liberalisation package is now in force in the EU and has been extended to Norway and Sweden. It will shortly be further extended to Iceland, Finland and Austria under the European Economic Area agreement. Our objective as far as the United States is concerned remains to liberalise air services, thus providing further choice and competition on transatlantic routes. Elsewhere, we are making progress in agreeing new or revised arrangements which allow carriers to make commercial decisions on how best to serve the market without needing to seek Government approval. Around 20 such agreements have been made since 1989, with others currenlty being pursued.

International shipping markets are already largely liberal. Agreements on liberalisation of international shipping and cabotage within the EU are examples of further progress in this direction.

The road haulage market within the EU is now effectively liberalised and substantial progress has now been made on liberalising passenger services. Road transport agreements, existing or under negotiation, with other countries, are in the main liberal or free of permit quotas.

Access to railway infrastructure must now be granted on equitable conditions for international railway groupings both within EU member states where they are established and in states in between, subject to safety and financial conditions, which must not be discriminatory.

Stansted

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is considering the redesignation of Stansted as a regional airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: No, we have largely discontinued this system of airport categorisation. This was announced in the 1985 airports policy White Paper—Cmnd 9542.

Disability Awareness

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the need for disability and mobility awareness training for taxi and private hire car drivers.

Mr. Norris: The Department attaches the greatest importance to disability awareness training for all transport operators.

Following consultation with both licensing authorities and the taxi trade, the Department of Transport has produced a video aimed at taxi drivers which deals specifically with disability awareness issues. Much of the information is directed to drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles, but much of the practical advice is also applicable to drivers of saloon cars, for example on how to assist people with sensory impairments. The video is entitled "Call A Cab" and is available on free loan from the Department of Transport's mobility unit.

The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee which advises the Secretary of State on transport issues affecting disabled people has recently set up a sub-committee to look specifically at the issue of accessible taxis. I know that one of the first topics it will be tackling is driver training and I look forward with interest to receiving its proposals.

Passenger Carrying Vehicle Test

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of drivers pass the passenger carrying vehicle test at *(a)* the first attempt, *(b)* the second attempt and *(c)* the third attempt.

Mr. Key: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Driving Standards Agency under its chief executive, Dr. John Ford. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from S. J. Ford to Mr. Michael Shersby, dated 7 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the percentage of drivers who pass the passenger carrying vehicle test (PCV) at their first, second or third attempt. We do not routinely collect this information as it does not directly affect the operation of the Agency.

For consistency of testing, and in fairness to the candidate, it is preferable if the examiner is not made aware of the number of previous attempts a candidate has made at a test. The overall pass rate on PCV tests in the last two financial years was:

	Per cent.
1991-92	56
1992-93	53

As part of our second Customer Survey, completed last year —the results of which were published in September—we asked a random sample of all our customers whether it was their first test or a repeat attempt. Of 355 people in the sample who had recently taken their PCV test, 81 per cent. had just passed; of these passes, 40 per cent. were at the first attempt, 33 per cent. at the second, 18 per cent. at the third and 7 per cent. at the fourth.

Buses and Coaches (Children)

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list *(a)* those local education authorities operating a three-to-two seats policy on school buses and *(b)* those local education authorities operating a policy of one child to one seat; what plans he has to change his Department's three children to two seats policy on school buses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The information requested is not kept centrally.

As part of a wider review of bus and coach safety my Department is reviewing the concession which allows three children, under the age of 14, to share a double seat and count as two passengers.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to limit the number of young children that can be carried on coaches without the use of seatbelts to two on each seat.

Mr. Key: As part of a wider review of bus and coach safety my Department is reviewing the concession which allows three children, under the age of 14, to share a double seat and count as two passengers.

Railtrack

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, by category, the principal assets of Railtrack from 1 April, together with the total valuation of each category.

Mr. Freeman: The scheme for transferring assets from the British Railways Board to Railtrack has not been finalised.

Lollipop People

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice his Department is giving local authorities in respect of the legality of lollipop people escorting children of pre-school age across busy roads.

Mr. Key: Sections 26 and 28 of the Road Traffic Act 1984 empower school crosssing patrols to stop traffic only at places where

"children cross roads on their way to or from school, or from one part of a school to another".

The words "children" and "school" are not defined. The interpretation of the law is a matter for the courts, but it would seem that the legislation would not prevent school crossing patrols from escorting children to or from an educational institution that provides education or instruction to children of no predetermined minimum age. This would include a nursery school or playgroup. It is, however, for appropriate authorities to decide their own policy in this matter, consulting their own legal advisers as necessary.

Minibuses

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what mandatory tests he plans to introduce to prevent the sale or hire of unsafe minibuses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I have no proposals to introduce mandatory tests to prevent the sale or hire of unsafe minibuses. There are already adequate safeguards.

It is an absolute offence under section 75 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 for any person to sell or hire out an unroadworthy vehicle. It is also an offence for any person to use, or cause or permit another person to use a vehicle which is unroadworthy.

There are also safeguards under the Sale of Goods Act 1979, the Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982 and the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the measures that he is taking to inform minibus operators of safety risks; and the cost involved.

Mr. Key: The Department funds the Community Transport Association's information and advice service which ensures that voluntary groups have a central source of free advice and information about all aspects of minibus operations. The budget for the financial year 1993-94 was £41,000.

A video and information pack about good practice in the transport of elderly and disabled people by minibus is available on free loan from the Department's mobility unit.

The Department issues a free guide on passenger transport provided by voluntary groups, which includes advice on recommended maintenance arrangements and requirements on equipment and use applying to permit minibuses.

European Passenger Services Ltd.

Mr. Wilson: to ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what the cost to the Exchequer will be of fully writing off the debt of £1·4 billion incurred by European Passenger Services Ltd. in order to incorporate it into a joint venture company with the private sector to build the channel tunnel rail link;

(2) whether it is his intention to reduce or write off the capital debt of assets belonging to European passenger Services Ltd. before its incorporation as a Government-owned company.

Mr. Freeman: European Passenger Services Ltd. will be established as a Government-owned company, and eventually transferred to the private sector promoter of the new channel tunnel fixed link, free of the long-term debt which it currently owes to the British Railways Board. The liability to repay these loans will remain with BR or Railtrack.

Rail Privatisation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many managerial and clerical staff have been hired to deal with rail privatisation by his Department; and if he will list their positions and salaries;

(2) how many managerial and clerical staff have been hired to deal with rail privatisation by British Rail; and if he will list their positions and salaries;

(3) if he will list the number of staff that have been recruited by British Rail to deal with the restructuring of BR in preparation for privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: Four staff, filling two full-time posts up to December 1993, and one thereafter, were hired specifically for rail privatisation work. All were administrative assistants in the full-time salary range £7,247 to £9,499 per annum.

At present, approximately 40 full-time equivalent staff work on rail privatisation matters.

BR staff matters are for them.

Greater London Regional Passengers Committee

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the stations covered by the Greater London regional passengers committee.

Mr. Norris: The London regional passengers committee covers all stations on the London underground and the docklands light railway, and all British Rail stations within the area bounded by and including the following stations: Stevenage, Bishops Stortford, Chingford, Harold Wood, Upminster, Ockendon, Purfleet, North Woolwich, Dartford, Swanley, Otford, Sevenoaks, Oxted, Caterham, Gatwick Airport, Dorking, London Road Guildford, Worplesdon, Woking, Virginia Water, Windsor, Slough, Bicester North, Aylesbury, Tring and Harpenden.

Marsh Mills Roundabout

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on which date the improvement works at Marsh Mills, Plymouth roundabout are likely to be completed.

Mr. Key: The present work is being carried out under an agreement with a store developer and is due to be completed by 25 March. However, improvements under an agreement with another developer are expected to start soon and be completed by the end of May. We are also currently evaluating tenders for a major reconstruction of the defective slip road viaducts east of the Marsh Mills roundabout. This work should start this spring and be completed by early 1996.

Oil Pollution and Salvage

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when Her Majesty's Government will ratify the 1990 international convention on oil pollution preparedness, response and co-operation to provide a framework for international co-operation for combating major oil pollution incidents; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the ratification of the 1992 protocol to the international convention on civil liability for oil pollution damage and the international compensation fund for oil pollution damage convention;

(3) if he will make a statement on the ratification of the 1989 international convention on salvage.

Mr. Norris: Enactment of the Merchant Shipping (Salvage and Pollution) Bill, introduced by my hon. Friend for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on 16 December 1993, would permit the ratification of these instruments.

Ships (Sewage Discharge)

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when Her Majesty's Government will ratify the International Maritime Organisation's regulations controlling the discharge of sewage from ships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Government will consider ratification of annexe IV of MARPOL when the findings of a comprehensive survey of United Kingdom reception facilities, including those for sewage, are available later in the year.

Aerodromes (Noise Control)

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce legislation to give local authorities powers to enforce noise control arrangements at aerodromes.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* We will introduce legislation when parliamentary time permits.

Channel Tunnel (Fire)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what day staff of the railway inspectorate first visited the channel tunnel to inspect the site of the electrical fire in the channel tunnel on 13 November.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive, including a railway inspector, first visited the site of this incident on 16 November 1993.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received reports on the electrical fire which occurred in the channel tunnel on 13 November 1992 from *(a)* Eurotunnel or TML and *(b)* the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

The Employment Department has been briefed on the incident by the Health and Safety Executive. HSE notified the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority of the incident and the investigation.

Eurotunnel also gave a report on the incident to the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority.

SCOTLAND

Women (Statistics)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of women between the ages of 16 and 59 years, and the percentage of those that is economically active, in the regions of Borders and Lothian.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is shown in the table:

Women aged between 16 and 59 years, 1991

	Number (Thousands)	*Percentage who are economically active*
Borders	29·7	72·4
Lothian	225·1	71·8

Source: 1991 Census of Employment.

Dental Services

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which health boards *(a)* have and *(b)* have not established emergency dental services since October 1990.

Mr. Stewart: Under regulations, emergency dental services consist of treatment provided out of hours, at weekends and on public holidays. Health boards may set up such formal emergency dental services where necessary using general dental practitioners and/or community dental staff. General dental practitioners are responsible for providing emergency dental treatment for their own registered patients. In some areas, dental emergencies may also be treated in hospital or on an ad hoc basis. The table shows which Scottish health boards operate formal emergency dental services and when these services were established.

Provision of emergency dental services by health boards in Scotland

	Emergency dental services available	*When services established*
Argyll and Clyde	—	—
Ayrshire and Arran	√	1982
Borders	√	[1]1990
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—
Fife	√	1989
Forth Valley	√	1986
Grampian	√	1982
Greater Glasgow	√	1982
Highland	—	—
Lanarkshire	—	—
Lothian	√	1977
Orkney	√	[2]1990
Shetland	√	[2]1990
Tayside	√	1982
Western Isles	—	—

[1] October.
[2] Pre-October.

Dunbartonshire Enterprise Council

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the recipients of all grants over £40,000 made by Dunbartonshire Enterprise Council for each year since its inception.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not held centrally.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many outstanding management agreements for Scottish Natural Heritage for sites of special scientific interest protection there have been in 1993-94; what is the estimate of their cost; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: At present there are 523 management agreements for sites of special scientific interest in Scotland. Scottish Natural Heritage estimates that the cost of these in 1993-94 will be £2,666,000.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions have been taken under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in Scotland in each year since 1982 for *(a)* carrying out a potentially damaging operation to a site of special scientific interest and *(b)* contravening a nature conservation order under section 29; how many of these were successful; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is not separately identifiable in the Scottish Office classification of crimes and offences.

Housing (Dampness and Condensation)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the impact on the prevalance of dampness and condensation in the public sector housing stock in Scotland of the imposition of VAT on fuel.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The results of the first Scottish house condition survey were published last year and show that 122,000 houses are affected by dampness in the public sector stock and 202,000 affected by condensation. There is an overlap between the two groups and the severity of the problem varies. There is no reason to suppose that the introduction of VAT on domestic fuels will have a direct bearing on the incidence of either condition.

Benefits have been uprated to take account of the introduction of VAT on domestic fuels. Additional resources have been allocated to the home energy efficiency scheme in 1994-95 which provides assistance for works of insulation and also advice on other energy conservation measures that can be applied.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will undertake a survey of statutory housing authority areas to determine the prevalence of dampness and condensation in the public sector housing stock in Scotland;

(2) if he will consult with statutory housing authorities in Scotland in order to agree an action plan to eliminate dampness and condensation in the public sector housing stock in Scotland;

(3) what research his Department is currently undertaking to eliminate the prevalence of dampness and condensation in the public sector housing stock in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The report of the 1991 Scottish house condition survey published in July 1993 provides an assessment of dampness and condensation in the public sector housing stock. A copy of the report is available in the Library.

Condensation and dampness are identified as national priorities for the use of resources and are being addressed by local authorities under the housing plan system. Authorities have been asked to prepare strategies for dealing with these problems. Research on dampness and condensation is carried out on a United Kingdom basis by the Building Research Establishment and provides the basis for regulatory standards.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what extra resources he proposes to allow local authority housing departments to spend in order to eradicate dampness and condensation in public sector housing in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Substantial resources totalling almost £426 million were announced on 24 February for investment in public sector housing in 1994-95. Under the housing plan system introduced on 30 April last year local authorities were asked to give priority to tackling condensation and dampness, as well as below tolerable standard housing and homelessness, within their capital programmes. It is for authorities to determine how to utilise the resources made available to them.

Scottish Defence Initiative

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made by the Scottish Enterprise national defence initiative, established on the instructions of the Secretary of State for Scotland, to alleviate the negative impact of defence expenditure reductions on the Scottish economy and to explore defence diversification issues.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish defence initiative was established by Scottish Enterprise in November 1991, at the request of my right hon. Friend, as a strategy to deal with the effects on businesses and employment of contraction in defence-related industries. A number of programmes and activities have been implemented as a result of the initiative. Since these are essentially operational matters, Scottish Enterprise is best placed to provide details of progress so far. I have therefore asked the chairman of Scottish Enterprise to write to the hon. Member.

Public Bodies

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the additional non-departmental public bodies to which he will make appointments as a result of the implementation of his proposals set out in "Scotland in the Union: a Partnership for Good".

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* I will be responsible for appointments to the Scottish Arts Council as from 1 April 1994 and to Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. when ownership transfers to me from the Civil Aviation Authority.

Osteoporosis

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding has been made available in each of the past five years to health boards for screening of osteoporosis; how many women in Scotland have been screened for osteoporosis in each of the past five years: how many clinics in health board and trust board areas exist for the specific purpose of screening for osteoporosis; and how many women have been diagnosed as suffering from osteoporosis in each of the past five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* Information about screening of osteoporosis and funding for this is not held centrally.

It is for health boards as purchasers of care to secure from provider units or trusts an appropriate level of osteoporosis services based on assessment of local need.

The table identifies the number of females discharged from hospital over the last five years with a diagnosis of osteoporosis.

Number of females discharged from NHS hospitals in Scotland with a diagnosis of "Osteoporosis" for the years 1988 to 1993

Year	Discharges (Females)
1988	1,056
1989	1,215
1990	1,478
1991	1,793
1992	1,960
[1]1993	2,283

[1]1993 data are provisional.

Sheilton Peatlands Nature Conservation Order

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now put back the public local inquiry into the Sheilton Peatlands Nature Conservation Order, scheduled to commence on Wednesday 16 March, to the week commencing 21 March.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* No. The order will cease to have effect after nine months of its being made unless my right hon. Friend gives notice of his decision.

It is likely that any delay now would preclude adequate consideration of the report of the inquiry within the statutory timetable.

Scottish Economy

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the regeneration of Scotland's economy; when he next plans to meet them to discuss this topic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* My right hon. Friend last discussed the Scottish economy with the Scottish Trades Union Congress on 14 December 1992. He will consider sympathetically any requests from the STUC for further discussions.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Light Bulbs

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what progress has been made in the conversion to the use of energy-saving light bulbs in each parliamentary building.

Mr. Ray Powell: As part of a continuing programme of energy-saving measures in the Palace of Westminster and the parliamentary estate, low-energy light fittings have been installed in many areas. Where these have been installed they have contributed over the past three years to savings of some 65 per cent. in the consumption of electricity. During the same period, over 300 "occupancy sensors" have been installed, which automatically switch off lights when areas are vacated.

Norman Shaw South

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what plans there are to upgrade communal areas of the Norman Shaw South building; and for how long it is estimated the building will continue in parliamentary use.

Mr. Ray Powell: There are no plans for an immediate upgrade of the communal areas of Norman Shaw South building. Following the completion of the phase II building in about six years' time, a major upgrade of the whole of Norman Shaw South will be undertaken. It is envisaged that the building will continue in parliamentary use for the foreseeable future.

Television Cameras

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what considerations underlie the prohibition of television cameras from hon. Members' offices.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The regulations which prohibit filming in Members' rooms were agreed in order to address potential problems of access, intrusion, and possible disturbance to the fellow occupants of Members' rooms. They are to be considered again in the near future by the Administration Committee in the context of a comprehensive review of the rules governing filming and photography in the House.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Statutory Instruments

Mr. Steen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many statutory instruments have been made since 1 November 1993; and how many of them were made by Home Office Ministers.

Mr. Newton: Five hundred and twenty-seven general and 505 local statutory instruments have been made since 1 November 1993 up to the end of February, of which 16 were made by Home Office Ministers.

EDUCATION

Schools Reorganisation, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will announce his decision on Doncaster local education authority's proposal for phase 3 of its reorganisation of schools programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend expects shortly to announce decisions on these proposals.

Dr. Bill Mallinson

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to initiate an independent public inquiry into the case of Dr. Bill Mallinson following the report by Sir Michael Davies.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend does not have powers to intervene in the internal administration of universities which are independent corporate institutions.

Technology Colleges

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, for each of the 12 schools listed in his announcement of 28 February, *(a)* the date when it will become a technology college, *(b)* its current pupil roll and character, *(c)* whether he has received an application for approval to a change in its admissions arrangements, *(d)* how many sponsor governors are being appointed, *(e)* what is the term of office of each sponsor governor and *(f)* which of the sponsors are represented by a sponsor governor.

Mr. Robin Squire: The 12 schools announced on 28 February each plan to operate as technology colleges from 1 September 1994. A statutory proposal to increase the capacity of St. George's grant-maintained technology school is currently under consideration. None of the other schools has applied to make a change in its admission arrangements constituting a change of character within the meaning of the Education Act 1993. Each school has confirmed its intention formally to apply to take on between one and four sponsor governors before September 1994. Which of the sponsors are represented by sponsor governors will be determined at that stage. The term of office for sponsor governors is required under the Education Act 1993 to be between five and seven years, with the exact term being specified in the instrument of government. The current pupil roll and character of each school is summarised in the table.

School	[1]*Pupil number*	*Age range and character*
Chalvedon grant-maintained school	1,397	11 to 19 non-selective mixed
Chatham grant-maintained grammar school for girls	669	11 to 19 selective girls
Collingwood grant-maintained school	1,675	12 to 18 non-selective mixed
Deacon's grant-maintained school	835	11 to 18 non-selective mixed
George Spencer grant-maintained school	958	11 to 18 non-selective mixed
Glyn grant-maintained school	956	11 to 18 non-selective boys
Harraby grant-maintained school	560	11 to 18 non-selective mixed

School	[1]Pupil number	Age range and character
Kemnal Manor grant-maintained school	749	11 to 18 non-selective boys
Saffron Walden grant-maintained county high school	1,539	11 to 18 non-selective mixed
St. George's grant-maintained technology school	1,017	11 to 18 non-selective mixed
St. Peter's Collegiate Church of England voluntary-aided school	981	11 to 18 non-selective mixed
Saintbridge grant-maintained technology school	720	11 to 18 non-selective boys

[1] Provisional at January 1994 as returned to the Department for Education and subject to validation.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many applications have been received from schools seeking to become technology colleges; and if he will list them.

Mr. Robin Squire: The 12 schools announced on 28 February submitted full applications to become technology colleges. Other schools are at varying stages in preparing their applications.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what bids were submitted for initial capital grant for each of the 12 schools listed in his announcement of 28 February; what allocations have been made; and what level and nature of additional annual funding has been agreed.

Mr. Robin Squire: The self-governing schools listed in the announcement have each been invited to submit a bid for a capital project which involves a capital grant of up to £100,000. The voluntary-aided school has been invited to submit a bid for a capital project which involves expenditure of up to £117,500 on which capital grant may be claimed at a rate of 85 per cent. of expenditure. Accordingly, no allocations have yet been made. Additional annual funding for each of the schools in financial year 1994-95 is expected to be at the rate of £60 per pupil, for the purposes of support, equipment and training for the teaching of technology, science and mathematics.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, for each of the 12 schools listed in his announcement of 28 February, and for each sponsor's contribution, how much of the value is in the form of *(a)* cash, *(b)* goods and *(c)* services; and whether the value of each of *(b)* and *(c)* is based on (i) the retail or normal commercial value and (ii) the cost to the sponsor.

Mr. Robin Squire: The value and nature of sponsorship pledged by the main sponsors for each of the 12 technology colleges are listed. Information on the retail or normal commercial value of goods and services and the cost to the sponsor is commercially confidential.

School/sponsor	Value £ thousands	Nature of sponsorship
Chalvedon grant-maintained school		
Garfield Weston Foundtion	50·0	Cash
Fairfield Catering	37·0	Cash
Roy Millard Associates	15·0	Cash
SIMS Centre	5·0	Cash
PMD Associates	4·0	Cash
Chatham grant-maintained grammar school for girls		
Garfield Weston Foundation	50·0	Cash
GEC Marconi Avionics	20·0	Cash
Clifton Reed Consultants	15·0	Cash, goods and services
Research Machines	10·0	Goods and services
Klick Technology	7·5	Goods and services
Data Collection Systems	5·0	Cash
Architects Joint Partnership	3·0	Cash
Collingwood grant-maintained school		
Garfield Weston Foundation	50·0	Cash
GTi Educational Systems	25·0	Goods
Oracle Corporation (UK)	15·0	Goods
Motorola	10·0	Cash and goods
Deacon's grant-maintained school		
Perkins Group	49·0	Goods
Database and Apricot Computers	27·0	Goods
Greater Peterborough TEC	20·0	Cash
Pearl Assurance	3·0	Cash
George Spencer grant-maintained school		
Sir Harry Djanogly	79·0	Cash
Database and Apricot Computers	20·0	Goods
Midland Bank	1·0	Cash
Glyn grant-maintained school		
ADT Group	100·0	Cash

School/sponsor	Value £ thousands	Nature of sponsorship
Harraby grant-maintained school		
Carnaud Metal Box	25·0	Cash and goods
Cavaghan and Gray	25·0	Cash, goods or services
Talk-Tel Communication	20·0	Goods
Cumbria TEC	10·0	Cash
Kemnal Manor grant-maintained county high school		
Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust	50·0	Goods
Architects Joint Partnership	12·5	Cash and services
Ballast Nedam Construction	12·5	Cash
Klick Technology	12·5	Cash, goods or services
Research Machines	12·5	Goods and services
Saffron Walden grant-maintained county high school		
Garfield Weston Foundation	50·0	Cash
Acorn Computers	30·0	Goods
Messrs. Wilby and Burnett	5·0	Cash, goods or services
St. George's grant-maintained technology school		
Mr. Reg. Brearley	100·0	Cash
Database and Apricot Computers	20·0	Cash, goods and services
St. Peter's Collegiate Church of England voluntary-aided school		
Garfield Weston Foundation	50·0	Cash
Database and Apricot Computers	20·0	Goods and services
Lucas Aerospace	22·0	Goods and services
Dixons Wallcoverings	5·0	Cash and goods
Unilab	5·0	Goods and services
Saintbridge grant-maintained technology school		
Garfield Weston Foundation	50·0	Cash
Systems Integrated Research	25·0	Goods
Chartwells	15·0	Cash, goods or services
Denford Machine Tools	35·0	Goods and services
AT (Poeton) Gloucester Plating)	2·5	Goods and services
Permali (Gloucester)	2·5	Goods and services
CM Downton	2·5	Goods and services

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library a copy of the management plan of each of the 12 schools listed in his announcement of 28 February.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. Applications under the technology colleges initiative were prepared by individual schools and their sponsors for submission to the Department. Management plans were not necessarily prepared with any expectation that they would become public documents.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance has been given to schools regarding funding under the technology college initiative; and what assessment he has made as to the consistency with this of the letter of 11 February from the governors of Prospect school, Berkshire, to parents.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend issued a prospectus to head teachers and chairmen of governors of all maintained secondary schools in September 1993 setting out the principles of the technology colleges initiative. More detailed information was circulated to head teachers, on request, in October and November 1993. Both the prospectus and subsequent information included guidance on funding likely to be available to technology colleges. My right hon. Friend has not seen a copy of a letter of 11 February from the governors of Prospect school, Berkshire, to parents.

Higher Education Funding Council

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make it his policy to instruct the Higher Education Funding Council to make restructuring funds available to university institutions which are in financial difficulties and where redundancies are likely;

(2) by what authority the Higher Education Funding Council may fund early retirement packages for university staffs when these include the commitment to re-employ at the same university those staff as consultants fulfilling comparable duties to those they carried out prior to their retirement;

(3) if the Higher Education Funding Council has made funds available for early retirement packages for senior employees at the university of London;

(4) if his Department was consulted by the Higher Education Funding Council about the reorganisation of the management structure of the university of London regarding the posts of principal, director of administration, and director of finance.

Mr. Boswell: Universities and colleges are autonomous bodies responsible for the management of their own financial and administrative affairs, including the deployment of staff.

Should a university experience financial difficulties, the Higher Education Funding Council for England would take action to monitor the position of the institution concerned to ensure public funds were not at risk.

The HEFCE does not allocate funds for early retirement packages. It is for the institutions themselves to determine staff salaries and any early retirement payments they choose to make from within the funds at their disposal.

The Department was not consulted about the reorganisation of the university of London's senior management, nor would we expect this. Any such reorganisation is a matter for the institution concerned.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what scrutiny his Department gives to the conduct and funding arrangements of each university following the creation of the Higher Education Funding Council.

Mr. Boswell: The Department for Education does not scrutinise the conduct and funding arrangements of individual universities. This would not be consistent with the Government's limited role of providing the general framework for an efficient higher education system nor with institutional autonomy which is enshrined in law.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England is responsible for the allocation of public funds to individual universities; the terms and conditions for use of the considerable public funds at its disposal are clearly specified in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and in a financial memorandum agreed with the Department. The HEFCE is required to ensure all appropriate steps are taken to safeguard the use of public funds.

London University

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education to which public offices he has appointed the vice-chancellor-elect of London university.

Mr. Forth: Professor Andrew Rutherford has not been appointed to any public office by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education to which public offices he has appointed the current vice-chancellor of London university.

Mr. Robin Squire: None, although the current vice-chancellor was appointed to the post of Her Majesty's chief inspector by the Queen in Council at my right hon. Friend's recommendation.

Funding Agency for Schools

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the operational budget of the Funding Agency for Schools under each budgetary heading.

Mr. Robin Squire: Subject to parliamentary approval of the main estimates, the Government propose to make provision of up to £12 million for the funding agency's running costs in 1994-95. Actual costs will depend on a number of factors, including growth in the number of GM schools. The detailed split of the total between different budget heads will be a matter for the funding agency.

Teachers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many newly qualified teachers were appointed to permanent teaching posts in each local education authority in 1993.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not yet available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many people *(a)* graduated or qualified and *(b)* failed in teacher training in each of the teacher training colleges and universities in 1993.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not yet available.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many inquiries have been received by the Child Support Agency from hon. Members on behalf of their constituents since it was set up; and how many inquiries have received a full reply *(a)* within a fortnight, *(b)* a month, *(c)* two months and *(d)* three months and over.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the chief executive of the Child Support Agency on 4 March 1994, *Official Report*, column 897.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances and on what conditions single mothers can withdraw authorisation once given to the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: If a parent who has given her authorisation makes representations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, they will be considered in the same way as representations made at the time of the original application. If the Secretary of State considers that there is a risk of harm or undue stress to the parent with care or any child living with her, he will withdraw the requirement to authorise action. Once he has done this, the parent with care may request that action to pursue child support maintenance ceases and the Secretary of State must comply with the request.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the cases dealt with by the Child Support Agency to date have resulted in absent parents requesting that their case go before an appeal tribunal; if there is a target time for dealing with appeals; what is the average length of time required to complete the appeal process; and in how many cases the appeal process has exceeded the target time.

Mr. Burt: The responsibility for hearing appeals against child support decisions lies with the independent tribunal service. The president of ITS informs me that during the period April 1993 to 25 February 1994 it received 1,132 appeals. Information is not available on how many of these appeals were made by the absent parent. No target for dealing with these appeals has been set by the president, as in his view there is as yet insufficient information on which to base any target. The average time from lodgment of appeal to issue of the tribunal decision is currently 17 weeks.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time taken by the Child Support Agency to respond to letters from hon. Members; and what action he intends to take to reduce this time.

Mr. Burt: The first year of the agency's operations has stimulated a great deal of correspondence and the chief executive of the Child Support Agency has received over 3,700 letters from hon. Members. By 25 February, she had replied to over 1,900. Targets for answering letters are not currently being met, but necessary steps are being taken to ensure that letters to hon. Members are answered as promptly as possible. The average clearance times for such correspondence are in the table.

Cleared	*Per cent.*
1 to 15 days	16·61
16 to 20 days	8·66
21 to 40 days	26·76
Over 40 days	47·98

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many single mothers have stopped applying for income support after receiving a maintenance application form from the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: Information is currently being collected on such cases, but figures are not available in a reliable form.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many absent parents who have no contact agreement with their former family have demanded contact or residence after receiving maintenance assessments from the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The arrangement of child maintenance is a separate matter from that of contact or residence with former families, which remains with the courts. Consequently, the Child Support Agency does not routinely collect figures on this subject and information in the form requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Benefit Offices, Lewisham

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his latest estimate of the total amount of money allocated to each benefit office in Lewisham for 1993-94 that is so far unclaimed for *(a)* family credit and *(b)* disability working allowance; and how many people he estimates are failing to take up their entitlement to the above benefits of each such benefit office;

(2) what is the total amount of money allocated to each benefit office in Lewisham for 1993-94 for *(a)* family credit and *(b)* disability working allowance; and what is the planned allocation to each benefit office in Lewisham for each benefit for (i) 1994-95 and (ii) 1995-96.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) on 23 February, at column *238*.

Domestic Fuel (VAT)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement detailing the circumstances in which pensioners will not receive the full allowances to help with the cost of value added tax on fuel.

Mr. Hague: Taking a "pensioner" as a person receiving a state benefit who is aged 65 or over in the case of men and 60 or over in the case of women and "full allowances to help with the cost of VAT on fuel" as the additional 50p per week for single people and 70p per week for couples payable from April, the circumstances will be as follows.

Where Income Support, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit is not in payment[1] and:

(a) basic retirement pension, invalidity benefit or widows' benefit is in payment at less than the standard rate, the additional amount will be a proportion of 50p or 20p, as appropriate, corresponding to the level of award in accordance with the contributory principle underlying these benefits,

(b) only non-contributory retirement pension or invalid care allowance is in payment the additional amount will be 20p per week,

(c) only graduated retirement benefit is in payment, or an award of retirement pension, invalidity benefit or widows' benefit consists solely of additional pension, the rate of benefit will not be increased beyond normal price indexation.

Note 1—Pensioners receiving income support, including men aged 60 to 64, will be entitled to 50p per week, 70p for couples. These increases will feed through into housing benefit and council tax benefit.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the *(a)* maximum and *(b)* minimum amount of weekly housing allowance paid to a single unemployed person in the Doncaster area during the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The maximum and minimum amounts of housing benefit paid to single unemployed persons in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, as at May 1992, the latest date for which information is available, were £55·59 and £4·44 respectively.

Data Source:

The housing benefit and community charge benefit management information system and the income support annual statistical inquiry. The inquiries are a 1 per cent. sample of cases in Great Britain in May 1992.

Notes:

1. The number of sample cases of the single unemployed in receipt of housing benefit from any individual local authority is likely to be very small. Therefore we cannot provide reliable figures for the minimum and maximum amount of housing benefit paid in Doncaster.

2. The data have been obtained from a 1 per cent. sample of cases, therefore, the figures are the maximum and minimum in the sample and the lowest and highest amount payable may not have been included.

3. "Housing allowance" has been assumed to mean housing benefit.

4. "Unemployed" has been defined as those in receipt of unemployment benefit.

5. 100 per cent. of eligible rent is paid for those with incomes at or below income support levels. Housing benefit is withdrawn on a tapered basis for each additional £1 of income above income support levels. This is reflected in the range of housing benefit in the sample.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secret ary of State for Social Security (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) of 3 February, *Official Report*, columns *837-38*, regarding housing benefit, if he will give similar information for each region in Great Britain;

(2) if he will provide for Scotland similar information to that provided by the Secretary of State for Social Security, in his answer of 3 February, *Official Report*, columns *837-38*, regarding housing benefit.

Mr. Burt: I have been asked to reply.

Details for May 1992, the latest date for which information is available, are in the table.

Housing Benefit Cases—000s—and average amounts of Housing Benefit—£/week—by tenure and region

	Local Authority		Other Private		Housing Association		All Tenures	
	Number of Cases	Average Amount	Number of Cases	Average Amount	Number of Cases	Average Amount	Number of Cases	Average Amount
South East (excluding London)	327	30·26	170	44·29	50	32·52	547	34·83
London	404	39·53	187	52·46	72	40·14	663	43·25
North (including Cumbria)	270	22·18	45	32·38	36	29·01	351	24·19
Wales	154	25·86	48	33·41	16	35·00	217	28·18
Scotland	459	22·12	57	36·85	21	25·43	537	23·81
Yorkshire and Humberside	286	20·65	67	32·86	24	29·97	377	23·42
East Midlands	190	22·67	62	33·97	12	29·52	264	25·64
East Anglia	88	25·59	37	38·60	11	29·71	136	29·44
South West	168	27·65	98	41·75	15	34·18	281	32·92
West Midlands	338	25·41	73	32·75	33	32·43	444	27·13
North West (excluding Cumbria)	346	24·47	104	37·04	52	26·78	502	27·31
TOTAL	3,030	26·45	948	40·69	341	32·24	4,318	30·03

Data Source:
The housing benefit and community charge benefit management information system 1 per cent. inquiry for May 1992 and the income support annual statistical 1 per cent. inquiry for May 1992.

Notes:
[1] The figures are in benefit units and are rounded to the nearest thousand. A benefit unit may be a single person or a couple.
[2] The information for "Other Private Tenants" excludes that of housing association tenants.
[3] All cases where the assessed benefit was less than 50p per week have been excluded.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by year for the last four years how much has been paid in housing benefit; and to how many households in the Doncaster area.

Mr. Burt: The information for Doncaster is in the table.

Financial year	Annual expenditure £	Average case load
1989-90	20,027,000	23,625
1990-91	21,028,000	22,699
1991-92	23,809,000	22,571
1992-93	28,104,000	23,691

Data source:
The housing benefit management information system.
Notes:
1. The annual expenditure amounts are the final or audited figures supplied by DSS and DOE.
2. Details of the number of households receiving housing benefit in the Doncaster area are not available. The information provided is in the form of benefit units for the Doncaster area, based on averaged quarterly case load figures over a financial year. A benefit unit may be a couple in receipt of housing benefit or a single person in receipt of housing benefit.
3. Case load is recorded at a particular point in time and will not record successful claims which start and finish between quarterly reporting periods.

Local Offices (Cold Weather)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of his Department's offices were temporarily closed for the day, or part of the day during the period 14 to 16 February due to the cold weather; if he will list the location of the offices involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The following offices were closed in the period 14 to 16 February.

District	Office(s)	Dates	Times	Reasons
Euston	Highgate	15 February 1994	From 2 pm	Adverse weather conditions affecting travel (AWCAT)
Hackney and Islington	Hackney	14 February 1994	All day	Heating failure
	Hoxton	14 February 1994	From 2 pm	AWCAT
	Companies House	14 February 1994	From 2 pm	AWCAT
	Shoreditch	14 February 1994	From 2 pm	AWCAT
	Stoke Newington	14 February 1994	From 2 pm	AWCAT
City East	City	14 February 1994	10 am to 2 pm	Electrical failure
Tameside	Hyde	15 February 1994	All day	Electrical failure
Sheffield West District	Sheffield North West	14 February 1994	From 2.30 pm	AWCAT
	Sheffield South West	14 February 1994	From 2.30 pm	AWCAT

The decision to close an office to the public is the responsibility of each individual manager. Such decisions are not taken lightly and are only made where it is felt that there may be a risk to the health or safety of the staff involved. Where there is any disruption to public service, this is kept to a minimum.

Earnings Statistics

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update the information provided on 8 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *502*, for estimated average earnings in 1994-95, excluding the estimated effect of extending home responsibility protection to state earnings-related pension scheme entitlements, and including the effect of that proposed change.

Mr. Hague: The available information is in the table.

As explained in the earlier reply, the amounts of additional pension quoted related to an individual who had average earnings in each year of his or her working life. In these circumstances extension of home responsibilities to SERPS would have no effect.

	1994-95 Per cent.	1994-95 £	2015-16 £	2025-26 £	2035-36 £	2045-46 £
Basic Pension	17·1	57·60	42·15	36·30	31·30	26·95
Average additional pension (women)	11·5	38·75	46·10	43·25	42·10	41·25
Average additional pension (men)	18·7	63·10	68·50	56·95	48·60	43·75

Notes:—

The amounts of additional pension are based on the amounts of SERPS payable in each respective year to an individual who had average earnings in each year of his or her working life. They are not based on average additional pension awards to new pensioners as these cannot be estimated.

Assumes real terms earnings growth of 1·5 per cent. per annum.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate for the Doncaster area the number of people who will be affected by the decision to reduce the entitlements to unemployment benefit from 12 months to six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: This information is not availble. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra) on 18 January, at column *559*.

Maternity Benefits

Mrs. Angel Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will announce proposals for bringing maternity benefits in line with the EC directive on the protection of pregnant women at work.

Mr. Lilley: In August last year, I issued a consultation document which described options available for adapting our maternity benefits schemes to the requirements of the EC directive on the protection of pregnant women at work.

I am grateful to all those organisations and individuals who responded. Their contributions proved very valuable in helping us to reach our final decisions.

The main proposals of the new scheme are:

Any woman who has been continuously employed in the same job for 26 weeks will be entitled to statutory maternity pay. This simple test replaces the present three tests which currently result in different rates of maternity pay depending on whether a woman has worked for 26 weeks, two years or five years in the same job.

All women who qualify for SMP will now receive

the higher rate—90 per cent.—of earnings for the first six weeks of their maternity leave, and

for the remaining 12 weeks, the standard rate of SMP, which is increased by £3·70 per week to £52·50 in line with statutory sick pay.

Maternity allowance is increased to £52·50 for qualifying employees; other recipients not covered by the directive will continue to receive £44·55.

Women claiming MA will have a longer period before their baby is due to satisfy the 26-week contribution conditions —66 weeks instead of the present 52.

Maternity leave and pay can begin at any time after the start of the 11th week before the week the baby is due. However, if a woman is on sick leave because of her pregnancy and there are fewer than six weeks before the baby is due, she will be deemed to be on maternity leave and entitled to maternity pay.

To pay for the additional cost of around £55 million a year, the rate by which employers are reimbursed for the SMP they pay out is to be reduced to 92 per cent. from 4 September 1994. However, small employers will be completely protected. They will continue to be fully reimbursed for the cost of any SMP they pay. The definition of "small employer" will be the same as the improved SSP definition from April—employers who pay £20,000 or less annually in gross national insurance contributions. Two thirds of employers—approximately 750,000 businesses—will be helped.

As a whole, employers will not be out of pocket. The reduction in employers' national insurance contributions announced in the Budget will more than compensate employers for the abolition of SSP reimbursement as well as the reduction in SMP reimbursement. The result of this package is a net gain for employers of some £125 million.

Allowing women to receive SSP in the later stages of pregnancy if they are sick for reasons other than pregnancy will also add an extra £10 million in SSP costs. The combined cost of these changes means a total cost for industry of £65 million a year—less than 0·03 per cent. of the national wage bill, or approximately £230 per expectant mother receiving maternity benefits.

The new arrangements will apply to women expecting a baby on or after 16 October 1994. The first payments for these women under the new rules will be made from the end of July—since women can take maternity leave up to 11 weeks before their baby is expected.

These improved maternity payments will benefit 285,000 women. At the same time we have simplified the scheme to make it easier for employers to administer and women to understand.

I will shortly be laying regulations to give effect to these proposals.

Job Seeker's Allowance

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *691*, how many people in *(a)* Nottingham city, *(b)* Nottinghamshire and *(c)* nationally would be affected if the proposed job seeker's allowance came into operation on 1 March, or the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the form requested. Nationally, when job seeker's allowance is fully operational, it is estimated that at any one time around 250,000 people could be affected.

Notes:

1. Estimates rounded to nearest 10,000 cases.
2. Estimates assume:
   (a) 2·75 million unemployed.
   (b) 1994-95 benefit rates.
3. Estimates relate to a point in time rather than the number who could be expected to be affected at some point during a year.

Income Support

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have had their benefit cut for failure to attend a restart course.

Mr. Burt: Since December 1990, approximately 31,000 unemployed claimants received a reduced personal rate of income support after the adjudication officer decided they had failed to attend or complete a restart course without good reason.

Details of the respective numbers of men and women affected are not held.

Child Support Legislation

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 31 January, ref. 6/3644/72 on a child support legislation.

Mr. Burt: I replied to the hon. Member today.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Sir John Wheeler: My right hon. and learned Friend approves the following public appointments which are not identified in "Public Bodies 1993":

Chairman of the Rural Development Council.
Up to one third of the membership of the Community Relations Council—the maximum membership is 24.
The lay observer.
Chairmen of the boards of:
- The Belfast Harbour Commissioners
- Londonderry Harbour Commissioners
- The Warrenpoint Harbour Authority

The chairman of:
- The Negotiating Machinery for Teachers' Salaries and Conditions of Service (Schools)
- The Colleges of Education Negotiating Committee
- The Further Education (Lecturers) Negotiating Committee

In addition, the Secretary of State appoints the independent commissioner for the holding centres, the independent assessor of military complaints procedures, the local government boundaries commissioner, one member to Armagh observatory board of governors and five members to Queen's university senate.

The list of appointments are made directly by my right hon. and learned Friend and do not include those made on his behalf by other Ministers.

Car Insurance

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have taken advantage of the concession in respect of third party insurance set out in Road Traffic (Third Party Risks) Order 1981 in each of the years in which it has been in force.

Mr. Tim Smith: No one has to date.

Crime

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of *(a)* recorded criminal offences, *(b)* offences recorded as cleared up by the police and *(c)* convictions by (i) category of offence and (ii) into those scheduled for hearing under the prevention of terrorism Acts, and those otherwise dealt with, for each year since 1983 in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Table 1: Crimes recorded and crimes cleared up by the police 1983 to 1992

Year	Crimes recorded	Crimes cleared
1983	62,493	17,371
1984	65,352	19,986
1985	63,025	21,943
1986	66,284	24,344
1987	61,779	26,617
1988	55,890	25,226
1989	55,147	23,808
1990	57,198	21,475
1991	63,492	22,675
1992	67,532	23,253

Table 2: Conviction by category of offence 1983 to 1992

	Indictable offences	Summary offences (excluding motoring offences)	Motoring offences
1983	8,317	8,299	24,145
1984	8,077	7,754	25,417
1985	8,568	8,346	27,255
1986	10,312	6,093	26,010
1987	10,650	6,072	28,200
1988	9,588	6,071	28,553
1989	8,422	5,113	26,096
1990	9,320	4,293	27,207
1991	8,893	4,177	20,133
1992	8,558	4,114	20,787

Table 3: Conviction in the Crown Court 1983 to 1992: scheduled and non-scheduled offences

Year	Scheduled offences	Non-scheduled offences
1983	577	1,139
1984	464	1,025
1985	625	1,205
1986	567	1,179
1987	680	1,135
1988	487	880
1989	414	820
1990	440	816
1991	388	821
1992	354	781

A number of scheduled offences were also tried in the magistrates court.

Court Cases

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases were dealt with by way of *(a)* magistrates courts, *(b)* trials by jury and *(c)* judges sitting alone under the prevention of terrorism Acts, and in

each category how many cases had (i) guilty pleas, (ii) convictions after pleas of not guilty and (iii) acquittals in each year since 1983.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Number of findings in magistrates court by plea and finding 1983 to 1992

	Pleading guilty	Found guilty after pleading not guilty	Found not guilty
1983	35,665	3,380	2,780
1984	35,812	3,947	2,410
1985	38,786	3,553	2,772
1986	39,139	1,530	2,720
1987	41,469	1,638	3,160
1988	41,358	1,487	3,212
1989	37,963	934	3,072
1990	38,615	949	3,341
1991	31,188	906	2,970
1992	30,805	1,519	3,149

Number of proceedings in Crown court for non-scheduled offences by plea and finding 1983 to 1992

	Pleading guilty	Found guilty after pleading not guilty	Found not guilty
1983	1,055	84	92
1984	926	99	96
1985	1,090	115	128
1986	1,101	78	84
1987	1,056	79	75
1988	783	97	91
1989	767	53	91
1990	716	100	136
1991	717	104	98
1992	673	108	110

Note: "Non-scheduled offences" means those that do not fall within schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991, and are hence tried by a court with a jury.

Number of proceedings in crown Court for scheduled offences by plea and finding 1983 to 1992

Year	Pleading guilty	Found guilty after pleading not guilty	Found not guilty
1983	464	113	61
1984	426	38	43
1985	552	73	73
1986	528	39	29
1987	634	46	33
1988	442	45	28
1989	373	41	42
1990	386	54	30
1991	343	45	35
1992	301	53	59

Note:
"Scheduled offences" are defined by the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991, and under the terms of the Act tried without a jury.

Western Health and Social Services Board

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many employees of the Western health and social services board in each category of employment are *(a)* perceived Protestants, *(b)* perceived Roman Catholics, *(c)* persons educated outside Northern Ireland and *(d)* others.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* The information requested is provided in the table:

	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Not known[1]		Educated outside NI		Total	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Administration and Clinical	415	37·0	612	54·5	5	0·4	90	8·0	1,122	100
Maintenance	85	56·7	55	36·7	3	2·0	7	4·7	150	100
Ancillary and General	445	40·2	564	50·9	12	1·1	87	7·9	1,108	100
Nursing	759	25·7	1,714	58·1	18	0·6	461	15·6	2,952	100
Social Services	140	27·9	288	57·5	2	0·4	71	14·2	501	100
Professional and Technical	199	41·8	226	47·5	—	—	51	10·7	476	100
Medical and Dental	86	28·6	80	26·6	6	2·0	129	42·9	301	100
Ambulance	52	49·5	43	41·0	1	1·0	9	8·6	105	100
Home Helps	650	36·1	966	53·7	50	2·8	133	7·4	1,799	100
Total	2,831	33·3	4,548	53·4	97	1·1	1,038	12·2	8,514	100

[1] Those who attended integrated or special schools which cannot be classified.

Terrorism

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all terrorist incidents in Northern Ireland since 1 January; and which have been the subject of admissions of responsibility by the IRA.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 17 February 1994]:* The list gives details of attacks believed to have been carried out by terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland from 1 January 1994.

Terrorist incidents in Northern Ireland from 1 January 1994 to 25 February 1994

Date	Incident	Location	Casualties	Group believed to be responsible
1 January 1994	Incendiary devices exploded in 10 premises; one other was defused	Belfast Newtownabbey Dunmurry	—	Republican
2 January 1994	Shooting: indiscriminate attack	Belfast	—	Loyalist
3 January 1994	Shooting: shots fired at civilian leaving a security force base	Castlederg	—	Republican
5 January 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Antrim	1 civilian injured	Loyalist
6 January 1994	Shooting/hijacking: gunmen took over a house and shot occupant's son	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Loyalist
6 January 1994	Explosion: improvised grenade attack on Army patrol partially exploded; second device defused	Belfast	—	Republican
7 January 1994	Explosion: Mark 16 mortar attack on joint RUC/Army mobile patrol	Belfast	—	Republican
7 January 1994	Explosion: Attack on Army patrol	Belfast	—	Republican
7 January 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Loyalist
7 January 1994	Explosion: device exploded when thrown at an Army patrol	Belfast	—	Republican
8 January 1994	Shooting/bombing: propelled grenade attack and shots fired at public house	Belfast	—	Loyalist
10 January 1994	Explosion: mortar attack on joint Army/RUC base	Crossmaglen	2 soldiers injured, one seriously	Republican
10 January 1994	Shooting: civilian shot as he arrived at his place of work	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Loyalist
10 January 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Loyalist
11 January 1994	Explosion: grenade attack on RUC vehicle	Belfast	3 police officers injured	Republican
11 January 1994	Device thrown at joint RUC/Army patrol failed to explode; defused	Belfast	—	Republican
12 January 1994	Shooting/explosion: shots fired at joint RUC/ Army patrol, followed by explosion	Belfast	1 soldier very seriously injured	Republican
12 January 1994	Device thrown at RUC patrol failed to explode; defused	Lurgan	—	Republican
13 January 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Republican
14 January 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Republican
15 January 1994	Nine incendiary devices exploded in shop premises; six others were defused	Greater Belfast/ Newtownards	—	Republican
17 January 1994	Explosion: bomb exploded on waste ground	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Republican
19 and 20 January 1994	Four incendiary devices exploded in shop premises; six others were defused	Coleraine/Limavady	—	Republican
20 January 1994	Explosion: device thrown at Army patrol	Belfast	—	Republican
21 January 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Republican
22 January 1994	Explosion: propelled grenade attack on joint RUC/Army patrol	Belfast	—	Republican
22 January 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civlian	Belfast	1 civlian injured	Republican
23 January 1994	Incendiary attacks on two shop premises	Lisnagelvin/Strabane	—	Republican

Date	Incident	Location	Casualties	Group believed to be responsible
23 January 1994	Explosion: device exploded in derelict building	Dungannon	2 civilians injured	Republican
23 January 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Loyalist
24 January 1994	Shooting/explosion: gunmen hijacked taxi; shots were subsequently fired, followed by explosion	Belfast	—	Republican
24 January 1994	Shooting: gun attack on RUC officer who returned fire	Lisnaskea	—	Republican
24 January 1994	Explosion: bomb in video cassette exploded in civilian home	Craigavon	2 civilians injured	Loyalist
27 January 1994	Explosion: bomb appeared to explode prematurely	Londonderry	1 civilian injured	Republican
27 January 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilians	Belfast	1 civilian killed	Loyalist
27 January 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Ballymena	1 civilian killed; 1 civilian injured	Loyalist
28 January 1994	Explosion: bomb attack on Army patrol; partially exploded	Belfast	—	Republican
30 January 1994	Explosion: propelled grenade attack on Army observation post	Belfast	—	Republican
31 January 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Republican
1 February 1994	Explosion: Mark 15 mortar attack on security force patrol base	Newry	—	Republican
1 February 1994	Explosion: device exploded as police were investigating reports of a smashed window	Portadown	1 police officer injured	Loyalist
2 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Republican
3 February 1994	Shooting: attack on taxi driver	Newtownards	1 civilian killed	Loyalist
3 February 1994	Explosion: propelled grenade attack on RUC mobile patrol	Belfast	—	Republican
3 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on mini-bus	Belfast	2 civilians injured	Loyalist
4 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Republican
4 February 1994	Explosion: device partially exploded at RUC officer's home	Londonderry	—	Republican
5 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on workmen at RUC station	Belfast	—	Republican
5 February 1994	Incendiary devices exploded in four commercial premises	Belfast/Lisburn	—	Republican
6 February 1994	Explosion: Mark 16 mortar attack on Army patrol	Belfast	3 soldiers injured	Republican
6 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Republican
7 February 1994	Explosion: mortar attack on Army observation post	Glassdrumman	—	Republican
8 February 1994	Shooting: shots were fired at a house from a passing van	Belfast	—	Loyalist
9 February 1994	Explosion: an explosion occurred on a building site	Lisburn	—	Loyalist
9 February 1994	Explosion: an explosion occurred on a footpath	Belfast	—	Loyalist
11 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on house	Belfast	—	Republican
11 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	1 civilian injured	Loyalist

Date	Incident	Location	Casualties	Group believed to be responsible
11 February 1994	Explosion: bomb attack on Army mobile patrol	Crossmaglen	—	Republican
12 February 1994	Coffee jar device thrown at RUC mobile patrol failed to explode; defused	Cookstown	—	Republican
12 February 1994	Explosion: rocket attack on Sinn Fein Advice Centre	Belfast	—	Loyalist
12 February 1994	Incendiary device exploded in shop	Belfast	—	Republican
12 February 1994	Explosion: an explosion occurred as a civilian moved a traffic cone away from her car	Craigavon	1 civilian injured	Loyalist
13 February 1994	Incendiary device exploded in restaurant	Belfast	—	Republican
13 February 1994	Incendiary device exploded in carpet store	Belfast	—	Loyalist
13 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on two civilians	Belfast	—	Loyalist
14 February 1994	Explosion: "chocolate box" bomb attack on civilian	Belfast	—	Loyalist
14 February 1994	Explosion: "chocolate box" bomb attack on civilian	Belfast	—	Loyalist
16 February 1994	Explosion: bomb attack on Army patrol	Belfast	1 soldier injured	Republican
17 February 1994	Explosion: propelled grenade attack on RUC vehicle	Belfast	1 police officer killed and 2 injured	Republican
17 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian on 17 February 1994. Victim died on 24 February 1994	Belfast	1 civilian killed	Loyalist
17 February 1994	Explosion: premature detonation of bomb	Belfast	—	Republican
18 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilians at Sinn Fein offices	Belfast	3 civilians injured	Loyalist
19 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian's house	Belfast	—	Loyalist
19 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on GAA club	Portadown	—	Loyalist
19 February 1994	Shooting: shots fired in street disturbance	Belfast	—	Loyalist
20 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on taxi-driver	Cookstown	—	Loyalist
20 February 1994	Explosion: attack on Army mobile patrol	Belfast	—	Republican
20 February 1994	Incendiary devices exploded in eight shops/ licensed premises; one other was defused	Belfast Newtownabbey	—	Republican
21 February 1994	Explosion: Mark 15 mortar attack on RUC station	Beragh	—	Republican
21 February 1994	Incendiary devices exploded in three shop premises	Belfast	—	Loyalist
23 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	—	Loyalist
24 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Belfast	1 civilian killed	Republican
25 February 1994	Shooting: gun attack on civilian	Lisburn	1 civilian injured	Loyalist
25 February 1994	An incendiary device exploded in a car showroom	Belfast	—	Republican
25 February 1994	Incendiary devices exploded in two licensed premises; one other was defused	Londonderry	—	Republican

Note: Terrorist shooting attacks within own communities.

Downing Street Declaration

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what assessment he has made of the main differences between the agreement between the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and Mr. Gerry Adams and the Downing street declaration; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he or his Department have now received a copy of the agreement between the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and Mr. Gerry Adams.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 7 March 1994, *Official Report*, column 24.

WALES

Housing

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what designated local authority areas were underfunded by housing associations in 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information as regards net programme outturn is as follows:

Housing for Wales: outturn expenditure 1992-93 through housing associations by local authority area

	Net programme outturn[1] *£000*
Clwyd	
Alyn and Deeside	2,522
Colwyn	2,745
Delyn	1,842
Glyndwr	1,107
Rhuddlan	1,902
Wrexham Maelor	3,432
Dyfed	
Carmarthen	1,975
Ceredigion	1,805
Dinefwr	2,053
Llanelli	2,444
Preseli Pembrokeshire	1,990
South Pembrokeshire	912
Gwent	
Blaenau Gwent	1,359
Islwyn	1,409
Monmouth	4,207
Newport	5,882
Torfaen	1,989
Gwynedd	
Aberconwy	2,095
Arfon	2,971
Dwyfor	1,574
Meirionnydd	375
Ynys Mon	455
Mid Glamorgan	
Cynon Valley	3,226
Merthyr	1,649
Ogwr	4,728
Rhondda	2,216
Rhymney Valley	2,214
Taff Ely	1,731
Powys	
Brecknock	103
Montgomeryshire	2,730
Radnor	1,045
South Glamorgan	
Cardiff	24,005
Vale of Glamorgan	3,316
West Glamorgan	
Lliw Valley	1,113
Neath	1,557
Port Talbot	1,076
Swansea	10,547
Total	108,301

[1] Excludes £20·366 million credit approval transfers.

GP Fundholders

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the general practitioner fundholding practices in Clwyd and give the totals spent out of the allocations for each practice for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are 17 fundholding general practices in Clwyd at present, as follows:

Dr. B. F. Bracewell and Partners, 14 Russell Road, Rhyl
Dr. W. B. Clarke and Partners, Padeswood Road, Buckley
Dr. C. W. Spencer and Partners, Padeswood Road, Buckley
Dr. D. E. Jones and Partners, Vale Street, Denbigh
Dr. J. G. Thomas and Partners, Bridge Street, Denbigh
Dr. G. O. Jones and Partners, Coleshill Street, Holywell
Dr. E. W. Jones and Partners, Regent Street, Llangollen
Dr. G. W. Jones and Partners, 360 Abergele Road, Old Colwyn
Dr. N. Evans and Partners, Ffordd Pendyffryn, Prestatyn
Dr. J. N. Taylor and Partners, The Roe, St. Asaph
Dr. D. Jones and Partners, Chapel Street, Wrexham
Drs. Alstead, Saul and Partners, 40 St. Georges Crescent, Wrexham (Group)
Dr. J. Tattersall and Partners, Gwersyllt, Wrexham
Dr. R. Rouse and Partners, 98 Conway Road, Colwyn Bay
Dr. D. Ryan and Partners, Gardden Road, Rhos
Dr. W. Jolly and Partners, 38 Shotton Lane, Shotton
Dr. S. B. Patel and Partners, Pwllycrochan Avenue, Colwyn Bay

The last year for which spending against allocations is available is 1992-93 and the figures for the practices which were fundholding in that year are as follows:

	Allocation £	*Outturn* £
Dr. B. F. Bracewell and Partners	2,159,000	2,377,853
Dr. W. B. Clarke and Partners	1,083,000	1,090,040
Dr. C. W. Spencer and Partners	1,322,000	1,297,839
Dr. D. E. Jones and Partners	1,384,000	1,414,880
Dr. J. G. Thomas and Partners	787,000	804,204
Dr. G. O. Jones and Partners	1,183,000	1,251,978
Dr. E. W. Jones and Partners	1,231,000	1,270,065
Dr. G. W. Jones and Partners	1,691,000	1,773,965
Dr. N. Evans and Partners	2,694,000	2,843,887
Dr. J. N. Taylor and Partners	1,491,000	1,609,687
Total	15,025,000	15,734,398

These figures are subject to, and have been audited, by the Audit Commission as part of the audit of the family health services authority.

Tourism

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those private companies whose tourism marketing expenditure is partly financed by grants from the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Development Board for Rural Wales has not given any grants towards the tourism marketing expenditure of private companies.

The board does, however, work in partnership with the Wales tourist board, the British Tourist Authority, Mid Wales Tourism Ltd., the region's local authorities and the Welsh Rarebit-Welsh Gold Collection consortium, and promotes the region through its own brochure "Welsh Country Holidays" which is itself supported by the British Tourist Authority. All these activities benefit the tourism marketing of private companies by the increased promotion of mid-Wales.

Health Care

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is proposing to take to improve the quality of health care in *(a)* Dyfed and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The health service in Wales has seen a significant improvement since 1979. By June 1993, the number of inpatients and day cases treated in our hospitals had increased by 71 per cent. and the number of out-patients had risen by 36 per cent. At the same time, the length of time people have to wait for treatment has never been shorter.

Next year, the spending on the NHS will increase by 5·1 per cent. in cash terms, a figure well in excess of inflation for the economy as a whole.

The NHS in Wales is committed to building on this impressive performance, and Dyfed will play its full part in providing better health care for patients.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many prosecutions have been taken under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in Wales in each year since 1982 for *(a)* carrying out a potentially damaging operation to a site of special scientific interest and *(b)* contravening a nature conservation order under section 29; how many of these were successful; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There have been three prosecutions taken under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in Wales since 1982 for carrying out a potentially damaging operation. One, in 1985, was unsuccessful; the other two, in 1990 and 1991, were successful. There have been no prosecutions taken under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in Wales since 1982 for contravening a nature conservation order under section 29.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many outstanding management agreements for Countryside Council for Wales for sites of special scientific interest protection there have been in 1993-94; what is the estimate of their cost; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: At 28 February 1994 there were 424 management agreements in force on SSSIs in Wales at a total cost of £1,113,227 in 1993-94 up to that date.

Teachers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people *(a)* graduated or qualified and *(b)* failed in teacher training in each of the teacher training colleges and universities in Wales in 1993.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of United Kingdom students who successfully completed an initial teacher training course, leading to qualified teacher status, at each colleage of the university of Wales in 1992-93 is shown in the table. The information for courses completed at colleages of higher education in Wales is not yet available for 1992-93. Information on the number of students who failed to complete an initial teacher training course is not available.

University of Wales[1]	*1992-93*
Aberystwyth	257
Bangor	130
Cardiff	19
Swansea	272

[1] Information supplied by each college of the university of Wales as at October 1993.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many newly qualified teachers were appointed to permanent teaching posts by each local education authority in Wales in 1993.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not yet available.

Welsh Language

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many officers of local community health boards appointed by him are able to speak Welsh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym: Jones: I do not appoint the officers of community health councils or health authorities. Information on the linguistic ability of health service staff is not held centrally.

NHS Managers

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which NHS trusts in Wales have changed the contracts of employment of any managers or executives to cash in annual leave not taken.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is a matter for NHS trusts.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy on managers in the NHS cashing in annual leave not taken.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the general Whitley council agreement which applies to NHS managers employed on centrally prescribed terms and conditions of service, payment in lieu of annual leave may be made in only two circumstances:

(i) where the manager is prevented on account of ill-health from taking his or her normal leave entitlement in the final year of service, and

(ii) where the manager dies in service.

NHS trusts have the freedom to set local terms and conditions of service for their staff.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the monthly taxable emoluments of the five highest paid managers in each of the district health authorities in Wales in *(a)* March 1990, *(b)* July 1990, *(c)* March 1991, *(d)* July 1991 and *(e)* March 1992.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the monthly taxable emoluments of the five highest paid managers or executives in each of the district health authorities and NHS trusts in Wales in *(a)* July 1992, *(b)* March 1993, *(c)* July 1993 and *(d)* January 1994.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which national health service trusts have established remuneration committees to establish local salary levels for managers and executives.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available centrally. Under new codes of conduct and accountability which my right hon. Friend proposes should come into effect from 1 April 1994, all NHS boards will be required to establish remuneration and terms of service committees.

Health Services, Pembrokeshire

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many staff were employed by the Pembrokeshire NHS trust in *(a)* April 1992, *(b)* September 1992, *(c)* March 1993, *(d)* September 1993 and *(e)* January 1994;

(2) how many staff were employed by the Pembrokeshire district health authority in *(a)* July 1990, *(b)* March 1991, *(c)* July 1991 and *(d)* March 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information available is given in the table. Information for March 1991 is not considered reliable.

Staff in Post (Whole-time equivalents)

	Non-medical and dental	*Medical and dental*
Pembrokeshire Health Authority		
July 1990	1,443	n/a
September 1990	1,429	82
July 1991	1,483	n/a
September 1991	1,478	82
March 1992	1,533	n/a
Pembrokeshire NHS Trust		
April 1992	1,498	n/a
September 1992	1,547	88
March 1993	1,557	n/a
September 1993	1,540	[1]94
December 1993	1,517	n/a

n/a Denotes not available. Medical and dental staffing information is only available centrally as at 30 September.
[1] Provisional.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether the Pembrokeshire district health authority needed his permission to transfer capital resources from the 1991-92 accounts to revenue expenditure in the 1992-93 financial years for the Pembrokeshire NHS trust.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Revenue funds were carried forward by the Pembrokeshire health authority from 1991-92 to 1992-93 by making an advance payment into the bank account of the shadow Pembrokeshire NHS trust. This arrangement subsequently came to the Department's attention when the authority's accounts for 1991-92 were being prepared. The Department has since made it clear that the accounts of shadow NHS trusts are to be regarded as accounts of the parent health authorities and cannot be used as a means of providing working capital for the trusts when they come into formal effect.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was, in cash and percentage terms, the rate of return on capital for the Pembrokeshire NHS trust in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; and what rate is projected for 1994-95.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is as follows:
1992-93—£1,438,000 or 4·7 per cent.
1993-94—£1,955,000 or 7·0 per cent. (projected)
1994-95—£1,688,000 or 6·0 per cent. (planned)
For each year, the achieved rate of return is identified through the formal annual accounts process.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many meetings his officials have had with officers of Pembrokeshire NHS trust, Pembrokeshire health authority, Clwyd health authority and Marlow hospital trust to discuss the service review report.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. The director of the NHS in Wales has been sent a draft copy of the report in the light of his responsibilities as the accounting officer.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the Pembrokeshire NHS trust achieved its target rate of return on capital in 1992-93.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1992-93 Pembrokeshire NHS trust achieved a pre-interest return of 4·7 per cent. against the initial planned target of 6 per cent.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he expects the service review report on the health service in Pembrokeshire to be published.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As the service review was commissioned jointly by Pembrokeshire NHS trust and Pembrokeshire health authority, this will be a matter for those two bodies.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the report jointly commissioned by the Pembrokeshire health authority and the Pembrokeshire NHS trust and the Welsh Office on the service review will be presented to the commissioning bodies.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is a matter for Pembrokeshire NHS trust and Pembrokeshire health authority as the joint commissioning bodies for the service review.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he has given to the Welsh Development Agency in the preparation of its 1994 corporate plan; and whether he will set targets for the agency.

Mr. Redwood: I have today written to the chairman of the agency setting out the ways in which I expect the agency to contribute to the wider objectives of economic development in Wales. I have included targets for inward investment, the development of industrial and commercial floorspace, leverage for private sector investment, and the clearance of derelict land.

There are changes to some of the targets following discussions with the chairman and the WDA board. I have also given the WDA a specific target for inward investment within its overall inward investment plans. I have arranged for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he will take to assist those national health service trusts that do not achieve their target rate of return on capital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: NHS trusts are currently required to achieve a 6 per cent. pre-interest return on their assets; break even, taking one year with another, and stay within the external financing limit set on an annual basis. Failure to meet any of those obligations will require appropriate action by the trust concerned, the extent of which will depend on the underlying causes of the variances from planned targets.

Patient Treatment Numbers

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if it is his policy to limit the numbers of patients treated by health providers to that contained in the contracts with health purchasers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: These arrangements are intended to ensure that all patients meant to be treated within the currency of a contract are treated within that time and, additionally, all urgent patients are to be treated without any delay.

HEALTH

Long-stay Hospital Beds

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many long-stay hospital ward beds have been closed nationally and in the Wirral since the introduction of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Mr. Bowis: The first full year of data following the introduction of the national health service aspects of the Act was 1991-92. These data exclude long-stay places provided by the NHS in the community or purchased from independent providers. It shows that between 1991-92 and 1992-93 there was at net increase of four long-stay hospital ward beds in the NHS in the Wirral and a net decrease of 6,832 in England.

Asthma

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her assessment of the effect upon asthma sufferers of air pollution in London.

Mr. Sackville: On the few occasions when levels are high, those who suffer from respiratory disease such as asthma may experience some effects including respiratory irritation, some coughing and possible pain on deep inspiration when taking exercise out of doors. Advice and information is provided on the freephone helpline: 0800 556677.

Minor Injuries Unit

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of *(a)* a full-time general practitioner and *(b)* an accident and emergency specialist in a minor injuries unit.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1992-93, general practitioners in Great Britain received an intended average net income of £40,010 for the provision of general medical services. The average earnings of a consultant, whose pay is agreed nationally, were £53,450 in the same year. Accident and emergency consultants may have their pay negotiated locally if they work in a national health service trust.

Public Health

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has on which groups of people have experienced *(a)* an improvement and *(b)* a deterioration of health since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The available data indicate that there have been improvements since 1979 for almost all groups. Examples are life expectancy, which has increased from 70 to 74 in males and from 76 to 79 for females, between 1979 and 1992 in England and Wales; and infant mortality rates which have almost halved in this period, falling from 12·8 to 6·5 per 1,000 live births in England.

There are, however, some instances of negative trends: for example, the general household survey shows an increasing percentage of people reporting longstanding illness—from 27 per cent. of persons questioned in 1979 to 32 per cent. in 1992—although slightly fewer said that their activities were restricted by illness in the previous two weeks—13 per cent. compared with 12 per cent. in 1979.

Such trends are reported in the first chapter of the chief medical officer's annual report "On the State of the Public Health", copies of which are available in the Library.

The strategy for health launched by the Government in July 1992 has the overall aim of further continuing improvement in the health of the nation. This requires better monitoring of the health of the population, and we have initiated a major new health survey for England. Its expansion to 17,000 subjects in 1993 will, when the results are available, greatly increase the information about groups within the population, including regional variations and trends over time.

Dentistry

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists in practice in south-east Northumberland *(a)* take NHS patients and *(b)* took private patients only but took NHS patients until 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: At 30 September 1993 the number of dentists in the general dental service in the Northumberland family health services authority area, which includes south-east Northumberland, was 101. The comparable number at 30 September 1990 was 103. Dentists are independent contractors who make their own decisions about whether to accept patients under national health service arrangements.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many dental surgeons in the Bristol area provide treatment under Denplan and other dental care schemes, for the last three years for which figures are available;

(2) how many dental surgeons were operating exclusively within the NHS in the Bristol area for the last three years for which figures are available;

(3) what percentage of dental costs in the Bristol area have been met *(a)* privately and *(b)* publicly for the years 1979, 1984, 1989 and each year since.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. Dentists are independent contractors and free to choose whether or not to accept an individual patient, or category of patients, for national health service treatment and to review their decisions at any time.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the deregistered dental patients failed to get reregistered in the last year for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is not possible to identify whether particular patients have sought reregistration but overall the number of adult patients registered has increased significantly since July 1992. All family health services authorities report that patients approaching them for help in obtaining national health service treatment can be assisted.

Wansbeck Hospital

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the number of job losses in Wansbeck hospital in south-east Northumberland.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. This is a matter for the local health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. J. R. Baker, chairman of Northumberland health authority, for details.

Prescribed List

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the value to the NHS of the savings made in 1992-93 from the removal of drugs from the NHS prescribable list.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

National Neurological Hospital

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received concerning the national neurological hospital, Queens square, London and its proposed closure.

Dr. Mawhinney: Up to 3 March 1994 there have been 28 representations from hon. Members and 49 from members of the public.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff are employed at the national neurological hospital, London.

Dr. Mawhinney: As at 30 September 1992, the latest date for centrally held data, there were 950 whole-time equivalent staff employed by the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a copy of the PE Consultancy report on the NHS Supplies Authority.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on 10 February, at column 423.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of hospital supplies are purchased through the NHS Supplies Authority.

Mr. Sackville: About half, on the basis that the total full-year value of National Health Service Supplies contracts on behalf of NHS hospital and community health services in 1992-93 was about £1·7 billion and the outturn total NHS HCHS spend on supplies in 1991-92, the latest year for which a figure is available, was about £3·5 billion.

Glasses and Lenses

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what she estimates is the total number of people eligible for receiving assistance towards the purchase of glasses or lenses through the NHS low-income scheme in each year from 1991-92 to 1996-97.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the table.

Estimated total number of national health service low-income scheme beneficiaries in Great Britain entitled to help with the cost of glasses or lenses 1991-92 to 1995-96

Year	Number[1]
1991-92	5,992,060
1992-93	6,738,032
1993-94	7,242,933
1994-95	7,610,330
1995-96	7,872,347

[1] Figures are families (individuals or couples) receiving income support or family credit, holders of AG2 and AG3 certificates and the members of their families named on the certificates. Figures for 1995-96 include recipients of disability working allowance with capital of £8,000 or less and their partners.

Manchester University Health Services Management Unit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funds were provided for the health services management unit at Manchester university in the last three years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The health services management unit at Manchester university is not funded by the Department of Health. It is known that the unit received £211,330 in 1993-94 for specific projects carried out for the Department, and may have received such funding on other occasions. However, information on this is not separately identifiable.

Corticosteroids

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines exist for doctors prescribing corticosteroids to pregnant women; and what research has been undertaken into the health effects of corticosteroids on pregnant women and their babies.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health has not issued specific guidelines on the prescribing of corticosteroids to pregnant women. The Department is aware that both the Royal College of Obstetricians and

Gynaecologists and a joint working group of the British Association of Perinatal Medicine and the research unit of the Royal College of Physicians have published guidelines about prescribing corticosteroids to pregnant women for the prevention of neonatal respiratory distress syndrome. The Department has also funded a review of research into this matter which was published in "Effective Care in Pregnancy and Childbirth". Attention has been drawn to these guidelines through EL(93)115 which was sent to all national health service managers and directors of public health. Extensive clinical trials have shown that administration of corticosteroids, to women who are about to deliver prematurely, reduces the risk of respiratory distress syndrome in the infant. Copies of "Effective Care in Pregnancy and Childbirth" and EL(93)115 are available in the Library.

Travellers

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she was consulted in the drafting of sections 58 to 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill on the effect of providing health care to the children of travellers following any repeal of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Bowis: Yes.

Head Injuries

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list hospitals in England which employ multidisciplinary rehabilitation teams for treating local patients who have suffered severe head injuries.

Mr. Bowis: The Department is providing funding of over £1 million per year to the following hospitals and units to develop rehabilitation services for people with head injuries:

Regional rehabilitation centre, Hunters Moor hospital, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Leeds head injury team, St. Mary's hospital, Leeds
Derbyshire royal infirmary and Derby City hospital, Derby City hospital, Nottingham
Central Sheffield university hospitals
Regional neurological rehabilitation unit, Homerton hospital, London
Rivermead rehabilitation centre, Oxford
Rayners Hedge physical rehabilitation service, Aylesbury
Stroke and rehabilitation unit, Royal Cornwall hospital (City), Truro
Frenchay healthcare trust, Bristol
Neurobehavioural rehabilitation unit, St. Edward's hospital, Cheddleton, and Neurorological rehabilitation unit, Haywood hospital, Burslem
Community unit, Worcester district health authority

Other national health service trusts and health authority units are also developing services.

Multiple Sclerosis

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement concerning the initiatives her Department has taken to assist those in the medical profession who are pioneering treatment for those suffering from multiple sclerosis;

(2) if she will make a statement concerning her future policy development as it affects neurological matters.

Mr. Bowis: The Department is providing funding for a study being carried out at the university of Cardiff entitled "Walking and Mobility in Patients with Multiple Sclerosis —Is Modification by Physiotherapy Effective". The study is due to finish in June 1995. Research is primarily a matter for the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In addition to research directly on multiple sclerosis, the Medical Research Council also supports research on a number of related topics, in particular muscle and neuroscience research, which may shed light on the causes and mechanisms and potential therapies.

The treatment and management of multiple sclerosis, as for other neurological conditions which result in physical disability, are primarily a matter for the medical practitioners concerned. It is for the district health authority or general practitioner fundholder to enter into arrangements with hospital and community units to ensure that the necessary range of services is available. The National Health Service Management Executive priorities and planning guidelines—EL(93)54—for 1994-95, copies of which are available in the Library, require regional health authorities to ensure that services for people with physical disabilities meet local standards in all districts based on the assessment of need and consultation with disabled people and carers.

Research Units

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 2 February 1993, *Official Report*, columns *721-22*, what decisions have been taken about the renewal of contracts of research units whose site visit reports have been completed; and, for each the decisions which have been taken, whether new contracts are being offered and their nature and period of time for which they will apply.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 26 November 1993 at columns *242-44*. We have not yet completed the series of site visits.

Health Authorities and Trusts

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the names of the chief executives and general managers of each of the regional and district health authorities in England with the correspondence addresses of each of the authorities and the parliamentary constituencies covered by each of the health authorities;

(2) if she will list the NHS trusts currently operating in England and the parliamentary constituencies within which each trust lies; and if she will list the names of the chief executives of each of these NHS trusts and the correspondence addresses of each of the trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the address of each health authority and trust in England and the name of each chief executive and general manager is published annually in the national health service yearbook. Information on the relevant constituencies can be obtained from the House of Commons Public Information Office.

Pharmaceutical Drugs

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of pharmaceutical drugs returned for destruction were *(a)* over-the-counter products, *(b)* time expired pharmacists' stock and *(c)* prescription medicines in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: No data about medicines returned to pharmacies for destruction have been collected to date.

Transport, London

Mr. Keen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* in 1981 and *(b)* in 1991 (i) the mode of travel to work of residents by London borough, (ii) the mode of travel to work of employees by London borough of employment, (iii) the location of employment of residents by London borough and (iv) the level of car ownership by London borough.

Mr. Sackville: This information has been, or is soon to be, published in census reports to Parliament, copies of which are in the Library. The following list gives references for the figures requested.

Means of travel to work by London borough of residence
1981—Census 1981, workplace and transport to work, England and Wales (Table 6).
1991—1991 census county report, inner London, Part 2 (Table 82); and 1991 census county report, outer London, Part 2 (Table 82).

Means of travel to work by London borough of employment
1981—Census 1981, workplace and transport to work, England and Wales (Table 6).
1991—1991 census, workplace and transport to work, Great Britain[1] (Table 6).

Area of employment by London borough of residence
1981—Census 1981, workplace and transport to work, England and Wales (Table 2A).
1991—1991 census, workplace and transport to work, Great Britain[1] (Table 2).

Cars in households by London borough
1981—Census 1981, county report, Greater London, Part 1 (Table 31).
1991—1991 census county report, inner London, Part 1 (Table 21), and 1991 census county report, outer London, Part 1 (Table 21).

[1]1991 census, workplace and transport to work, Great Britain is due for publication in May 1994. A copy will be placed in the Library.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which NHS trusts in England failed to meet their target return on capital in 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The trusts that recorded a return of less than 6 per cent. in their accounts for 1992-93 were:

Airedale NHS Trust
Allington NHS Trust
Anglian Harbours Health Trust
Barnsley Community and Priority Services NHS Trust
Bedford Hospital NHS Trust
Bradford Community Health NHS Trust
Bradford Hospitals NHS Trust
Central Manchester Healthcare NHS Trust
Chester and Halton Community NHS Trust
Christie Hospital NHS Trust
Devon Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Ealing Hospital NHS Trust
East Hertfordshire Health NHS Trust
Eastbourne Hospitals NHS Trust
Hinchingbrooke Health Care NHS Trust
Liverpool Obstetrics and Gynaecological NHS Trust
Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust
Milton Keynes General Hospital NHS Trust
Mount Vernon Hospital NHS Trust
North East Essex Mental Health NHS Trust
Newcastle Mental Health Services NHS Trust
Norfolk Ambulance Services NHS Trust
Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
North Hertfordshire NHS Trust
North Tees Health NHS Trust
Northumbrian Ambulance NHS Trust
Nottingham City Hospital NHS Trust
Nottingham Community Health NHS Trust
Poole Hospital NHS Trust
Royal Cornwall Hospitals and West Cornwall Hospital NHS Trust
Royal Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust
Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital NHS Trust
Royal Surrey County and St. Lukes NHS Trust
Royal United Hospital Bath NHS Trust
South Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Scarborough and North East Yorkshire Healthcare NHS Trust
South Bedfordshire Community Healthcare NHS Trust
Southend Health Care NHS Trust
Southport and Formby Hospital NHS Trust
St. Helens and Knowsley Hospitals NHS Trust
St. James' University Hospital NHS Trust
St. Peter's Hospital NHS Trust
United Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust
West Dorset Community Health NHS Trust
West Dorset General Hospitals NHS Trust
West Dorset Mental Health NHS Trust
Walsgrave Hospital NHS Trust
Wellhouse NHS Trust

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, columns *681-82*, who was present at the meeting held between her Department's officials and representatives of the Tobacco Manufacturers Association on 23 February; what was the outcome of the meeting; and when the next meeting will take place.

Dr. Mawhinney: The meeting was attended by Department of Health officials and representatives of the Tobacco Manufacturers Association. The content of the meeting is confidential. A further meeting was held on 4 March.

Incontinence Services

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what are the statutory responsibilities of *(a)* district health authorities, *(b)* trusts and *(c)* family health services authorities for the provision of incontinence services;

(2) what requirements exist in respect of minimal standards of provision of incontinence services;

(3) what requirement is placed on district health authorities, trusts and family health services authorities to publicise the availability of incontinence services.

Mr. Bowis: Where there is shown to be a medical need for health services, health authorities, national health service trusts and family health services authorities have a general duty to provide them, subject to priorities set for the use of the resources available. The NHS planning guidelines for 1994-95—EL(93)54—issued on 29 June 1993 require district health authorities to ensure that continence services conform to the guidelines in the departmental report "An Agenda for Action on Continence Services" which was issued to the chairmen of NHS authorities in 1991. Copies of both documents are available in the Library. The report lists the key features of an effective local service including active publicity work. The 1994-95 planning guidelines also require health authorities to set specific challenging targets for reductions in the prevalence of treatable incontinence.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision is made within fundholding general practice budgets for incontinence services.

Mr. Bowis: No specific provision is made but all general practitioners advise their patients on problems of incontinence.

Day Surgery

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing for each region, for each of the last four quarters, the number of patients waiting for day surgery *(a)* under 12 months and *(b)* over 12 months.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on waiting lists for hospital day case treatment by regional health authority and in annual time bands is shown in the table. There has been a rise of around 7,000 since March 1993 in the number of patients waiting more than a year for day case treatment. However, the fact remains that the number fell dramatically from nearly 33,000 in December 1989, to less than 11,000 in March 1993.

It is the time people wait that matters not the number waiting. Half of all admissions to hospital are immediate. Of those admitted from waiting lists almost half are admitted within five weeks, nearly 75 per cent. within three months and 98 per cent. within a year.

Day case hospital treatment figures
Provisional waiting times figures

Provider-based

Region	March 1993		June 1993		September 1993		December 1993	
	0-11 months	12+ months	0-11 months	12+ months	0-11 months	12+ months	0-11 months	12+ months
Northern	23,289	369	23,289	730	24,507	951	25,623	1,157
Yorkshire	22,502	726	24,211	1,128	24,644	1,387	26,808	1,684
Trent	25,434	898	27,823	929	28,851	1,129	31,746	1,269
East Anglian	11,922	387	12,384	491	13,054	657	14,439	680
North West Thames	17,807	1,035	19,078	1,068	20,313	1,262	21,072	1,591
North East Thames	29,552	1,398	30,265	1,757	32,802	2,238	36,201	3,083
South East Thames	21,328	1,322	22,600	1,277	24,434	1,389	28,480	1,930
South West Thames	21,053	518	23,214	955	25,037	1,289	27,451	1,486
Wessex	20,889	935	19,662	1,060	20,146	1,008	19,180	768
Oxford	13,839	518	14,445	578	14,665	537	15,291	445
South Western	23,035	53	23,730	155	23,755	168	24,323	142
West Midlands	32,437	953	34,421	1,250	36,196	1,540	39,329	1,861
Mersey	21,638	24	22,752	114	22,073	56	22,411	0
North Western	29,600	1,601	31,661	1,725	32,889	1,825	35,471	1,827
All Regions	314,325	10,737	329,535	13,217	343,366	15,436	367,825	17,923

Hospital Closures

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by region and name each proposed hospital closure notified to her Department for each year since 1988; whether the hospital closed, merged, changed its function or was downsized; and what was the number of beds each hospital had at its closure date.

Mr. Sackville: The Department requires formal notification only where proposed closures are contested by the community health councils. The detailed information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Social Workers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of social workers based in hospitals for each year since 1979.

Mr. Bowis: For 1979 to 1992 this information is not available centrally. The information for 1993 is still being validated.

Care Packages

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy in respect of care packages for individuals or their relatives who refuse to accept discharge arrangements from hospital into independent sector residential or nursing care.

Mr. Bowis: Where an individual does not want, for whatever reason, to be discharged to a nursing home or residential care home the local and health authorities should seek to work together with the individual and their family or carer to find a satisfactory alternative solution.

Health Information Service

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many calls the health information service has received since it was set up;

(2) how many people are employed to answer calls in the health information service;

(3) what was the cost of setting up the health information service, including publicity; and what are the running costs of the service.

Mr. Sackville: The information, in the form requested, is not available centrally. A special trawl of regions has produced the information set out below.

The number of calls received by the health information service in the period April 1992 to December 1992 was 51,252. In the period between 26 January 1993, when the freephone facility was set up, to 31 December 1993 the number of calls was 136,293, making a total of 187,545.

The number of staff employed to answer the telephones is 31·5 whole-time equivalent personnel.

The total setting-up costs for the regions for 1992-93 were £379,182 and £209,257 for publicity, totalling £588,439, and for 1993-94 £287,686 and £156,701 for publicity, totalling £444,387.

The total setting-up costs for the Department of Health were £397,000. The running costs of the health information service operated by all regions were £899,113 for 1992-93 and £1,401,127 for 1993-94.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she has issued to regulate extra-contractual referrals; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Current guidance is contained in FDL(93)07—"Consolidation of Guidance on Extra-Contractual Referrals, Tariffs and Invoicing"—and HSG(93)8—"Guidance on Operation of Notification Arrangements for Tertiary Extra-Contractual Referrals"—copies of which will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring her Department undertakes of the rate of extra-contractual referrals.

Dr. Mawhinney: The National Health Service Management Executive quarterly monitoring system collects information by regional health authority on their forecast outturn spend on extra-contractual referrals compared with their planned levels of spend.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 24 January, ref. 4/4593/21 and originally written to the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. Bowis: I replied to the hon. Member's letter on 3 March.

Patient Waiting Times

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing for each divisional health authority area, for each of the last four quarters, the number of patients waiting for treatment *(a)* less than 12 months and *(b)* more than 12 months.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on waiting lists for in-patient and day case treatment by district health authority is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England", which is published twice yearly. In addition, provisional figures are published quarterly but only on a regional health authority basis. Copies of both are available in the Library.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* acute and *(b)* non-acute beds were available in each region, each district, each special health authority and for the nation as a whole for each year from 1987.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in "Bed availability for England, Financial Year 1992-93", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Emergency Admissions

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of state for Health if she will provide a table showing the number of emergency hospital admissions by region for each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The number of finished consultant episodes that are non-elective admissions by regional health authority for 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94—forecast and subject to revision—are shown in the table. Directly comparable information for earlier years is not available. The information is for the general and acute specialities and has been compiled on a purchaser basis in order to reach regional totals. It is estimated that over 80 per cent. of non-elective admissions are emergencies.

General and acute—'000s

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*Forecast 1993-94*
Northern Non-electives	255·0	257·0	263·7
Total	553·8	560·9	579·6
Percentage	47·8	45·8	45·5
Yorkshire Non-electives	295·8	304·7	304·0
Total	616·5	644·3	669·2
Percentage	48·0	47·3	45·4
Trent Non-electives	345·1	359·4	379·6
Total	705·7	751·9	806·3
Percentage	48·9	47·8	47·1
East Anglian Non-electives	137·3	144·1	144·3
Total	280·9	293·4	310·9
Percentage	48·9	49·1	46·4
North West Thames Non-electives	217·8	224·6	220·3
Total	471·6	490·4	497·9
Percentage	46·2	45·8	44·2
North East Thames Non-electives	273·6	266·1	271·7
Total	534·4	530·6	552·7
Percentage	51·2	50·2	49·2
South East Thames Non-electives	248·7	256·1	261·3
Total	510·6	535·8	550·5
Percentage	48·7	47·8	47·5
South West Thames Non-electives	195·3	199·8	200·0
Total	421·0	429·7	433·7
Percentage	46·4	46·5	46·1
Wessex Non-electives	195·1	219·9	228·6
Total	455·1	482·1	501·5
Percentage	42·9	45·6	45·6
Oxford Non-electives	155·6	156·5	161·5
Total	316·9	342·8	357·5
Percentage	49·1	45·7	45·2
South Western Non-electives	218·9	230·2	244·3
Total	488·0	527·4	556·2
Percentage	44·9	43·7	43·9
West Midlands Non-electives	356·8	380·7	399·0
Total	755·0	799·7	821·9
Percentage	47·3	47·6	48·5
Mersey Non-electives	207·0	218·8	226·7
Total	395·0	429·2	456·8
Percentage	52·4	51·0	49·6
North Western Non-electives	340·8	339·0	351·0
Total	721·9	748·4	788·0
Percentage	47·2	45·3	44·5
ENGLAND Non-electives	3,442·8	3,556·9	3,655·8
Total	7,206·5	7,566·5	7,882·6
Percentage	47·8	47·0	46·4

Source: 1991-92, 1992-93 (Quarter 4) Quarterly Monitoring
1993-94 (Quarter 3) Quarterly Monitoring

HOME DEPARTMENT

Royal Palaces (Security)

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proportion of the cost of security arrangements at the royal palaces fell on the Exchequer, including police and Army wages, in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) who is operationally responsible for overseeing security at royal palaces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Operational responsibility for overseeing security at the royal palaces and residences rests with the chief officer of police concerned. Within the Metropolitan police district all aspects of royalty protection are the responsibility of a deputy assistant commissioner who reports directly to the Commissioner. The effectiveness of the arrangements made for royalty protection is examined regularly by the standing group for monitoring royalty protection which was established in 1982 and reports to me from time to time. For security reasons, it would not be right to give a breakdown of the costs involved, but I can confirm that nearly all the costs incurred fall to the Exchequer.

Private Clubs

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his definition of a private club; and how many private clubs are operating in each standard region of England.

Mr. Maclean: The term "private club" has no particular legal significance. It could be applied to a wide range of associations and establishments, such as political clubs, sports clubs and philatelist clubs. There is no requirement for private clubs to be registered as such, and the Government have no information as to their numbers.

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review present legislation governing inspection and enforcement of fire regulations at private clubs; and what assessment he has made of the changes necessary as a result of the recent tragedy in London.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The fire safety scrutiny set up by the Government, which began its work on 17 January 1994, is looking at the operation and effectiveness of all legislation dealing with fire safety, and with the organisational arrangements of all bodies responsible for enforcing it.

Any decision about the need for changes to the legislation must await the outcome of that scrutiny and of the inquiries which are currently being conducted into the tragic fire at the Dream City Club.

Passports

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department has spent, and is planning to spend in the next year, on market testing for the issue of United Kingdom passports.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Estimated expenditure on the three United Kingdom Passport Agency projects which were included in the Department's 1992-93 market-testing programme is about £5,000. The extent of future spending on market testing will depend on the outcome of the current review of the agency's framework document which includes an examination of the scope for market testing.

Cannabis

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average fine imposed on individuals found guilty of possession of cannabis.

Mr. Maclean: In 1992, the latest year for which figures are available, the average fine for the offence of unlawful possession of cannabis was £74.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the proposal to increase the maximum fine for possession of cannabis.

Mr. Maclean: Apart from several general inquiries from members of the public, we have had forwarded by hon. Members nine letters on the proposed increase in fines for the illegal possession of class B and class C drugs.

Identity Cards

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the EU member states and the states about to join the EU which use identity cards or unique personal reference numbers, outlining the degree of obligation to produce evidence of identity in each state.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The following European Union member states use national identity cards:

Belgium
France
Germany
Greece
Italy
Luxembourg
The Netherlands
Portugal
Spain

With the exception of the Netherlands, we understand that the police are able to request proof of identity in each of these member states. We understand that new legislation will come into effect in the Netherlands on 1 June 1994 which will oblige Dutch nationals to provide proof of identity in certain defined circumstances.

In Denmark all citizens are issued with a "central person register" number. This is used for administrative purposes. The police may request proof of identity although we understand that the CPR number is not accepted as such proof.

Information about those states about to join the European Union is not readily available.

Firearms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the increase in firearms imported illegally from eastern Europe since 1988.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is no doubt that the breakup of the former Soviet Union and the demise of the Warsaw pact has led to a greater availability of firearms on the world market. I know that HM Customs is aware of this increased risk and is taking steps to counter it.

Anti-drug Policies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the report "The Use of Drugs by Young People in Newcastle"; and what assessment he has made of the outcome of Government anti-drug policies in the light of the report.

Mr. Maclean: The research reported on in "The Use of Drugs by Young People in Newcastle", by Dr. Leslie Gofton of the University of Newcastle, was funded with a grant from the Newcastle drugs prevention team. Publication will be arranged by Dr. Gofton.

The research consisted of some group interviews with young people about their leisure activities and drug use and a survey of the self-reported drug usage of 263 18 to 25-year-olds. The research provided insights into the nature of local drug use, and of young people's leisure preferences, which the Newcastle drugs prevention team has taken into account in the development of its local work, including "Take Notice", a local drugs prevention information campaign aimed at young people. But the samples demographic profile was not representative of the general population of young people, in Newcastle or elsewhere.

Police Resignations

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers have resigned from each police force since January 1993; how many of the resignations since January 1993 are attributable to debts payable to the Child Support Agency; and how many of the resignations since January 1993 cite the Child Support Agency as the reason for the resignation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The numbers of resignations for the period January to December 1993 are shown in the tables. Information on the reasons for an officer's resignation is not held centrally.

Table showing resignations from police forces from 1 January 1993 to 31 December 1993

Force	Resignations
Avon and Somerset	20
Bedfordshire	14
Cambridgeshire	9
Cheshire	12
Cleveland	4
Cumbria	14
Derbyshire	6
Devon and Cornwall	9
Dorset	15
Durham	6
Dyfed Powys	5
Essex	19
Gloucestershire	12
Greater Manchester	39
Gwent	5
Hampshire	22
Hertfordshire	15
Humberside	8
Kent	34
Lancashire	29
Leicestershire	10
Lincolnshire	8
Merseyside	19
Norfolk	17
Northamptonshire	16
Northumbria	19
North Wales	14
North Yorkshire	6
Nottinghamshire	9
South Wales	7
South Yorkshire	14
Staffordshire	18
Suffolk	13
Surrey	8
Sussex	31
Thames Valley	41
Warwickshire	5
West Mercia	19
West Midlands	50
West Yorkshire	35
Wiltshire	8
City of London	6
Metropolitan	99
Total	769

Women's Organisations

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what grants have been made to the National Alliance of Women's Organisations from the Home Office voluntary services unit since 1979; what assistance will be available in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No grants have been made by the voluntary services unit to the National Alliance of Women's Organisations. As I made clear on 2 February, column *703*, in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson), there are insufficient resources to fund this organisation in 1994-95.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from women's voluntary organisations regarding reductions in core funding from the voluntary services unit for the National Alliance of Women's Organisations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The voluntary services unit has not provided the National Alliance of Women's Organisations with any core funding. Since 1 February, seven letters about the funding of this body have been received in the Home Office from other women's voluntary organisations.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy with regard to the funding of voluntary organisations representing women's issues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Women's issues are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Fine Defaulters

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *634*, how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women fine defaulters in prison on 31 January had failed to pay fines valued at between *(a)* less than £50, *(b)* between £50 and £100, *(c)* between £100 and £250, *(d)* between £250 and £500 and *(e)* in excess of £500.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not collected centrally.

Crime (Street Lighting)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research he has carried out into the effect of street lighting on levels of crime.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The most recent Home Office research on street lighting and crime and the fear of crime was published in August 1991—crime prevention unit paper 28 "The Influence of Street Lighting on Crime and Fear of Crime" and crime prevention unit paper 29 "The Effect of Better Street Lighting on Crime and Fear: a Review". Copies of both are in the Library of the House.

Charities

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the legal powers of the Charity Commission to investigate malpractice within charities; and what is the range of penalties open to the Charity Commissioners to penalise trustees if malpractice is found.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under section 8 of the Charities Act 1993, the Charity Commission, or a person appointed by it, may institute inquiries with regard to charities or a particular charity or class of charities, either generally or for a particular purpose.

If malpractice is found, the commission can:

(a) suspend and, if necessary, remove trustees;
(b) appoint additional trustees;
(c) freeze bank accounts;
(d) prohibit all further fund raising;
(e) stop further actions by the trustees in dealing with the charity's property;
(f) refer the matter to the appropriate authorities for them to consider legal proceedings for the recovery of charity property or to compensate the charity for any loss;
(g) refer the matter to the police.

In less serious cases, the commission may simply give charities a warning and ensure that faults are put right. If necessary, the commission will monitor the activities of the charity.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the legal obligations of the Charity Commission to publish details of its investigations into malpractice among charities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The commission is not legally obliged to publish details of investigations it undertakes. The commission does, however, have discretion, where it thinks appropriate to publish the investigator's report in full or to publish extracts from, or statements about, the report.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the legal powers of the Charity Commission to compel charities to hand over lists of their donors; and what is the range of penalties open to the Charity Commission to penalise charities if they refuse to do so.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Charity Commission has the power to require any person to provide it with information or documents which relate to a charity and which it is necessary for the commission to have in order to discharge its functions properly.

If a person refuses to provide information sought by the commission using this power, the commission may apply to the High Court to have the person dealt with as if he had disobeyed a court order.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 17 December, *Official Report*, column *948*, how many people were interviewed during the course of the Charity Commission's investigation into the relationship between the Foundation for Business Responsibilities and Aims of Industry; who they were; and how much money had been paid to Aims of Industry in each year between 1988 and 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Charity Commission that no personal interviews were held during the inquiries made into the relationship between the Foundation for Business Responsibilities and Aims of Industry.

The published accounts of the Foundation for Business Responsibilities do not show details of payments made to Aims of Industry as expenditure broken down other than into the categories of accommodation, service charges and research. Charities are not required to provide further detail in their accounts.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints of unlawful political activity by charities have been investigated by the Charity Commission since 1990; and in how many cases the commission found against the charity concerned.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since 1990 a total of 76 complaints about improper political activity have been investigated. Of these, 24 were upheld.

Mediation

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy actively to promote the wider use of mediation by providing appropriate funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The role which mediation might play in the criminal justice system was examined by an inter-departmental working group in 1992. Within the sphere of the Home Office's responsibilities, it was concluded that mediation or reparation might usefully complement a caution. The efficacy of a number of schemes which link mediation with a caution is being examined. Victim-offender mediation has been taken forward by individual probation services and funding has been provided to local mediation schemes under 10 of the safer cities projects.

European Community

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements exist for the representation of the European Commission on the body known as steering group I which reports to the article K4 committee under the intergovernmental co-operation procedures; and what opportunities will exist for the examination of the work of steering group I by the European and United Kingdom Parliaments.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The European Commission is fully associated with work under title VI of the treaty on European Union, and its representatives attend all meetings of steering group I.

The Government have put forward proposals for parliamentary scrutiny by the United Kingdom Parliament of the work carried out under title VI which includes that carried out by steering group I.

Article K6 of the treaty sets out the basis on which the European Parliament will be informed and consulted on the work carried out under title VI.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if articles of the main agreement establishing the European Economic Area which extend the right of free movement to nationals of Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden are directly enforceable; and what plans he has to allow them to be relied upon as a basis for legal actions in the United Kingdom courts.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since 1 January 1994, when the European Economic Area agreement came into force, nationals of Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden have been treated in the same way as European Community nationals for immigration purposes. An Order in Council section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972, the Immigration (European Economic Area) Order 1994, will shortly be laid before Parliament in order to transpose into United Kingdom law the relevant European Community directives relating to the rights of free movement and residence for European Economic Area nationals.

Police Pay

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will take action to ensure that the assessment bonuses part of future police pay is directed to those who most effectively serve their community;

(2) if the payment of housing allowances, which will be discontinued for police officers recruited after September, will still be payable to policemen currently serving but who do not purchase their own house until after that date;

(3) if he will ensure that all police officers whose duties require them to work in plain clothes and not a uniform continue to receive adequate tax-free allowances.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland have asked the police negotiating board to make recommendations on police pay, overtime and allowances by Easter.

Dogs

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individual Acts of Parliament contain legislation relating to dogs; if he will list their titles; and if he will consider introducing a single consolidated Dogs Act.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The following legislation relates exclusively to dogs:

Dogs Act 1871
Dogs Act 1906
Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953
Breeding of Dogs Act 1973
Guard Dogs Act 1975
Dangerous Dogs Act 1989
Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
Breeding of Dogs Act 1991

There are references to dogs, or provisions relevant to dogs, in a number of other Acts, including general animal welfare legislation. We have no current plans to seek consolidation of the law in this area.

Prisoners (Provisons Costs)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the reasons for the variation of provisions cost per prisoner varying from £9·03 to £12·11 per week.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 8 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the variation in the costs of inmates' food.

Costs per head will vary for a number of reasons, which will include the mix of religious and cultural backgrounds of inmates in a particular establishment which will influence the number of ethnic and religious diets to be provided.

The regime of an establishment will also have some impact upon food costs; for example, the provision of packed meals for inmate working parties, whether bread is produced in-house or purchased and the use of frozen meals where inmates return late to the establishment.

Establishments with large health care facilities may have a higher requirement for more expensive medical diets.

Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to publish the full results of the first stage of the joint Home Office-university of Salford study on the settlement of refugees in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The report on the first stage of this study is currently being examined. A date for publication has not yet been decided.

DTELS

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the sale of DTELS on 28 February with specific reference to the issue of employee consultations over the pension scheme of National Transcommunications Ltd.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The sale of DTELS to National Transcommunications Ltd.—NTL—was completed on 1 March. Staff and unions were aware throughout the sale process that it was a requirement that the purchaser should provide a pension scheme which was broadly comparable with that provided by the principal civil service pension scheme.

Unions were informed on 26 January that the Government Actuary's Department—GAD—had confirmed that NTL's intended arrangements met this requirement.

A GAD representative attended a meeting with the unions on 10 February. There were then GAD presentations to staff in the week beginning 14 February, in which the benefits available under the NTL scheme were explained and compared with the PCSPS. Union representatives were sent copies of the GAD certificate of pension comparability on 16 February. Further information on the safeguards within the existing scheme and the further benefits negotiated by the Department were sent to the unions on 23 February together with answers to a

number of questions which they had raised at an earlier meeting. Arrangements were made on 24 February that each member of DTELS staff should receive a copy of the GAD certificate of pension comparability together with answers to questions which had been raised in the course of the earlier presentations.

Murder Victims

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to provide financial assistance to the families of murder victims, whose bodies cannot be released by coroners for cremation, to meet the costs of storage.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were brought by the police relating to animal welfare in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992 and *(c)* 1993; and how many were successful.

Mr. Maclean: Information for 1991 and 1992 is given in the tables. 1993 data will not be available until autumn 1994.

Table A: Number of prosecutions brought by the police for offences relating to animal welfare by result
England and Wales 1991

Offence	Police prosecutions	Convictions
Cruelty to animals	437	326
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, sections 22(3), 23 and 25(3)	1	1
Protection of Animals Act 1911 (as amended)	337	254
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 section 8	—	—
Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925	—	—
Protection of Animals (Cruelty to Dogs) Act 1933	10	7
Protection of Animals Act 1934	1	1
Pet Animals Act 1951	2	—
Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1954	10	5
Animal Health Act 1981, sections 40-42, 46, 49 and orders under sections 8, 9, 37, 38, 39 and 43	24	19
Slaughterhouses Act 1974	—	—
Abandonment of Animals Act 1960, section 1	19	16
Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963	4	3
Riding Establishments Acts 1964 and 1970	—	—
Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968, sections 1, 2 and 6	1	1
Badgers Act 1973	19	12
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, section 9	2	—
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, section 11	4	4
Other	3	3
Diseases of Animals Act	47	31
Wild Birds Protection Acts	76	63

Table B: Number of prosecutions brought by the police for offences relating to animal welfare by result
England and Wales 1992

Offence	Police prosecutions	Convictions
Cruelty to animals	475	367
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, sections 22(3), 23 and 25(3)	3	2
Protection of Animals Act 1911 (as amended)	359	283
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 section 8	4	4
Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925	—	—
Protection of Animals (Cruelty to Dogs) Act 1933	5	4
Protection of Animals Act 1934	—	—
Pet Animals Act 1951	2	—
Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1954	10	9
Animal Health Act 1981, sections 40-42, 46, 49 and orders under sections 8, 9, 37, 38, 39 and 43	24	19
Slaughterhouses Act 1974	—	—
Abandonment of Animals Act 1960, section 1	26	22
Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963	1	1
Riding Establishments Acts 1964 and 1970	—	—
Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968, sections 1, 2 and 6	2	2
Badgers Act 1973	32	16
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, section 9	3	3
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, section 11	1	1
Other	3	1
Diseases of Animals Act	27	15
Wild Birds Protection Acts	62	43

Pedal Cyclists

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many pedal cyclists were prosecuted for road traffic offences in each of the past five years;

(2) how many pedal cyclists were prosecuted for failing to stop at traffic lights in each of the past five years.

Mr. Maclean: Information for 1988 to 1992 is given in the table. 1993 data will not be available until the autumn 1994.

Number of defendants prosecuted for offences connected with pedal cycles, 1988 to 1992
England and Wales

Offence description	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Riding to common danger	8	17	7	7	5
Being towed	8	6	2	3	3
Neglect of traffic directions	248	217	182	150	138
More than one person carried	74	57	58	35	34

Offence description	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Riding on footpath	585	453	483	333	313
In relation to pedestrian crossings	14	13	11	9	11
Failing to obey signal	29	62	53	48	29
Failing to comply with brake regulations	149	201	96	69	42
Reckless and dangerous driving by a pedal cyclist	14	17	26	17	30
Careless driving by a pedal cyclist	67	77	67	89	77
Driving under the influence of drink and drug by a pedal cyclist	222	261	211	191	108
Taking part in unauthorised cycle race	—	—	1	3	1
Promoting unauthorised cycle race	—	—	1	1	—
Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 sec. 17(4)	34	36	42	18	31
Highways Act 1980 sec. 137(1)	4	5	8	5	4
Take or ride a pedal cycle without consent	350	361	312	288	270
Lighting and reflector offences	1,593	1,381	1,578	950	547
Other offences	9	1	17	12	16
All offences	3,408	3,165	3,155	2,228	1,659

Note: The offence of "failing to comply with traffic light signals" may be recorded under "Neglect of traffic directions", "Failin g to obey signal" or "Other Offence."

Mobile Phones (Theft)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his estimate of the number of mobile phones stolen each year;

(2) what representations he has received from manufacturers and retailers of mobile phones about the theft of their products; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make the rechipping of mobile phones illegal.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are aware of estimates that between 10,000 and 12,000 mobile phones are stolen each month; however, no information on the number of such thefts is recorded centrally and we have no reliable means of making any estimate.

Nevertheless, we share the concern that the number of thefts seems to be increasing, and have received a number of representations on this subject from hon. Members and others, including the Federation of Communication Services. The Home Office is supporting the Department of Trade and Industry in its discussions with the mobile phone industry on what measures can be taken to reduce the theft of mobile phones, but we have no plans to make rechipping a criminal offence. Not all rechipping is carried out in relation to stolen telephones, and it would not be appropriate to criminalise what may be an entirely legitimate activity, for example in connection with the repair of mobile phones, or the legitimate sale of second-hand mobile phones. Those who steal mobile phones, or handle stolen goods are, of course, already guilty of criminal offences under the law as it stands.

Fire Deaths

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will produce a table showing the deaths by fire of *(a)* infants, *(b)* adolescents, *(c)* adults and *(d)* the elderly for the latest 20 years.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 1 March 1994]:* The available information is shown in the table.

Fire-related deaths[1] by age from fires attended by local authority fire brigades
1963 to 1992
United Kingdom

Age groups: (a) 1963–68; (b) 1969–73; (c) 1974–77; (d) 1978–88; (e) 1989–92

Year	Number of deaths by age group					
(a)	0–5	6–15	16–65	66+		
(b)	0–4	5–14	15–64	65+		
(c)	0–4	5–14	15–59	60+	Unspecified	Total
(d)	0–4	5–14	16–64	65+		
(e)	0–4	5–16	16–64	65+		
1963	131	31	285	361	6	814
1964	110	39	265	264	3	681
1965	155	36	264	240	7	702
1966	145	34	301	295	2	777
1967	119	33	308	303	13	776
1968	158	42	349	293	18	860
1969	154	35	311	340	11	851
1970	128	38	315	338	17	836
1971	111	45	324	321	17	818
1972	134	60	410	437	25	1,066
1973	130	54	437	394	23	1,038
1974	120	66	346	475	31	1,038
[2]1975	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	920
1976	79	65	324	421	5	894
1977	80	53	255	326	[4]135	849
1978	64	53	375	380	[4]71	943
1979	71	56	457	498	14	1,096

Year	Number of deaths by age group					
(a)	0–5	6–15	16–65	66+		
(b)	0–4	5–14	15–64	65+		
(c)	0–4	5–14	15–59	60+	Unspecified	Total
(d)	0–4	5–14	16–64	65+		
(e)	0–4	5–16	16–64	65+		
1980	91	55	415	412	[4]61	1,034
1981	63	48	433	419	7	970
1982	79	36	417	377	8	917
1983	75	50	415	359	1	900
1984	84	44	402	350	3	883
1985	95	40	418	419	5	977
1986	94	40	437	381	5	957
1987	84	45	438	355	4	926
1988	87	44	423	354	7	915
1989	81	56	472	288	3	900
1990	63	40	487	300	6	896
1991	83	54	396	267	14	814
[5]1992	58	32	411	295	9	805

[1] Excluding fire brigade deaths and for 1974 to 1981 deaths from fires due to terrorist activity.
[2] Figures estimates due to industrial action, no estimates made for age of casualty.
[3] Not available.
[4] Age of casualty not give due to industrial action.
[5] Provisional.

Source:
Home Office fire statistics.

EMPLOYMENT

Young People

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new measures he plans to help young people in the North West region to find employment.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Tuesday 22 February, *Official Report*, column *198*.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest official figures for the numbers of unemployed; and what the corresponding figures were for 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: On the consistent seasonally adjusted basis, claimant unemployment in the United Kingdom stood at 2,787,600 in January 1994 and 1,100,100 in January 1979.

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest unemployment figures for the North West.

Miss Widdecombe: In the North West region, seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment stood at 308,100 or 10·3 per cent. of the work force in January 1994. This is a fall of 26,400 compared with a year ago.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees were employed in manufacturing industry a year ago and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: In December 1993, there were 4,176,000 employees in manufacturing industries in Great Britain. This compares to 4,190,000 employees in December 1992—a fall of 14,000 jobs over the year. The changing distribution of employment away from manufacturing and towards services is a trend shared by all western industrial nations. However, the output of United Kingdom manufacturing industry in the December quarter showed an annual increase of 2·2 per cent. This reflects a substantial improvement in productivity, up by 3·2 per cent. over the same period.

Careers Service

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the projected number in each of the 13 careers service pathfinder areas of local education authority careers service staff to be *(a)* made redundant or *(b)* given early retirement in 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is not available. It is for careers service providers to decide how best to manage their resources to deliver the highest quality of service.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, by each of the 13 careers service pathfinder areas, the total numbers of bids received per area and the name of each successful bidder to run each of the pathfinder services from 1 April.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on organisation tendering to provide careers services is commercial in confidence. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will announce those organisations with whom he will contract when negotiations are finalised.

Leeds Development Corporation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the number of people in employment in the area covered by the Leeds development corporation on *(a)* 1 April 1990 and *(b)* the latest available figures.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available for the area requested. The most detailed geographical area

for which information is published is the electoral ward. The Leeds development corporation area cannot be approximated from any combination of these wards.

Employment estimates for individual wards within Leeds local authority district are available from the periodic censuses of employment, the most recent of which was conducted in September 1991. These can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Business Start-up and Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have participated in *(a)* business start-up and *(b)* the enterprise allowance scheme in each year since their inception.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the following table. I expect the business start-up scheme to continue to help those people wishing to set up in business and that the additional funding announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the March 1993 Budget will help more people in 1993-94.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme (EAS)[1] Business Start-up Scheme (BSUS)
Entrants 1982-83—1993-94
Great Britain

Year	Number
1982-83	2,500
1983-84	27,600
1984-85	46,000
1985-86	60,000
1986-87	86,800
1987-88	106,300
1988-89	98,500
1989-90	78,000
1990-91	60,000
1991-92	50,000
1992-93	41,000
April-November 1993	24,900

Sources: Training Statistics
TEC Operating Agreement (Annex J)
Scottish Office MIS
Welsh Office MIS

[1] The EAS was replaced by BSUS on April 1991

Learning for Work

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have participated in learning for work.

Miss Widdecombe: At 10 February 1994, the latest date available, 5,506 men and 1,607 women were receiving the learning for work allowance.

Job Plan Workshops

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have participated in job plan workshops in each month since their inception;

(2) what evidence he has of positive outcomes for those who attend job plan workshops.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 8 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about Jobplan workshops. You have asked about the number of men and women who have participated in Jobplan workshops since they were launched in April 1993 and what evidence there is of positive outcomes for those attending.

It may be helpful if I explain that Jobplan workshops are for people who have been unemployed for a year who decline or fail to take up a job or a place on an Employment Department programme at their Restart interview. It aims to help people compete more successfully for jobs and opportunities by allowing them to review their strengths and skills, establish clear job goals. This will help them draw up a comprehensive Action Plan, which maps out the steps they need to take to get back to work.

Jobplan workshops were launched in April 1993 and the figures in the table attached show the number of men and women who have taken part in the workshops in the period April 1993 to January 1994.

Since April 1993, 93 per cent. of workshop completers were referred to a job or an Employment Department employment or training programme or another option to help them back to work. Research into the positive outcomes of those who attend Jobplan workshops has been commissioned but is not yet completed.

I hope this is helpful.

Jobplan Workshops
Number of participants 1993-94

	Men	Women
April 1993	11,573	2,415
May 1993	16,770	3,388
June 1993	17,154	3,490
July 1993	24,614	5,330
August 1993	19,986	4,197
September 1993	18,910	4,013
October 1993	27,076	5,928
November 1993	22,523	4,653
December 1993	18,260	3,725
January 1994	22,415	4,512
Total	199,281	41,651

Workstart

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the workstart pilots; and what plans he has to extend this scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have not yet completed our assessment of the pilots. I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total cost of the workstart pilots.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Sir R. Howell) on 3 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *868*.

Restart

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have participated in restart in each quarter since its inception.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 8 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about the number of men and women who have participated in Restart Courses in each quarter since its inception.

It may be helpful if I explain that Restart Courses are short courses normally lasting for one week. They are targeted at people who have been unemployed for two years or more who are having the most difficulty in getting back to work. The courses provide people with the opportunity to explore all the options open to them and give them the confidence and motivation to take the next step back to work.

The number of people participating in Restart courses from their inception in 1986 to quarter ending December 1993 is set out in the attached table.

Since December 1990, people who have been unemployed for two years or more who refuse to take up a place on an Employment Department employment or training programme at their Restart interview, have been asked to attend a Restart Course. You will see that this led to a large increase in the numbers of people attending.

You will see that because of changes in the collection of management information, we can not supply some of the detailed information in the form requested.

I hope this is helpful.

Table 1
Number of starters on restart courses from 1986 to 1993

Quarters	Participants Male	Female	Total
1986-87	Not available	Not available	100,841
1987-88			
Quarter 1	9,539	3,305	12,664
Quarter 2	9,916	3,080	12,996
Quarter 3	9,278	2,943	12,221
Quarter 4	8,056	2,875	10,931
Total	36,609	12,203	48,812
1988-89	31,241	11,769	43,010
1989-90			
Quarter 1	7,915	3,004	10,919
Quarter 2	6,619	2,551	9,170
Quarter 3	7,576	2,574	10,150
Quarter 4	8,529	3,172	11,701
Total	30,639	11,301	41,940
1990-91	Not available	Not avaialble	57,976
1991-92	[1]113,764	[1]20,076	133,840
1992-93	[1]108,493	[1]16,212	124,705
1993-94			
Quarter 1	29,673	4,427	34,100
Quarter 2	31,624	4,882	36,506
Quarter 3	32,541	5,015	37,556
Total[2]	93,838	14,324	108,162

[1] The male/female split is an estimate based on two sample surveys.
[2] April to December 1993.

Community Action

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have participated in community action in each month since its inception;

(2) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women who have participated in community action have found work.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 8 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about the numbers of men and women who have participated in Community Action and the numbers of men and women who have found work as a result of participation.

Community Action provides people who have been out of work for 12 months or more with the opportunity to gain recent work experience combined with individually tailored help in looking for jobs. This enables them to compete for jobs more effectively.

The attached table gives the numbers of men and women who participate in Community Action during each month since the programme began on 27 July.

By the end of January a total of 6,995 men and 1,573 women had received help through Community Action. Of these, 5,916 men and 1,362 women were still participating in the programme, 153 men and 27 women left the programme and went directly into paid employment.

I hope this is helpful.

Table showing number of people helped by community action during each month since the programme began

	Men	Women	Total
July	36	0	39
August	96	13	109
September	258	35	293
October	1,083	207	1,290
November	2,547	566	3,113
December	4,070	857	4,927
January	6,397	1,464	7,861

Job Programme Costs

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the total cost per annum to his Department of running job research seminars in 1993-94 prices and in cash terms in each year since their inception;

(2) what was the total cost per annum to his Department of running job review workshops in 1993-94 prices and in cash terms in each year since their establishment;

(3) what is the total cost per annum to his Department of running the job interview guarantee scheme in 1993-94 prices and in cash terms, in each year for which figures are available;

(4) what is the total cost per annum to his Department of running job plan workshops in 1993-94 prices and in cash terms in each year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief exective. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 8 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about the annual costs of runnning Job Search Seminars; Job Review Workshops; Job Interview Guarantee; and Job Plan Workshops.

The attached table shows the expenditure for each of these programmes in both current prices and constant 1993-94 prices. The 1993-94 figures are planned allocations although for other years I have used actual expenditure. The main identifiable area

of expenditure is for the programme itself which, in most cases, is contracted out to separate providers. However, one of the key elements of the Job Interview Guarantee programme is 'matching and screening' of clients to vacancies, which is delivered by ES staff and it is therefore possible to provide you with the salary costs associated with this.

The other three programmes are made available to clients through our claimant advisory service but it is not possible to attribute the cost of this to individual programmes.

Expenditure in current prices (cash terms)

	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Job Search Seminars			
Programme Expenditure	—	5·755	4·704
Job Review Workshops			
Programme Expenditure	1·252	3·769	3·473
Job Interview Guarantee			
Programme Expenditure	0·876	1·140	2·321
Staff Delivery Costs	5·984	9·259	19·945
Job Plan Workshops			
Programme Expenditure	—	—	37·470

Expenditure in constant 1993-94 prices

	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Job Search Seminars			
Programme Expenditure	—	5·833	4·704
Job Review Workshops			
Programme Expenditure	1·307	3·820	3·473
Job Interview Guarantee			
Programme Expenditure	0·915	1·156	2·321
Staff Delivery Costs	6·248	9·385	19·945
Job Plan Workshops			
Programme Expenditure	—	—	37·470

Job Interview Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have participated in the job interview guarantee scheme in each year since its inception;

(2) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have found a job within three months and six months of attending the job interview guarantee scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 8 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about the number of men and women who have been helped by Job Interview Guarantee.

The information available is set out in the attached table and shows the total number of people who have taken part in and been placed into jobs through Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) since it began in September 1989.

We collect statistical information on the total numbers of people participating in JIG but this is not broken down by gender. However, a survey carried out in May 1992 showed that 71 per cent. were males and 29 per cent. female.

Whilst we collect details of how many people go into a job through JIG, there is no follow up at the three and six month stages. To do so would necessitate expensive tracking mechanisms at a disproportionate cost.

I hope this is helpful.

Numbers assisted and placed by Job Interview Guarantee September 1989 to January 1994

	Numbers assisted[1]	Numbers placed
2 September 1989 to March 1991[2]	9,632	5,324
1991-92	134,296	39,960
1992-93	196,060	76,701
1993-94	338,527	148,421
Total	688,515	270,406

[1] The number of people participating in JIG is referred to as "numbers assisted".

[2] From September 1989 to March 1991, JIG was piloted in 20 inner-city areas only.

Training for Work

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have attended a training for work course.

Miss Widdecombe: In the second quarter of 1993-94, the latest period available, there were 66,400 entrants to training for work in England and Wales and of these 69 per cent. were men and 31 per cent. women.

Youth Credits

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were using youth credits to obtain training in each month since the scheme's inception.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the table:

Youth credits
Leavers by gender 1991-92 to 1993-94 Great Britain[1]

Percentage

	1991-92		1992-93		1993-94	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
April	n/a	n/a	53	47	60	40
May	n/a	n/a	53	47	58	42
June	n/a	n/a	63	37	60	40
July	n/a	n/a	60	40	57	43
August	n/a	n/a	58	42	58	42
September	n/a	n/a	64	36	60	40
October	n/a	n/a	63	37	59	41
November	n/a	n/a	60	40	—	—
December	n/a	n/a	54	46	—	—
January	45	55	59	41	—	—
February	60	40	63	37	—	—
March	50	50	63	37	—	—

	1991-92		1992-93		1993-94	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Year/Year to date	54	46	60	40	59	41

Note:
n/a = Data for individual months not available due to low number of records.
[1] England and Wales for 1993-94.
Source: YT leavers database.

Job Clubs and Job Search

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have participated in job clubs each year since the scheme started;

(2) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have attended job search seminars in each quarter since their inception.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 8 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Employment has asked me to reply to your questions about the number of men and women participating in Jobclub and job search seminars since the programmes started.

This breakdown is not available for Jobclubs for the year 1985-86, the first year that the programme was running. From April 1986 details of males and females are based on survey information and evaluation reports. Since April 1990 we have collected information on male and female participants on a sample survey basis and this has been used to calculate the annual totals in Table A. The sample survey for 1993-94 is taking place this month.

Table B shows the number of attenders in job search seminars for each quarter since the programme began in August 1991. We do not keep statistics on male and female job search seminar attenders. However a survey in September 1992 showed that approximately 70 per cent. of job search seminars attenders are male and 30 per cent. female.

I hope this is helpful.

Table A
Total number of jobclub participants
Proportion of males and females

Year	Throughflow	Males	Females
1985-86	[1]1,994	Not available	Not available
1986-87	[1]20,606	15,867	4,739
1987-88	105,677	80,314	25,363
1988-89	132,262	97,874	34,388
1989-90	140,095	102,269	37,826
1990-91	134,712	102,381	32,331
1991-92	176,140	140,470	35,670
1992-93	216,679	173,343	43,336
1993-94[2]	190,194	Not yet available	Not yet available

[1]Denotes estimated figures.
[2]To January 1994.

Table B
Number of attenders in job search seminars from August 1991

Quarter	Number of participants
September 1991 (2 months)	1,274
December 1991	13,787
March 1992	19,570
June 1992	20,179
September 1992	22,127
December 1992	22,966
March 1993	20,935
June 1993	16,519
September 1993	15,849
December 1993	17,168
January 1994 (1 month)	5,548

Note: A survey carried out by the Employment Service in September 1992 showed that approximately 70 per cent. of job search seminar participants are male and 30 per cent. female.

Job Review Workshops

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have attended job review workshops in each month since their inception.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 8 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of men and women who have attended Job Review Workshops.

Job Review Workshops were launched in October 1991 to help newly unemployed people review their career path and set clear job goals suited to their skill, experience and preferences. The programme is particularly suitable for professional, managerial and executive jobseekers who want to consider alternative careers.

Statistical data was collected monthly until March 1993. From April 1993 information has been collected on a quarterly basis.

I attach tables which show the number of men and women attending the workshops since its inception until December 1993.

I hope this is helpful.

Job Review Workshops

	Men	Women
1991-92		
April	—	—
May	—	—
June	—	—
July	—	—
August	—	—
September	—	—
October	544	158
November	1,817	453
December	1,523	313
January	2,302	525
February	2,732	723
March	3,478	790
TOTAL	12,396	2,962
1992-93		
April	2,104	528

	Men	Women
May	2,759	648
June	2,614	536
July	3,313	786
August	2,610	652
September	2,702	610
October	3,033	758
November	2,986	832
December	2,294	574
January	3,120	780
February	3,239	810
March	2,885	742
TOTAL	33,659	8,256
1993-94		
Quarter 1	7,136	1,826
Quarter 2	6,959	1,976
Quarter 3	7,348	2,054
Quarter 4	—	—
TOTAL	21,443	5,856

Minimum Wages (United States)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column 227, what is the current national minimum wage rate for the United States of America provided under the Fair Labour Standards Act 1938.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The current rates above which individual states in the USA are free to set minimum wages are set out in the fair labour standards amendments of 1989. A copy of this legislation is available in the Library.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much his Department spends on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if he will make a statement about child care.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* The sum of £430,000 in 1993-94 across the Employment Department group as a whole. This includes net expenditure on nursery places and holiday play schemes and financial help with additional child care costs incurred through attending training courses or other work-based functions. About 2,500 children are estimated to have been helped through this expenditure.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

School Milk Scheme

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many children were direct beneficiaries of the school milk scheme in *(a)* the 12 school weeks prior to and 12 school weeks after the removal of buttermilk and cheese from the school milk scheme and *(b)* the 12 school weeks before and 12 school weeks after the reduction in funding for the school milk scheme was effected.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information on the number of school children benefiting from the school milk scheme is not held on a weekly basis. During the academic years 1992-93 and 1993-94, 8,139,417 and 8,048,510 school children respectively were eligible beneficiaries of the school milk scheme.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of EC funding available for the subsidy of milk and dairy produce in schools was accounted for by the United Kingdom before and after each reduction in funding for the school milk scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The United Kingdom accounted for 24·29 per cent. of total EC expenditure on the school milk scheme in the 1992 FEOGA year and for 22·62 per cent. in 1993. This reduction reflects the removal of cheese and buttermilk from the scheme, in the United Kingdom, in April 1993. There is no information yet available on United Kingdom expenditure on the scheme following the 25 per cent. cut in the rate of subsidy and the technical amendments adopted in October 1993. The new arrangements came into effect only on 1 January 1994.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will provide a figure for the value of European Community support lost to the United Kingdom as a consequence of the reduction in European funding for the school milk scheme since *(a)* 1 April 1993 and *(b)* 4 October 1994.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Based on claims covering the 12-month period prior to the removal of buttermilk and cheese from the scheme, on 1 April 1993 the value of EC subsidy lost to the United Kingdom for those products totalled £9,245,245·97. Buttermilk accounted for expenditure of just £599·99. No information will be available on the value of support lost to the United Kingdom as a result of the 25 per cent. cut in the school milk subsidy, which was adopted on 4 October 1993 and came into force on 1 January 1994, until claims for the period have been received.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many ready-packaged one third pint containers of subsidised milk were distributed by local authorities in the United Kingdom six months before and after each reduction in funding for the school milk scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No information is held by the Intervention Board executive agency, which administers the school milk scheme, on the number of one third pint containers of milk distributed by local authorities.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what quantity and value of milk and milk products which would formerly have been distributed through the school milk scheme have since 1 April 1993 instead been redirected; and to where they have been redirected;

(2) what quantity and value of milk and milk products formerly distributed under the school milk scheme have been redirected since 1 April 1993; and what have been their destinations.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: No definitive information is available on the quantity, value or use to which the milk and milk products no longer utilised under the school milk scheme have been put.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the change in spending

in actual and real terms on the school milk scheme after *(a)* the removal of buttermilk and cheese from the school milk scheme and *(b)* the reduction in funding.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: The change in spending by local authorities in actual terms since the removal of buttermilk and cheese from the scheme on 1 April 1993 has amounted to a reduction of £5,549,137·98 when comparing the cost of subsidised products in the term before, spring 1993, and the term after, summer 1993, the removal of cheese and buttermilk from the scheme on 1 April 1993. No information will be available on the reduction in funding resulting from the 25 per cent. cut in the rate of subsidy and the technical amendments to the scheme until claims for the period have been received.

It would be inappropriate to express the reductions in expenditure on the school milk scheme in real terms because the changes to the scheme have been single events rather than the result of changes over a period of time.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in real terms what was the average cost of each local authority school meal in *(a)* the 12 school weeks prior and 12 school weeks after the removal of buttermilk and cheese from the school milk scheme and the 12 school weeks prior to and 12 school weeks after the reduction in funding for the school milk scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: No information is collected by the Intervention Board executive agency, which administers the school milk scheme, on the cost of school meals.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of the relationship between the cost trend for local authority school meals and change in the availability of ingredients formerly subsidised as part of the school milk scheme and the reduction of funding for the scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No assessment has been made of the relationship between the costs of school meals provided by local authorities and the changes in the products covered by the school milk scheme. Furthermore, neither MAFF nor the Intervention Board executive agency, which administers the scheme, has any information which would enable such an assessment to be carried out.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the cost to the local authorities in terms of the funding allocated for the purpose of making up the deficiency in their accounts arising as a consequence of cuts in the value and scope of the school milk scheme since *(a)* 1 April 1993, *(b)* 4 October 1993 and *(c)* in total.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Neither MAFF nor the Intervention Board executive agency, which administers the school milk scheme, have any information on how local authorities have covered the deficiency in their accounts created by the reduction in funding following the 25 per cent. cut in the rate of subsidy.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the administrative costs of *(a)* distributing milk through the school milk scheme and *(b)* alternative provision for disposing of milk.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The administrative costs for the Intervention Board executive agency and the Department of Education for Northern Ireland in distributing milk through the school milk scheme were £134,871·80 for the financial year 1993-94. There is no information available on the administrative costs incurred by local authorities. The costs of alternative provisions for disposing of milk not taken up under the school milk scheme would depend on the products into which this milk was manufactured, the volumes involved and the disposal method used. The cost of disposing of one tonne of milk in the form of butter or skimmed milk powder is estimated at around £96.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who is responsible for the disbursement of funds for the school milk scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Responsibility for the disbursement of funds for the school milk scheme rests with the Intervention Board executive agency in Great Britain and the Department of Education for Northern Ireland in the Province.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tonnes of milk and other products eligible for the school milk scheme were consumed in *(a)* the 12 school weeks prior to and *(b)* 12 school weeks after the removal of buttermilk and cheese from the scheme, *(c)* the 12 school sitting weeks before and *(d)* the 12 school sitting weeks after the reduction in funding for the scheme was effected.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There is no information available on a 12-weekly basis on tonnages of milk and milk products consumed under the school milk scheme after removal of buttermilk and cheese. 30,608,186·49 tonnes of eligible milk and milk products, for which subsidy was claimed, were consumed in the school term, spring term 1993, immediately prior to the removal of buttermilk and cheese from the scheme on 1 April 1993. A total of 30,621,821·121 tonnes of eligible milk and milk products, for which subsidy was claimed, were consumed in the school term, summer term 1993, immediately following the removal of buttermilk and cheese from the scheme on 1 April 1993.

Similarly, there is no information available on a 12 weekly basis on changes in consumption before and after the 25 per cent. cut in the subsidy and the technical amendments were introduced. No information will be available until claims for the period have been received.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will chart any changes in the local authority spending on milk and other products eligible for the school milk scheme in *(a)* the 12 school sitting weeks before and 12 school sitting weeks after the removal of buttermilk and cheese from the school milk scheme and *(b)* the 12 school sitting weeks before and 12 school sitting weeks after the reduction in funding for the school milk scheme was effected.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No information is available on a 12-weekly basis to enable changes in local authority spending before and after removal of buttermilk and cheese from the school milk scheme to be monitored, nor on the changes following the 25 per cent. cut in the subsidy and the technical amendments introduced on 1 January 1994. Local authority spending on eligible milk and milk products during the term, spring 1993, prior to the removal

of buttermilk and cheese from the scheme on 1 April 1993 and the term after, summer 1993, decreased by £4,360,333·99. No information on changes in spending before and after 1 January 1994 will be available until claims for the period have been received.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the local authorities which since 4 October 1993 have *(a)* increased, *(b)* reduced and *(c)* left unchanged their provision of subsidised school drinking milk and other eligible products under the school milk scheme as part of a school meal.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No information will be available on changes in uptake by local authorities under the school milk scheme following the 25 per cent. cut in the subsidy and the technical amendments to the scheme, introduced on 1 January 1994, until claims for the period have been received.

Set-aside

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further steps she is taking to encourage the positive management of set-aside to benefit the countryside environment.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I support the positive environmental management of set-aside. I have today placed in the Library of the House a handbook entitled "Managing Set-Aside Land for Wildlife". This publication is the result of work commissioned by my Department from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology to investigate the possibilities of using set-aside land to create or restore wildlife habitats. We have drawn on many of its conclusions in setting the management conditions for set-aside under the arable area payments scheme, and I hope that farmers and conservation advisers will find it equally helpful.

Vintners Company

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members of the wine standards board of the Vintners Company.

Mr. Jack: The members of the wine standards board of the Vintners Company are:

Mr. P. J. Purton *(Chairman)*
Dr. A. T. Woodrow
Ms C. Kent
Mr. A. Foster
Mr. P. M. Boyling
Brigadier G. Read CBE

The board is funded jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Vintners Company.

Regional Flood Defence Committees

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which organisations she has consulted to seek nominations for membership of regional flood defence committees of the National Rivers Authority of people who have expertise in hydrology, coastal processes, town and country planning, emergency planning, financial management, fisheries, recreation and the built heritage.

Mr. Jack: The following organisations were invited to submit nominations:

Association of Drainage Authorities
Confederation of British Industry
Country Landowners Association
National Chambers of Commerce
National Farmers Union
Transport and General Workers Union

In addition English Nature and the Countryside Commission were asked to submit a joint list after consultation with other environmental and conservation bodies. Candidates were also sought from the central list held by the public appointments unit of the Cabinet Office.

The objective is to reflect a range of interests in the ministerial appointments to each committee, having regard to the expertise provided by those committee members appointed by local authorities and by the National Rivers Authority.

Baby and Infant Milks

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the definition of independent person, name of preparatory infant formulae and brand name as used in European Commission directives 91/321 and 92/52.

Mr. Soames: Neither Commission directive 91/321 nor Council directive 92/52 on infant formulae and follow-on formulae define such terms. Any interpretation of these terms where used in the law would be a matter for the courts.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will extend the ban on advertising of baby milks and the giving of free samples to include follow-on milks and specialised baby formulae for infants under one.

Mr. Soames: The Government are currently reviewing the comments received during the consultation exercise on the proposed United Kingdom regulations on infant formulae and follow-on formulae to implement the relevant EC directives. Our decision on the final form of the regulations will be announced as soon as possible.

Wine

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the price at which British wholesalers buy wine per 75 cl bottle, *(b)* what she estimates the price of wine per bottle would be in a free market without European Community price intervention, *(c)* the levels of European Community production and consumption of wine, *(d)* the level of common agricultural policy expenditure on wine subsidies and *(e)* the cost to the British Exchequer of European Community intervention in the wine sector.

Mr. Jack: The price at which British wholesalers buy wine is a matter for commercial negotiation and varies by consignment.

It is not possible to estimate the price of wine without European Community price intervention for the reasons given in my reply to the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on 11 January at columns 65-6.

The European Commission estimates that European Community wine production in the 1992-93 wine year was 184 million hectolitres—mhl—that 127 mhl was consumed as wine in the EC, net exports were 7 mhl and other uses—for example, vinegar, vermouth and eaux de vie—15 mhl.

Total common agricultural policy expenditure in 1993 on the wine regime was 1,510 million ecu—£1,186 million —provisional outturn.

The Exchequer cost of CAP support for wine in the United Kingdom is estimated at £591,000 for the 1993-94 financial year. The United Kingdom also contributes to the European Community budget as a whole, which funds the cost of the wine support system in other member states.

Flood Defence Committees

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many MAFF-appointed members of regional flood defence committees of the National Rivers Authority receive direct or indirect pecuniary benefits from the flood defence operations of the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Jack: The terms of appointment of ministerial members draw attention to the provisions referred to in paragraph 14 of schedule 4 to the Water Resources Act 1991 whereby if a member or his or her spouse has any pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, in a contract, proposed contract or other matter which is to be considered at a meeting of the committee at which the member is present, the member must disclose the fact and refrain from taking any part in the proceedings relating to that contract or other matter. In addition, members are requested to avoid any conflict of interest between their RFDC responsibilities and any personal or business interests.

Soil Erosion

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice her Department gives to farmers to avoid soil erosion in flash floods.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My Department published the code of good agricultural practice for the protection of soil in December last year.

The code provides practical guidance to help farmers and growers avoid causing long-term damage to the soil and specifically deals with techniques to combat soil erosion caused by water.

Copies of the soil code have been placed in the Library of the House.

DEFENCE

Helicopters

11. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effects of low-flying helicopters on animal livestock in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Low-flying helicopters have been accepted as the cause of claims from farmers for dead or injured livestock, resulting on a number of occasions in the payment of compensation.

Ceremonial and Guard Duty

17. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much ceremonial and guard duty is required of how many horses and troops; at what average annual cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Ceremonial and guards duties are currently undertaken primarily on a full-time basis by 824 Army and Royal Air Force personnel at an estimated cost in 1993-94 of £18,650,000. Included in this sum is the cost of 362 horses involved in mounted duties.

Bosnia

18. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to revisit Bosnia to examine the conditions of British troops.

Mr. Rifkind: I maintain a close interest in the conditions under which British forces are deployed in Bosnia. I make regular visits there, most recently last month, and I was particularly impressed, as are we all, by the dedication and courage demonstrated by our forces in carrying out their work under difficult and dangerous conditions.

Ferranti

19. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consequences Ferranti's decision to call in the receiver has had for Britain's armed services.

Mr. Aitken: The receivership of Ferranti International has had no consequences of any significance for the armed forces. The receivers are continuing to trade, and my Department has co-operated fully with them to avoid disruption to MOD contracts.

Women Personnel

20. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the defence relationship with the American armed forces and on the implications of their policy on women personnel for the United Kingdom services and on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom's defence relationship with the American armed forces is wide ranging and involves frequent contacts at all levels. The American armed forces' policy on the employment of female personnel is unlikely to have any material implications for the United Kingdom armed forces.

Expenditure

21. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the difference in real terms between the planned level of defence spending in 1994-95 and the actual expenditure in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1990.

Mr. Hanley: Details of previous and planned defence spending between 1978-79 and 1996-97 are contained in table 3.3 of the statistical supplement to the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", 1994-95, Cm 2519, which was published on 25 February.

Contracting Out

22. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards contracting out RAF engineering and maintenance work.

Mr. Aitken: Engineering and maintenance activities in support of the Royal Air Force are currently being drawn together as part of the new RAF Logistics Command, which will come into being with effect from 1 April 1994.

However, as the House knows, the defence costs study "Front Line First" is examining the whole of the defence support area to ensure that current plans provide the most cost-effective approach to supporting the front line, and its recommendations are awaited.

D-day

23. **Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role his Department is playing in planning the celebration of the 50th anniversary of D-day.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence is chairing the steering group responsible for co-ordinating the United Kingdom's involvement in the D-day commemorations.

Personnel Reductions

24. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the percentage cut in the regular armed forces and in the reserves since "Options for Change"; and what reductions are planned for the next five years.

Mr. Hanley: Between 1 April 1990 and 1 January 1994, the total strengths of the regular and volunteer reserve forces reduced by 15·6 per cent. and 14·5 per cent. respectively. On current plans, a further reduction of 5·1 per cent. in the strength of the regular forces will be made by 1 April 1995. These figures exclude the former Ulster Defence Regiment, which was part of the volunteer reserve forces until it formed the home service battalions of the Royal Irish Regiment on 1 July 1992 and became part of the regular forces. At the present time, it is not possible to forecast any further changes in the manpower levels in the regular or volunteer reserve forces.

Space-based Missiles

25. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts on space-based missile defence.

Mr. Hanley: There have been no recent NATO ministerial discussions on space-based missile defence but the overall issue of ballistic missile defence remains under regular review and this includes regular discussion at official level within NATO.

Battle Tanks

26. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many main battle tanks will be in service with the British Army by the end of the century.

27. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many main battle tanks will be in service with the British Army by the end of the century.

Mr. Aitken: One hundred and twenty-seven Challenger 2 tanks are already on order from Vickers Defence Systems. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced to the House of Commons Defence Committee on 1 December, subject to the negotiation of satisfactory contractual terms we intend to place a further order for up to 259 more of these tanks. The number of main battle tanks that will be in service with the British Army by the end of the century will therefore be up to 386.

Yugoslavia

28. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many armed services personnel are currently serving offshore and on the ground in former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hanley: There are currently some 2,260 armed forces personnel serving in the Adriatic and some 2,450 on the ground in the former Yugoslavia. In addition, some 650 Royal Air Force personnel are based in Italy in support of United Nations and NATO air operations in theatre.

Peacekeeping Forces

29. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of Britain's peacekeeping forces worldwide; and what proportion of this cost is reimbursed from the United Nations.

Mr. Hanley: United Kingdom military personnel have been involved in five United Nations peacekeeping operations during the financial year 1993-94; the additional cost is likely to total between £100,000,000—£110,000,000. Reimbursement from the United Nations for the same period so far amounts to £23,000,000. The United Kingdom stands to claim up to a further £25,000,000, subject to other member states paying their assessed contributions.

10 Squadron

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *347*, if he will place in the Library copies of the criteria used for determining repayment charges for non-defence tasks carried out by 10 Squadron; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Rosyth Naval Base

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the cost involved in the change of task at Rosyth naval base in terms of redundancies and associated costs for civilians and the transfer of naval personnel;

(2) what are the numbers involved in the change in task of Rosyth to a minor war vessels operating base for both civilian and royal naval personnel as at *(a)* July 1991, *(b)* January 1994 and *(c)* completion of change of task to a minor war vessels operating base;

(3) if he will provide an update on the annual savings over five years expected from the change in task at Rosyth naval base;

(4) if he will make it his policy that the social and economic implications of changes at Rosyth will be taken fully into account during the current review;

(5) if he will place in the Library a copy of the terms of reference for the studies regarding minor war vessel base porting being carried out at Rosyth, Plymouth Devonport and Portsmouth.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Lady to my letter of 3 March 1994; a copy of which is being placed in the Library of the House.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the annual value for the past five years

of refit, docking and essential defects and other work carried out by Rosyth royal dockyard on minor war vessels based at Rosyth and elsewhere; and what percentage this represents of the total shipwork expenditure on minor war vessels.

Mr. Aitken: The annual value of refit, docking and essential defects and other work carried out by Rosyth royal dockyard over the past five years on minor war vessels is set out:

£ million

	At outturn prices
1989-90	26·57
1990-91	27·18
1991-92	25·73
1992-93	21·54
1993-94	[1]23·17

[1]Estimate.

Some minor war vessel work is undertaken by the fleet maintenance groups at the naval bases. Since these organisations are capacity funded, not all costs arising out of minor war vessel work are attributed to this task. It is, therefore, not possible to establish a meaningful percentage comparison with the total shipwork expenditure on minor war vessels. However, broad indications are that in 1992-93 the figure was around 60 per cent. and the estimate for the current financial year is around 80 per cent.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the Government's assessment of the resulting unemployment rates in Dunfermline and Fife if the Rosyth naval base were to be closed as a result of the current review.

Mr. Aitken: No decisions on the defence costs study have been taken, nor will they be until Ministers have been presented with the findings of the study as a whole. It is too early to speculate about the outcome of this work.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many redundant personnel formerly employed at Rosyth naval base have used the redundancy counselling and relocation service provided by British Coal Enterprise; and how many of these have gained employment as a result.

Mr. Hanley: Between 12 October 1992 and 28 February 1994, of the 92 employees who registered with British Coal Enterprise, 81 subsequently attended outplacement training. Of this number, 75 decided to pursue full-time employment in the area. To date, 41 have found new jobs and four, who were provided with additional specialised training, are now self-employed. Of the 30 still seeking employment, 15 remain employed at Rosyth naval base.

Defence Costs Study

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what plans he has to establish an overall strategy for dealing with the restructuring process arising from the defence costs study; and if he will make it his policy to take into account the social and economic impact on the communities involved;

(2) what mechanisms are in place for the restructuring of military establishments and the use of redundant assets: and what assessment he has made of the work done to date.

Mr. Aitken: The defence costs study is examining all aspects of support to the front line. One aim of the study is to develop proposals for change that will ensure that assets employed in defence support areas are not under-utilised.

It is too early to speculate about the outcome of this work, but all relevant factors will be taken into account.

Recruitment

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of current levels of naval recruitment from Scotland and the north of England; and what were the expressed first base preferences for *(a)* Rosyth and *(b)* Faslane.

Mr. Hanley: During the recruiting year 1993-94 the Royal Navy has recruited 40 officers and 223 ratings from the North region.[1] Information on applicants' preference is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

[1] *Note:* The North region is defined as the area from Cumbria to Cleveland northwards, including Northern Ireland.

Civilian Establishments

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list his Department's civilian establishments, their locations, their functions and the number of people they each employ.

Mr. Hanley: In the interests of security, it is not my Department's practice to publish complete lists of all its civilian establishments and their functions.

Home Military Bases

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the United Kingdom's home military bases, their locations and the number of service personnel based and civilian staff employed at each of them.

Mr. Hanley: In the interests of security, it is not my Department's practice to publish complete lists of all the United Kingdom's military bases.

Submarines and Fishing Vessels

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the internal investigation into the incident between HMS Valiant and the fishing vessel Audacious to be made available to members of the Department of Transport's fishing industry safety committee sub-group dealing with submarine and fishing vessels matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The investigation into the incident between HMS Valiant and fishing vessel Audacious has now been completed and the findings are being examined. As I indicated in the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) on 18 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *506*, the findings of the investigation will shortly be made available to the members of the Department of Transport's fishing industry safety group sub-group on submarine and fishing vessel interaction, which includes representatives of the fisherman's federations.

Regimental Boards of Inquiry

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the notice required to be given to witnesses or persons appearing before a regimental board of inquiry about their right to be represented.

Mr. Hanley: There is no set period of notice required to be given to persons appearing before regimental inquiries or boards of inquiry. Reasonable steps are taken to ensure that those witnesses who are likely to be affected by the outcome of the board of inquiry, and are therefore entitled to be legally represented, have the opportunity to seek legal representation.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has commissioned within his Department, or from outside consultants, any study on the long-term safety of the high-level liquid nuclear waste storage tanks at Sellafield; and what is his policy in regard to evaluating independent expert reviews of nuclear waste storage safety.

Mr. Eggar: No, this is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc subject to the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate's views as to safety. Where appropriate, the NII considers factors such as studies by independent experts in its assessment of operators' safety cases.

Miners (Employment)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many miners were in employment in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* the United Kingdom in each year since 1964.

Mr. Eggar: The numbers of wages earners on colliery books at 31 March each year since 1964 were as follows:

Thousands

Year	*England*	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*United Kingdom*
1964	373·0	79·4	52·9	505·3
1965	353·9	73·8	49·6	477·3
1966	326·4	64·9	44·9	436·2
1967	307·7	60·1	41·9	409·7
1968	274·7	54·1	36·0	364·8
1969	240·1	47·1	31·5	318·7
1970	223·4	42·2	30·1	295·7
1971	216·4	39·9	30·1	286·4
1972	207·6	38·0	28·4	274·0
1973	200·9	36·0	26·7	263·6
1974	186·0	32·2	24·3	242·5
1975	190·9	33·1	24·8	248·8
1976	188·3	31·8	23·6	243·7
1977	188·0	31·2	22·9	242·1
1978	187·2	30·2	21·9	239·3
1979	182·8	28·6	21·0	232·4
1980	184·6	27·6	21·0	233·2
1981	178·4	26·6	19·8	224·8
1982	169·9	25·5	17·4	212·8
1983	162·3	23·9	16·5	202·7
1984	146·7	21·3	13·1	181·1
1985	139·6	20·5	11·3	171·4
1986	116·1	14·7	7·7	138·5
1987	94·4	11·0	4·5	109·9
1988	74·9	10·6	3·5	89·0
1989	69·8	8·0	2·4	80·2
1990	58·8	5·1	1·5	65·4
1991	52·8	3·1	1·4	57·3
1992	40·8	1·6	1·3	43·7
1993	29·3	1·2	1·2	31·7
[1]1994	9·6	0·4	1·0	11·0

[1] Men on books at 28 February.
Source: British Coal.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many public interest immunity certificates he, or his predecessors, have been asked to sign in each year since 1979; how many he or his predecessors decided not to sign; and if he will make a statement of his policy on signing public interest immunity certificates.

Mr. Heseltine: No central record is kept of public interest immunity certificates signed since 1979.

The use of public interest immunity certificates is currently an issue before Lord Justice Scott's inquiry. I have already given my evidence to the inquiry.

Newsagents

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes he plans to introduce to the current arrangements for retailing newspapers following the publication of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on newsagents.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) on 1 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *623*.

Research and Development

Mr. Butler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the Government's assistance for exceptional projects scheme of financial support for investment and research and development projects.

Mr. Sainsbury: I announced on 26 January 1993 the suspension of the assistance for exceptional projects scheme from 1 March 1993 until April 1994. I have decided to maintain this suspension until at least the end of June 1994.

Regional Challenge

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he intends to introduce a regional challenge as part of the way in which the European regional development fund will be deployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: It is my intention to introduce, consistently with the council regulations, a new competitive element in the way that ERDF money is allocated in objective 1, 2 and 5b areas of England. Under this regional challenge, modelled on the city challenge concept, a proportion of ERDF money, to be determined in agreement with the Commission, would be allocated separately by competition on the basis of local regeneration or development proposals submitted by local partnerships.

Competition would take place only within each community support framework area. The distribution of the structural funds between the regions would not be affected.

I believe that this initiative will stimulate local communities to work together to produce imaginative proposals, encourage a more coherent overall approach to local issues, lever in significantly increased private sector funding and enhance value for money. Relevant United Kingdom public expenditure programmes, including the single regeneration budget, will in principle be available within existing public expenditure provision to contribute towards successful bids alongside the ERDF and other resources. The arrangements will be administrated in each region by the integrated regional offices.

Regional challenge should enhance the effectiveness of the structural funds in each community support framework area. The initiative will be worked up in consultation with the local partnerships and with the agreement of the Commission, with the aim of introducing it when the community support frameworks are adopted later this year.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales intends to open discussions immediately on the introduction of a separate regional challenge scheme in the Principality.

Inertia Address Listing

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to seek to amend the regulations governing inertia address listing.

Mr. McLoughlin: Persons who do not wish to receive unsolicited mail can have themselves removed from most mailing lists by registering with the mailing preference service. I see no need for additional regulation in this area.

Communication on Superhighways

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if his Department is currently sponsoring research into communication superhighways.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department sponsors a diverse range of activities at European and national level which underpin the developments of advanced information highways.

At the European level, the Community has so far spent over 1 becu—£700 million—through the research in advanced communications for Europe—RACE—programme. The research carried out will assist the development of integrated broadband communications.

At a national level, my Department jointly sponsors with the Science and Engineering Research Council, the following relevant link programmes: personal communications, £20 million, higher performance interfaces and protocols, £8 million, computer supported co-operative work, £13 million, and optoelectronic systems, £30 million.

A recent study conducted for the Department of the international competitiveness of the United Kingdom telecommunications infrastructure concluded that the United Kingdom's existing information infrastructure can stand comparison with the best in the world. The work referred to will help to ensure that United Kingdom maintains this position.

Patent Office

Mr. Mills: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he plans to announce the recommendations of his consultants and his conclusions on the consultation period on the proposed privatisation of the Patent Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am still considering the report by the consultants on the review of the Patent Office, along with the views which have been put to the consultants and direct to my Department during the course of the review. I shall announce my conclusions as soon as I am in a position to do so.

Rover Group

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, columns *828-30*, what was the estimated percentage United Kingdom content of the cars manufactured in the United Kingdom in 1973; what is his estimate of the content in 1993; and if he will estimate the number of each category of cars produced by Rover and the overall United Kingdom content, including the operating profit but excluding licence payments.

Mr. Sainsbury: This question can be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *319*, what are his reasons for expecting the takeover of Rover by BMW to make Rover more competitive than it would have been under the pre-existing arrangements with Honda; and whether his expectation includes *(a)* overseas markets as well as the United Kingdom market, *(b)* cars as well as utilities, *(c)* medium cars as well as small cars and *(d)* contract suppliers as well as Rover itself.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my statement to the House, on 31 January, *Official Report*, columns 615-16.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, columns *615-16*, if he will make a statement on the reasons why the number of fraudulent trading convictions submitted by bodies other than the Insolvency Service fell from five in 1992-93 to two in 1993-94.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The number of cases submitted by bodies other than the Insolvency Service which contain allegations of possible offences of fraudulent trading, and the number of prosecutions arising from such referrals, is small. The variations from year to year are erratic.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement as to how his consultants on the privatisation of the Insolvency Service should compare the efficiency of the Insolvency Service with that of insolvency practitioners with regard to mechanical processing work in the absence of data on the number of voluntary liquidations completed in any year.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The consultants' work will involve a comparison between the value for money offered by

private sector contractors with that provided by official receivers in performing those mechanical, processing tasks carried out by official receivers.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the current proposals being drawn up by the Insolvency Service agency for major information technology expenditure where the proposals have not yet been quantified or approved.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Insolvency Service continues to explore the possibility of productive investment in information technology across the range of its functions and in the light of its likely business needs.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much of the expenditure on information technology during the last five years and the expected expenditure during the next five years by the Insolvency Service relates to *(a)* mechanical processing work and *(b)* investigation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The bulk of the service's information technology expenditure over the last five years and during the next few years has been and will continue to be made in three areas. These are:

(i) development and support for the Insolvency Service information system mainframe system;
(ii) development and installation of the service's local office information system—LOIS—which will replace ISIS in due course; and
(iii) the development of a new computer system for central accounting unit.

Both ISIS and LOIS supports the range of the service's functions.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *419-20*, what assessment he has made of the reasons why authorising bodies have struck off only one unfit insolvency practitioner since the introduction of the Insolvency Act 1986 where the initial complaint did not originate with the Insolvency Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Many complaints about the conduct of insolvency practitioners are made initially to my Department's Insolvency Service, notwithstanding that the particular practitioner concerned is authorised by one of the recognised professional bodies. This may be because the complainant is not aware of the authorisation procedures introduced by the Insolvency Act 1986 or, alternatively, he does not know by which of the bodies the practitioner is authorised.

The Insolvency Service refers such complaints to the appropriate authorising body to take such action as may be appropriate.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many trials for fraudulent trading resulted in an acquittal for each of the past five years; and how many of those trials were instituted by the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The figures for trials in proceedings brought by my Department where any defendant pleaded not guilty to one or more charges of fraudulent trading are set out in the following table. Records are not kept in such a form that information about the origin of all these cases is readily available, but I can say that in 1992-93 seven of the unsuccessful trials arose from investigations by the Insolvency Service and that in 1993-94 all of the unsuccessful trials arose from such investigations.

Fraudulent trading cases 1 April 1989-4 March 1994

Years (1 April-31 March)	*Total number of fraudulent trading trials*	*Number of successful fraudulent trading trials*	*Number of unsuccessful fraudulent trading trials*
1989-90	18	14	4
1990-91	14	11	3
1991-91	27	8	9
1992-93	27	17	10
1993[1]	29	18	11

[1] To 4 March 1994.

Note:
"Trials" means contested cases where one of the main counts is fraudulent trading.
"Successful" means a conviction is secured for fraudulent trading against one or more defendants in the trial.
"Unsuccessful" means no conviction for fraudulent trading was secured against any defendant in the trial. It includes cases where one or more convictions were secured in other counts, for example for Theft Act offences or for failure to keep proper accounting records.
The figures are for cases prosecuted by the DTI. Other agencies, such as the Crown Prosecution Service, also prosecute offences of fraudulent trading.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the cost of employing consultants on the privatisation of the Insolvency Service; and if the cost will be met from the Insolvency Service budget.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The purpose of the review of the future of the Insolvency Service is to examine the ways in which official receivers may concentrate more on their investigatory role by involving the private sector more in the mechanical processing work in insolvencies. The cost of the review, which is commercially confidential, will be met from Insolvency Service resources.

Insolvency

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many compulsory insolvencies distinguishing between companies and personal bankruptcies were dealt with by insolvency practitioners in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The number of compulsory insolvencies passed to insolvency practitioners and the number of final accounts received from them on conclusion of their administration were as follows:

	1991-92 Cases to Final		1992-93 Cases to Final		1993-94 Cases to Final	
	IPs	a/c's	IPs	a/c's	IPs[1]	a/c's[2]
Bankruptcy	5,150	2,844	5,258	3,024	4,125	2,969
Companies	1,514	927	1,417	1,030	1,119	1,015
Total	6,664	3,771	6,675	4,054	5,244	3,984

[1] 9 months to 31 December 1993
[2] 11 months to 28 February 1994

Disqualification

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many directions to proceed with disqualification were issued in official receiver cases in 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if he will make a statement as to the reasons underlying the change in numbers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In 1992-93 there were 164 directions to proceed with disqualification proceedings in official receiver cases. In 1993-94 there were 50 directions for the nine months ended 31 December 1993.

The decline in the number of proceedings issued is a consequence of the reduced investigative time available to official receivers in the light of recent high levels of compulsory insolvencies.

EC Assistance

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those areas in the United Kingdom originally designated for European Community objective 5b assistance but subsequently removed from such designation, giving the size and population of each area.

Mr. Sainsbury: In its announcement of 21 December 1993, the European Commission proposed an objective 5b population for the United Kingdom of 2·816 million. It did not designate precise areas but invited the Government to define in detail areas within the population total. The Commission subsequently increased this total to 2·841 million.

In order to accommodate a small number of additional areas originally proposed by the Government for objective 2, and in order to express the population of all the areas concerned on a different statistical basis requested by the Commission, it was necessary to propose a marginal adjustment to many of the areas originally proposed for objective 5b.

Where an adjustment led to a net reduction in the proposed population for an area it was in the range from 2 to 11 per cent. The sum of these adjustments led to a total net reduction of 136,000.

There were no implications for the United Kingdom's financial allocation under objective 5b.

Post Office

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the implications of the introduction of optical character recognition equipment in sorting offices for employment levels in the Post Office.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has made no assessment of the implications of the introduction of optical character recognition in sorting offices for employment levels in the Post Office as this is an operational matter for the Post Office board. I understand from the Post Office that any reduction in staffing levels to date has been achieved without compulsory redundancies and that it hopes to continue on this basis.

British Telecom

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the impact of the regulatory regime in the United Kingdom on the ability of British Telecom to be a major player in global telecommunications.

Mr. McLoughlin: Current telecommunications regulation achieves a good balance between the need to ensure real and effective competition and the need to avoid over-burdensome restrictions on companies. BT has benefited from its experience in the liberalised United Kingdom environment. This has been in large part responsible for its development into an internationally successful company.

Advertising

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 18 January, *Official Report*, column *513*, if he will make a statement on why Classic FM was used by his Department in its advertising campaign regarding the submission of company accounts; and what other media outlets his Department considered, or employed.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Responsiility for the subject has been delegated to the chief executive of the Companies House executive agency for which my Department is responsible. I have, therefore, asked Mr. David Durham to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. David Durham to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 March 1994:

On 2 March you tabled the following Parliamentary Question:

> "To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his Answer of 18th January, Official Report, column 513, if he will make a statement on why Classic FM was used by his Department in its advertising campaign regarding the submission of company accounts; and what other media outlets his Department considered, or employed."

Following the answer given by Mr. Neil Hamilton MP, I am replying as Chief Executive of Companies House.

I have made use of Classic FM because it was an appropriate radio station for a national filing awareness campaign, having the most appropriate demographic profile of the national commercial stations.

As I commented in my previous letter, the introduction of Late Filing Penalties in July 1992 has provided a major boost to the completeness of the company register. However, many companies appear to remain unsure of their filing obligations and continue to file late.

Companies House does recognise that awareness of the legal obligations, which include dates by which company accounts must be filed, is an important aspect of the process of enabling companies to meet their obligations under the Companies Acts. We were deeply disappointed to learn from independent research that 55 per cent. of company directors did not know what their due dates were. We see it as our duty to ensure that we use all reasonable means to make the business community aware of the deadlines for filing all accounts and the mandatory penalties which apply.

A variety of media are considered to ensure that company directors are aware of these facts and the penalties that apply. These include commercial radio, inserts in technical press, national press and direct reminders, all of which have been used at various times to good effect. In addition, as indicated in our winning Charter Mark submission, we attend roadshows, exhibitions, hold customer days, issue Notes for Guidance and provide a central enquiry unit.

Independent market research is commissioned to monitor the effectiveness of our communications. Recent results indicated that 75 per cent. of accountants and 49 per cent. of companies thought it was important that Companies House should advertise to inform and remind companies of their due dates for filing.

I hope this is helpful.

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override his Department's accounting officer's objections.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* From records currently available there have been no such occasions in the Department of Trade and Industry, but formal directions have been issued to ECGD on three occasions, all of which have been reported to Parliament —*Official Report*, 8 July 1981, columns *125-26*; 16 October 1990, columns *771-72*, and 30 June 1993, column *511*.

Legal Advice

Mr. Winnick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade from what sources he receives outside legal advice for his departmental duties.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* In the first place I look to the solicitor to the Department of Trade and Industry and his staff. I also have access, where necessary, to advice from the law officers. In cases where special expertise is required or where the effective use of resources makes this desirable, I make use of the services of the Treasury Solicitor's Department and of the Bar or solicitors in private practice.

Investigating Accountants

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of whether present arrangements are sufficient to ensure that no conflict of interest arises when investigating accountants are appointed as receivers of a company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* This issue has been brought to my attention many times but a convincing case for statutory intervention has yet to be made.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to review the arrangements whereby investigating accountants can be appointed as receivers of a company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* My Department has already contributed to a review of ethical guidance initiated by the insolvency profession which covered, amongst other things, the issue of investigating accountants being appointed receivers and I do not believe further action is appropriate at the moment.

Royal Mail

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made about value added tax exemption being removed following the possible privatisation of the Royal Mail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* The EC sixth VAT directive requires the supply of services by the public postal services to be VAT exempt. A privatised Royal Mail would continue to provide public postal services. The Government are therefore satisfied that VAT would not be charged on stamps sold by a privatised Royal Mail.

Fire Safety

Mr. Michael: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now extend the current review of the enforcement of fire safety legislation to allow further consultation with fire service authorities and with particular reference to the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* The review of fire safety enforcement and legislation involves consultation with all interested parties. These include representatives of all the various fire service bodies, including the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority.

Companies Legislation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the SRU report on the options for changing the structure of Companies House and company registration.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* We are currently considering the SRU report and have yet to take any decision on its publication.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 9 March 1994

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Shalfleet Bridge

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when the Shalfleet bridge was first placed on the draft list of listed buildings; and when the county council was advised of the draft listing of this structure.

Mr. Brooke: Shalfleet bridge was included in the draft resurvey list which was submitted to my Department by English Heritage on 9 July 1993. A copy of the draft list was sent to South Wight borough council on 12 July 1993, and I understand that the Council passed it on to the Isle of Wight joint planning technical unit, which serves South Wight and Medina borough councils and the Isle of Wight county council.

My Department does not send copies of draft lists to county councils: copies are sent only to district planning authorities.

Arts Council of England

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he will announce the members of the new Arts Council of England.

Mr. Brooke: Shortly.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on Child Support Agency case reference no. 1001953851, dealt with at the Longton agency; and on what grounds the agency cancelled the child maintenance order concerned.

Mr. Burt: The case was taken on under section 6 of the Child Support Act 1991 and the maintenance order was subsequently superseded and ceased to have effect by virtue of regulation 3(6) of the Child Support (Maintenance Arrangements and Jurisdiction) Regulations 1992.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the policy of the Child Support Agency regarding using first-class post rather than second-class post;

(2) how many letters on average are sent by the Child Support Agency to each person who is the subject of a claim prior to the statement of the new contribution required;

(3) what was the overall cost of administration and the cost of the postage bill for the Child Support Agency in the last available year.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Mike O'Brien, dated 8 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the overall cost of administration, the cost of postage and the number of letters issued by the Child Support Agency before a maintenance assessment is completed.

As the Agency has not completed its first year of operation, the actual full year's costs are not yet known. The total budget allocation for the Agency's capital and running costs for the year 1993-94 is £116 million, of which £2·2 million has been allocated for postage.

Figures are not collected centrally on the total number of letters issued to individual clients before a maintenance assessment is made. Our records indicate, however, that in addition to the initial letter, reminders are currently required in 50 per cent. of cases, and further verification required in 40 per cent. of cases.

All correspondence issued by the Agency's computer system and payments are sent by first class post. Clerically issued correspondence will normally be sent by second class post.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what instructions are given to the Child Support Agency to protect single mothers who have disabilities or children with disabilities from a possible £8·80 a week income support reduction or withdrawal of their benefit book.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Ms Mildred Gordon, dated 8 March 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the instructions given to the Child Support Agency to protect single mothers with disabilities, or single mothers with children who have disabilities from a possible £8·80 reduction in their income support.

The instructions given to child support officers (CSOs) on dealing with reduced benefit directions are contained in the Child support Manual, a copy of which is contained in the Library. There are no specific instructions concerning single mothers who have disabilities or children with disabilities, but the decision to implement a reduced benefit deduction is made only after the CSO has considered the impact on the welfare of the children.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many assessments the Child Support Agency has made; how many assessments are being challenged by parents with care; and how many assessments are being challenged by absent parents.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Ms Mildred Gordon, dated 8 March 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the numbers of maintenance assessments issued by the Child Support Agency which have been challenged.

During the period 5 April 1993 to 31 December 1993 the Agency assessed 121,600 cases, and received 16,600 requests for

second tier reviews of assessments. A breakdown of how many requests for review were initiated by absent parents, and how many by parents with care is not available.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many cases have been dealt with by the Child Support Agency to date;

(2) how many of all the cases dealt with by the Child Support Agency to date have involved absent parents who are in receipt of income support.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Ms Rachel Squire, dated 8 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for the numbers of cases dealt with by the Child Support Agency.

From 5 April 1993 to 31 December 1993 the Agency took on 711,000 cases.

In the same period, over 200,000 cases were cleared, and more than 121,600 resulted in a maintenance assessment. Of these 24,300 cases involved absent parents receiving income support.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases to date the Child Support Agency has used earnings deduction orders to obtain maintenance payments.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Ms Rachel Squire, dated 8 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of deductions from earnings orders issued by the Child Support Agency.

To the end of February 1994, the Agency had issued deductions from earnings orders in an estimated 1,400 cases.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what target time the Child Support Agency has for completion of assessments of new child support claims; how many of the claims made after April 1993 have been assessed within the target time; and in how many cases the Child Support Agency has exceeded the target time by *(a)* four weeks, *(b)* eight weeks and *(c)* 12 weeks.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Ms Rachel Squire, dated 8 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the target time for completion of a child maintenance assessment by the Child Support Agency.

The Agency does not have a target time for completion of assessments. The original expectation was that it would take between 6 to 12 weeks to clear a straightforward case once the Agency was fully operational. To date, the process has been more time consuming than had previously been expected. Information for the period 5 April to 31 December 1993 shows that 45·5% of assessments have been cleared in under 40 days, 12 % in between 40 and 100 days, and 42% in over 100 days.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the cases dealt with by the Child Support Agency to date have resulted in absent parents requesting a review of maintenance assessment; if there is a target time for dealing with reviews; what is the average length of time required to complete the review process; and in how many cases the review process has exceeded the target time.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Ms Rachel Squire, dated 8 March 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about reviews of child maintenance assessments.

During the period 5 April 1993 to 31 December 1993 the Child Support Agency received 16,600 requests for second tier reviews of assessments. Information on clearance times is being collected but, because of the relatively low volumes, it is too early for reliable information to be available. At this stage we are, therefore, unable to estimate how long it should take to complete a review.

A breakdown of how many requests for review were initiated by absent parents, and how many by parents with care is not available.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much, on average, it costs the Child Support Agency to access and collect £2·20 from an absent parent on income support.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Ms Mildred Gordon, dated 8 March 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the cost to the Child Support Agency of administering the collection of £2·20 from absent parents on income support.

The assessment and collection of the £2·20 deduction from an absent parent on income support is part of the Agency's overall assessment and collection services and, as such, is not costed as a separate item, being part of the total costs of administration. Given, however, that the process involves automated transfers of multiple payments, the marginal cost attributable to each individual case will be very small.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, (1) pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column 695, when estimates will be available of the amount of money the Child Support Agency will be expected to recover in *(a)* 1994-95 *(b)* 1995-96 and *(c)* 1996-97;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column 695, what is the estimated shortfall between the Child Support Agency target of £530 million to be recovered in 1993-94 and the actual amount now expected to be recovered.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ross Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Mike Hall, dated 8 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security, about the estimated shortfall in benefit saving recoveries for 1993-94 and when estimates will be available of recoveries for future years.

We are not yet able to provide an assessment of the level of benefit savings that the Agency will achieve in 1993-94 because of uncertainties caused by the effect of the recent policy changes.

Targets for the Agency, including that for benefit savings, are set annually. The 1994-95 target will be announced in due course.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Renton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases the Child Support Agency has pursued to date when there is in existence a court agreement regarding maintenance.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my right hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Tim Renton, dated 8 March 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State about the number of cases the Child Support Agency has pursued where there was an existing court order.

Up to 31 December 1993, the latest date for which figures are available, the Agency had issued maintenance application forms to 344,000 absent parents, of which 121,600 have resulted in the assessment of maintenance. Figures are not kept on the number of cases in which a prior court agreement existed. It is estimated, however, that 45 per cent. of cases taken on will have an existing maintenance arrangement, a proportion which includes court agreements.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

Child Poverty

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list research commissioned or undertaken by his Department since 1979 into the causes and effects of poverty, material deprivation and very low family income among children in any part of the United Kingdom, specifying the year and cost of each project; and whether he has any plans for such research.

Mr. Burt: Research is regularly conducted into the role of social security and its impact on those in low-income households. A list of research projects sponsored by the Department is published in the social security research yearbooks, formerly the DHSS handbook of research and development, copies of which are in the Library.

In addition, the Department sponsors a number of long-running statistical surveys to monitor change in the composition and circumstances of households and the level and nature of their income. These provide the basic data for research and analysis by other interested researchers.

World Summit

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *691*, if he proposes to prepare a report on poverty for the world summit on social development planned to take place in Copenhagen in March 1995; and if he will specify which other memberes of the European Union have already issued such reports in preparation for that summit.

Mr. Burt: I have no such plans, and am not aware of any reports on poverty that have been issued by European Union countries in preparation for the world summit on social development.

Funeral Payments

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes he plans to make to the rules governing funeral payments from the social fund.

Mr. Scott: Amendments to the Social Fund Maternity and Funeral Payment (General) Expenses Regulations 1987 have been laid before Parliament today. They aim to ensure that help will be focused more accurately on those who have good reason to take responsibility for funeral costs. People in genuine nerd of help will not be affected.

Housing Benefit

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants living in private rented accommodation had their housing benefit reduced in the last year; and what was the average level of reduction.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available. Decisions on the level of housing benefit paid in individual cases are matters for local authorities, which may restrict payments on the basis of a rent officer's determination or may choose to pay benefit exceeding that amount.

Crisis Loans

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many crisis loans were paid for rent in advance for the last year.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is published in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's annual report on the social fund for 1992-93, which is in the Library.

Family Credit

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time taken to process an application for family credit.

Mr. Burt: The assessment of family credit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Ms Tessa Jowell, dated 8 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the average length of time taken to process an application for Family Credit.

Firstly, I should explain that the Benefits Agency's 1992-93 target, set by the Secretary of State is to clear 60 per cent. of claims to Family Credit within 13 days.

The average clearance time for the latest month, February 1994, is 12·11 working days. I am also able to inform you that over the last six months, claims to Family Credit have been cleared in an average of 11·72 days.

I hope my reply has been helpful.

Income Support

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what representations he has received from Coventry concerning undue delay in the payment of income support;

(2) what standard is set for the time to be taken to process and pay income support to a woman who is within 11 weeks of her expected date of confinement;

(3) what information is required of an income support claimant who is within 11 weeks of expected date of confinement in order to evaluate their claim;

(4) what representations he has received from Coventry concerning the Benefit Agency asking unnecessary and irrelevant questions of income support claimants;

(5) to what explanation an income support claimant is entitled in a case of extensive delay in processing and paying a claim;

(6) what investigations are currently being conducted into the processing and payment of income support from the Coventry office.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Robert Ainsworth, dated 8 March:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about claims to, and the payment of, Income Support (IS) in Coventry.

National targets for the 1993/94 year for IS claims are that 71% should be decided within 5 working days and 90% within 13 working days. Coventry District Office has achieved clearance rates of 74·1% within 5 working says and 89·7% within 13 working days in the year to date.

The Benefits Agency Customer Charter, a copy of which I have enclosed, is freely available in any of the Agency's District Offices and states clearly that, where a delay occurs, the customer should contact the person dealing with their claim who will explain clearly the reason for it. If they are not satisfied with this explanation, they can contact the Customer Service Manager, who will then deal with the complaint. The name and address of the Customer Service Manager is displayed in all public areas of the Agency's offices and is also given on request to customers.

Complaints addressed personally to the Manager of the Coventry office are not broken down to record the specific subject. I should also explain that no record is kept of the number, or nature of complaints, answered by IS staff, which were not referred to either the Customer Service Manager or Office Manager at Coventry.

A customer who claims IS must supply any information necessary for an independent Adjudication Officer to decide entitlement to benefit. In addition, customers who are pregnant must also provide a certificate of Expected Date of Confinement provided by their GP or hospital.

Peter Light, the Manager at Coventry District Office has informed me that he has no complaints under investigation concerning the processing of IS, or delays in making payment by his staff. However, if you have received a specific complaint or allegation, Mr. Light can be contacted and he will investigate it as a matter of priority and provide you with a full written report of his findings.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Benefits, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are currently receiving *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* disability allowance, *(c)* family credit, *(d)* income support, *(e)* invalidity benefit and *(f)* sickness benefit in the Doncaster area.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 8 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about benefit recipients in Doncaster.

The information is not available in the format requested. This is because Benefits Agency District boundaries do not correspond with county or borough boundaries. A small part of the Doncaster area falls within that covered by the Mexborough Branch Office of the Agency's Rother and Dearne District.

Statistics relating to the Mexborough customers living in the Doncaster area receiving Sickness Benefit, Invalidity Benefit, Income Support and Family Credit could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However, I have provided details for the area covered by the Doncaster District only.

Statistical data for each of the benefits is collected and collated over different periods and timescales. The latest available figures show that on the last working day of January 1994 there were 14,728 people claiming Invalidity Benefit and 3,160 people claiming Sickness Benefit; on the last working day of February there were 30,800 people claiming Income Support, and at 18 February 1994 there were 3,010 people claiming Family Credit.

Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance are centrally administered benefits. A clerical trawl would be necessary to ascertain the number of Attendance Allowance beneficiaries residing in Doncaster. To obtain the same information for Disability Living Allowance recipients would necessitate a scan of the DLA computer system. Both these exercises could only be carried out at a disproportionate cost.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many landowners claiming full exemption from inheritance tax have been found not to have made appropriate arrangements to publicise the right of public access to their land.

Mr. Dorrell: Landowners who breach the undertakings they have given to secure conditional exemption are liable to an inheritance tax charge on the current value of the land. To date there has been no need to raise any such charge. Any questions which have arisen have been resolved in discussion.

Council Tax

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the initial cost of the valuation of properties for council tax.

Mr. Nelson: The cost of the initial valuation banding of domestic properties for council tax was £36,067,401.

Paris Club

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his current policies within the Paris Club; which countries are in consultation with the club; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The United Kingdom's policy is to work with other creditors in the Paris Club to negotiate sustainable reschedulings of bilateral claims that will maximise recoveries. For severely indebted, low-income

countries, the United Kingdom's view is that more concessional relief is required, along the lines proposed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in Trinidad in 1990, and the Government are working to achieve a consensus for this.

At its latest meeting, which ended on 4 March, the Paris Club agreed concessional reschedulings for Senegal and Niger. The world bank's publication "World Debt Tables 1993-94", a copy of which is in the Library, contains details of earlier multilateral debt relief agreements.

Banknotes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amount of banknotes will be printed by the Bank of England for each financial year from 1994-95 to 1996-97.

Mr. Nelson: The Bank of England expects to print approximately 1,400 million notes of all denominations in each of the next three years. This is the same as it will print in 1993-94.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the breakdown of the PSBR in this fiscal year between central and local government.

Mr. Nelson: A detailed breakdown of the forecast for the PSBR for 1993-94 was given in table 6.11 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report published last November. The table gives a summary of this information.

	£ billion
Central Government borrowing requirement on its own account	50·2
Local authority borrowing requirement	–0·8
Public corporations borrowing requirement	0·4
PSBR	49·8

Air Passenger Duty

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made regarding the revenue derived from air passenger duty per annum in respect of *(a)* scheduled passenger flights and *(b)* charter flights to and from (i) Leeds-Bradford airport and (ii) Humberside airport.

Sir John Cope: CAA statistics for 1992 show terminal passenger traffic by individual airports. Assuming that all flights are return flights and that the proportion of EC to non-EC flights is the same as nationally, it is estimated that the air passenger duty revenue per annum for flights departing from these airports will be of the order of magnitude shown below.

	(£ million)	
	Scheduled	Charter
Humberside	0·2	0·2
Leeds/Bradford	0·9	0·8

Building Societies (Pre-tax Profits)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table giving the pre-tax profits for each financial year from 1978-79 for the following building societies *(a)* Halifax, *(b)* Nationwide, *(c)* Woolwich and *(d)* Abbey National now plc.

Mr. Nelson: These figures are not collated by the Treasury, but they are in the public domain. I suggest that the hon. Member approaches the institutions directly.

Betting Duty

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment his Department has made of the loss of betting duty caused by the cancellation of horse race meetings due to bad whether during the last year.

Sir John Cope: Receipts from general betting duty in the latest three months, November 1993 to January 1994, were 2·6 per cent. lower than in the same period a year earlier. This compares to an increase of 6 per cent. for receipts in the months May 1993 to January 1994. It is not possible to attribute the fall in receipts specifically to bad weather, but this is likely to have been a factor.

VAT Penalty Regime

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received since the November Budget on the VAT penalty regime; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: There was extensive and very helpful consultation about the VAT penalty regime before the Budget. There have been very few further representations since.

Sports Clubs (VAT)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the total amount of value added tax wrongly imposed on sports clubs in respect of subscriptions and the hire of grounds and equipment for each year since 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise estimates, based on information from the Department of National Heritage, are that repayments will amount to some £10 million for each calendar year since 1990.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury currently makes no use of freephone or freepost facilities and there is no record of it having done so since 1979.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column 96, if he will provide whatever information is

available of those occasions on which he, or other Ministers in his Department, have signed public interest immunity certificates, and for what reasons.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have not signed any public interest immunity certificates as Chancellor of the Exchequer and no other serving Treasury Minister has ever signed such a certificate.

So far as I am aware, the only public interest immunity certificate signed by a Treasury Minister since 1979 was signed in January 1988 by my right hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) in his then capacity as the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. That certificate was issued in connection with civil proceedings in which the Bank of England was concerned, and related to Treasury and bank documents. Public interest immunity was claimed on the grounds that it was necessary that the documents in question be withheld from production, in the case of some, for the proper functioning of the public service, and in the case of others, for the proper exercise by the bank of its functions and responsibilities as a central bank and banking supervisor. The claim was considered by the court and upheld.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Departments spend on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if he will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* The information requested is set out for each of the Chancellor's Departments. The expenditure shown relates to the current financial year, unless otherwise stated.

Her Majesty's Treasury
EXPENDITURE: £7,800 per annum.
PROVISION: School Holiday Playscheme and Emergency Nursery places.
Number of children receiving childcare this financial year to date: 32.

Inland Revenue:
EXPENDITURE: The Inland Revenue subsidise a number of nurseries and playschemes, both in monetary terms and also by providing accommodation, utilities and administrative support. Childcare budgets are delegated to 34 regional offices, and no data are held centrally.
PROVISION: Nurseries and Playschemes.
Number of children receiving childcare: 651 use playschemes and 147 use workplace nurseries.

National Investment and Loans Office
EXPENDITURE: £481 per annum.
PROVISION: School Holiday Playscheme.
Number of children receiving childcare this financial year to date: 3.

Government Actuary's Department
No expenditure on childcare.

Department for National Savings
No expenditure on childcare.

Registry of Friendly Societies
No expenditure on childcare.

Royal Mint
No expenditure on childcare.

Central Statistical Office
EXPENDITURE: £5,798 per annum.
PROVISION: Playschemes.
Number of children receiving childcare this financial year to date: 57.
The CSO also spent £173,000 in 1992-93 building and setting up an on site nursery for 34 children.

Customs and Excise
EXPENDITURE: £428,000 per annum.
PROVISION: Workplace nurseries, bought in schemes and other playschemes.
Number of children receiving childcare this financial year to date: approximately 1,000.

Paymaster General's Office
EXPENDITURE: £44,500 per annum.
PROVISION: Nursery.
Number of children receiving childcare this financial year to date: 43.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Young Offenders

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department where a 17-year-old alleged offender who is deemed to be category A would normally be held in the prison system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Jean Corston, dated 9 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about where a 17 year old alleged offender who is deemed to be category A would normally be held in the prison system.

For any alleged offender who, because of the nature and circumstances of their alleged offences, is placed in category A, security must be the first priority.

Unconvicted persons in prison custody who are placed in category A can only be held in Prison Service establishments with an appropriate level of security. In the case of a 17 year old alleged (ie unconvicted) offender the only YOI with a level of security appropriate to hold a category A is Moorland. Unless the courts to which a 17 year old would have to be taken for remand and trial appearances are within reasonable travelling distance of Moorland, such an individual would have to be held in a category A holding local prison.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the detailed rules of the revised criminal injuries compensation scheme, the tariff scheme.

Mr. Howard: The detailed rules of the tariff scheme, which comes into force on 1 April 1994, are being published today.

A copy of the text of the rules and the accompanying guide, which explains to claimants how the new scheme works and the criteria adopted for deciding applications, have been placed in the Vote Office and the Library. Copies of both documents may be obtained from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, Tay house, 300 Bath street, Glasgow G2 4JR.

Bail Hostels

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *253*, relating to the expected savings in 1994-95 in respect of bail hostels, what directions have been given to the West Midlands probation service as to the savings to be made in 1994-95.

Mr. Maclean: The Home Office has not given directions to the West Midlands probation committee on this matter. The committee has been asked to identify two approved hostels for closure so that the necessary savings in public expenditure may be made.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he had received about his decision to close 11 bail hostels.

Mr. Maclean: Representations have been received from a number of hon. Members, probation services, and others involved in the criminal justice system from the areas affected.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements will be made for offenders in the west midlands when there is no vacancy in a bail or probation hostel in the west midlands.

Mr. Maclean: There are over 100 approved hostels in England and Wales, a number of which are located in probation areas neighbouring the west midlands. All are available to the west midlands courts and it is the responsibility of the probation service to bring them to those courts' attention.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of those remanded on bail are remanded to bail hostels.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not held centrally and is not available.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the total reduction in funding for bail hostels is being met from the west midlands.

Mr. Maclean: Some 16 per cent.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide details of the rates charged by local authorities to other local authorities for accommodating those remanded on bail when there is no vacancy available in their own hostels.

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities are required to pay a standard flat rate charge for hostel residents for whom they have responsibility, irrespective of where that hostel is located. For 1993-94 the weekly charge is £65·03.

Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were sentenced to a prison term under each offence category in the latest year for which figures are available; and what numbers and percentage of the total were fine defaulters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 9 March 1994:

RECEPTIONS UNDER SENTENCE

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many people were sentenced to a prison term under each offence category in the latest year for which figures are available; and what numbers and percentage of the total were fine defaulters.

The information you have requested is given in the table.

Receptions into prison service establishments by offence, 1993[1]

Offence	*Immediate imprisonment*	*In default of payment of a fine*	*All*	*Percentage in default of payment of a fine*
All offences	52,337	22,583	74,920	30
Violence against the person	7,537	1,575	9,112	17
Murder	214	0	214	0
Manslaughter	183	0	183	0
Other homicide and attempted homicide	403	5	408	1
Wounding	4,826	785	5,611	14
Assaults	11,371	612	1,983	31
Cruelty to children	46	1	47	2
Other offences of violence against the person	494	172	666	26
Sexual offences	1,849	34	1,883	2
Buggery and indecency between males	179	1	180	1
Rape	428	0	428	0
Gross indecency with children	223	2	225	1
Other sexual offences	1,019	31	1,050	3
Burglary	9,532	1,673	11,205	15
Robbery	3,075	59	3,134	2

Offence	Immediate imprisonment	In default of payment of a fine	All	Percentage in default of payment of a fine
Theft and handling	9,142	4,431	13,573	33
Taking and driving away	2,178	349	2,527	14
Other thefts	5,228	3,451	8,679	40
Handling stolen goods	1,736	631	2,367	27
Fraud and forgery	1,790	698	2,488	28
Frauds	1,665	659	2,324	28
Forgery	125	39	164	24
Drugs offences	3,126	495	3,621	14
Other offences	12,255	13,391	25,646	52
Arson	430	24	454	5
Criminal damage	701	1,842	2,543	72
Immigration Act 1977	7	0	7	0
In charge or driving under the influence of drink or drugs	1,665	579	2,244	26
Other motoring offences	5,007	7,210	12,217	59
Offences relating to prostitution	19	91	110	83
Drunkenness	161	526	687	77
Vagrancy	28	93	121	77
Other	4,237	3,026	7,263	42
Offence not recorded	4,031	227	4,258	5

[1] Provisional figures.

Police Expenditure

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the expenditure *(a)* per officer, *(b)* per 100,000 population (i) in total, (ii) on vehicles, (iii) on buildings, and (iv) on communications by year for the last four years for the police forces in (1) Humberside, (2) North Yorkshire, (3) South Yorkshire and (4) West Yorkshire.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Total expenditure per officer and per 100,000 population is set out in the table. Separate totals for expenditure on vehicles, buildings and communications are not held centrally.

(a) Total expenditure per officer, based on establishments at 1 April each year:

	1990-91 (£)	1991-92 (£)	1992-93[1] (£)	1993-94[2] (£)
Humberside	35,572	40,262	42,798	44,665
North Yorkshire	35,100	38,743	43,288	46,604
South Yorkshire	33,935	36,514	41,229	43,565
West Yorkshire	36,651	40,671	42,942	46,306

(b) Total expenditure per 100,000 population, based on mid-year population figures:

	1990-91 (£000's)	1991-92 (£000's)	1992-93[1] (£000's)	1993-94[2] (£000's)
Humberside	8,311	9,245	9,880	10,312
North Yorkshire	6,807	7,566	8,490	9,140
South Yorkshire	7,850	8,466	9,583	10,126
West Yorkshire	9,347	10,395	10,859	11,709

[1]Using estimated expenditure for 1992-93.
[2]Using budgeted expenditure for 1993-94.
[3]Based on mid-1992 population figures. 1993 figures not yet available.

Arrests and Prosecutions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the number of *(a)* arrests and *(b)* prosecutions, (i) per officer and (ii) per 100,000 population by year for the last four years in the police authority areas covering (1) Humberside, (2) north Yorkshire, (3) south Yorkshire and (4) west Yorkshire.

Mr. Maclean: The readily available information is given in the table.

Arrests and prosecutions per officer and per 100,000 population

	Arrests—all offences		Prosecutions—indictable offences only	
	Per officer	Per 100,000 population	Per officer	Per 100,000 population
1989				
Humberside	18	4,182	4	916
North Yorkshire	12	2,458	4	737
South Yorkshire	13	3,088	4	983
West Yorkshire	15	3,803	4	1,001
1990				
Humberside	18	4,212	4	913
North Yorkshire	14	2,800	4	819
South Yorkshire	15	3,396	4	998
West Yorkshire	16	4,073	4	1,056

	Arrests—all offences		Prosecutions—indictable offences only	
	Per officer	Per 100,000 population	Per officer	Per 100,000 population
1991				
Humberside	18	4,172	4	924
North Yorkshire	15	2,882	4	864
South Yorkshire	15	3,527	4	1,034
West Yorkshire	16	4,148	4	1,108
1992				
Humberside	17	4,026	4	907
North Yorkshire	16	3,201	5	909
South Yorkshire	15	3,556	4	999
West Yorkshire	16	4,046	5	1,288

Police Capital Programmes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the capital programmes by year for the last four years for the police authority areas covering *(a)* Humberside, *(b)* north Yorkshire, *(c)* south Yorkshire and *(d)* west Yorkshire.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Total capital allocations for the forces concerned were:

Capital allocation	1990-91 £ million	1991-92 £ million	1992-93 £ million	1993-94 £ million
Humberside	1·567	3·293	2·839	2·811
North Yorkshire	1·119	1·989	1·970	1·905
South Yorkshire	4·081	3·525	4·737	4·112
West Yorkshire	8·646	14·627	14·951	8·469

Bail (Reoffenders)

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were charged with criminal offences committed while already on bail in Plymouth in 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not available centrally.

Fraudulent Trading

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many successful fraudulent trading convictions were obtained in each of the last five years, excluding those obtained by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Maclean: Court proceedings information held centrally on fraud cases cannot separately identify whether an offence was one of fraudulent trading.

West Midlands Probation Service

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what considerations underlay the reduction of the funding to the West Midlands probation service; what estimate he has made of this on the Shard End drive training project in Birmingham; and what facilities for projects alternative to the Shard End drive project exist in the west midlands.

Mr. Maclean: There has been no such reduction in funding. The West Midlands probation service's revenue grant for 1994-95 is 5·4 per cent. higher than in 1993-94 and the funds allocated to it from the probation supervision grants scheme are 46 per cent. higher. The Shard End drive project has previously been funded under the scheme. It is for the West Midlands probation service to decide, in preparing its plans for partnerships with the independent sector, which individual projects to continue to support.

The service has decided to invite applications from any interested organisation in the area to run drive training activities in future. The response will show the service what alternative facilities are or might be available.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *704*, if he will provide occupancy figures for each probation and bail hostel in the west midlands for each of the last four quarters for which figures are available after discounting those beds in hostels which are not available due to refurbishment under the non-availability was approved by his Department.

Mr. Maclean: The West Midlands probation service has provided the following occupancy figures, which exclude places taken out of use for refurbishment. In most cases the Home Office approval for temporary withdrawal of places was not sought or required.

Location	[1]Per cent.	[2]Per cent.	[3]Per cent.	[4]Per cent.
Carpenter House	91	96	83	78
Bilston	96	81	88	88
Stoke Green	89	72	64	81
Welford House	69	72	67	74
Crowley House	55	48	57	60
Marshall House	89	90	91	92
Sycamore Lodge	80	79	73	84
Stonnal Road	n/a	n/a	81	88

[1]January to March 1993.
[2]April to June 1993.
[3]July to September 1993.
[4]October to December 1993.
Note: Stonnel Road re-opened in May and the first complete quarterly figures available are April to June. Elliott House did not open until November 1993.

Fines (Non-payment)

Ms Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of remanded or sentenced women received into custody in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* the west midlands for each quarter for the last five years for non-payment of fines imposed for not possessing a television licence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Lynne Jones, dated 9 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking if he will list the number of remanded or sentenced women received into custody in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* the West Midlands for each quarter for the last five years for non-payment of fines imposed for not possessing a television licence.

The available information is for England and Wales, 1991-93 and is given in the attached table. No females were held on remand for this offence during the period 1991 to 1993. No information is available for the period before 1991 as the offence of non-payment of fines for not possessing a television licence was not separately identified in the prison statistics.

Females received for non-payment of fine imposed for not possessing a television licence

Quarter	*From all courts sentencing in England and Wales*[1]	*From a court sentencing in the west Midlands*
All 1993	292	19
1st	70	3
2nd	61	1
3rd	83	7
4th	78	8
All 1992	163	5
1st	41	1
2nd	33	—
3rd	47	2
4th	42	2
All 1991	136	2
1st	18	—
2nd	43	2
3rd	26	—
4th	49	—

[1] Includes those from the west Midlands.

Immigration

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people he estimates are in the United Kingdom illegally and how many have been here for more than five years; how many adults have children; and how many are self-sufficient in terms of housing and income.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Comprehensive information on the number of persons who have entered illegally or are in the United Kingdom in breach of the conditions imposed on their leave to enter or remain here is not available.

Moorlands Prison (Escape)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement in respect of the escape from Moorlands prison by remand prisoner, Craig Weekly; and if he has been recaptured;

(2) to which prison Craig Weekly, remand prisoner, escaped from Moorlands prison, will be sent when recaptured.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 9 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the escape of Craig Weekly from Moorland prison, whether he has been recaptured and the prison to which he will be sent when recaptured.

Craig Weekly escaped from Moorland prison on the afternoon of Saturday 5 February 1994. Mr. Weekly has been recaptured and is being held in Perth prison in Scotland pending the results of police investigations into whether there will be any criminal charges arising from his actions whilst unlawfully at large. Once any such charges have been dealt with he will be returned to Moorland prison to face a discipline adjudication resulting from his escape and to await any further court appearances.

Deportation

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what were the numbers and costs of deportations in each of the past three years and the numbers and costs of the enforced deportations in those years when those deported had not been convicted of a criminal offence;

(2) how many of those deported in 1991, 1992 and in 1993 were in family units of more than one person.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on the numbers of people removed from the United Kingdom under the deportation process is given in the table. The other information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

People removed from the United Kingdom under the deportation process

	1991	*1992*	*1993*
Total people removed under deportation process[1]	2,616	2,583	[3]2,254
of which, a deportation order was enforced[2], excluding deportation action following a court recommendation	256	399	[3]449

[1] Including persons who departed voluntarily, but excluding illegal entrants removed. In total, some 6,100 people were removed as illegal entrants or under the deportation process in 1993.
[2] That is excluding voluntary and supervised departures.
[3] Provisional figure.

Prison Education

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the expenditure by each local education authority in respect of classes in prisons, detention centres or community homes with education for each year since 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Payments made to local education authorities for the provision of education in prisons and young offender institutions in England and Wales since 1 April 1989 are as follows:

	£ million
1989-90	20·2
1990-91	24·1
1991-92	26·0
1992-93	28·2
1993-94	[1]8·6

[1] Estimated.

The payments in 1993-94 reflect the changeover this year to direct provision through further education colleges

and other providers, rather than through local education authorities, consequent upon the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

Expenditure on education classes in community homes falls within the departmental responsibilities of the Department of the Environment. Details of such expenditure, and of payments made to individual local education authorities, are not held centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of quail used in scientific procedures under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 during 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not available. Changes which are being introduced to the system for the collection of the annual statistics of scientific procedures will make it possible from 1995 onwards to distinguish between different types of birds used in experiments.

Absences from Prison

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances those convicted of rape and other serious crimes are permitted to enjoy periods of absence from prison for social reasons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Patrick Nicholls, dated 9 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the circumstances in which those convicted of rape and other serious crimes are permitted to enjoy periods of absence from prison.

Under Prison Rule 6, prison governors have powers to allow temporary release to sentenced prisoners. Temporary release may be granted to a prisoner under Prison Rule 6(2) *"for any special purpose or to enable him to engage in employment, to receive instruction or training or to assist him in the transition from prison life to freedom"*. Temporary release is not, however, available to unconvicted and convicted unsentenced prisoners; sentenced prisoners who are remanded on further charges; persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971; prisoners who are subject to extradition proceedings; prisoners who are considered to be mentally ill or suffering from mental disorder or have been committed to prison as a place of safety; and prisoners who are in Category A or on the escape list.

Before temporary release may be granted, governors must be satisfied that a prisoner can be trusted both to abstain from crime during a period of temporary release and to return to prison afterwards. In addition, governors are required to consult headquarters before temporary release may be granted to certain categories of prisoners. These include prisoners serving 10 years or more and not within 12 months of release and prisoners convicted at any time of a serious sexual offence.

A review of the present arrangements has recently been undertaken. The conclusions and recommendations are now being considered.

Crime (Street Lighting)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he has issued as to the appropriate level of street lighting for inner-city areas for the purposes of combatting crime.

Mr. Key: Guidance has been published by the British Standards Institution, in BS5489 part 3: 1994: "Code of practice for lighting for subsidiary roads and associated pedestrian areas". A copy is in the Library. This standard classifies the lighting requirements for three categories of crime risk. The responsibility for lighting is with the appropriate local authority.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value in sterling of overseas aid forecast to be made in the current financial year for *(a)* famine relief, *(b)* other aid to improve immediate human conditions, *(c)* technical aid and assistance, *(d)* infrastructural projects, *(e)* debt relief, or assistance with prior contractual commitments and *(f)* consultancy; and if he will list figures within these categories by countries or regions of the world.

Mr. Goodlad: It is estimated that in financial year 1993-94 bilateral expenditure on overseas aid will be as follows:

	Africa £ *million*	*Asia, Latin America and the oceans* £ *million*	*Other* £ *million*
Food aid	19	—	—
Emergency and refugee relief	44	35	48
Debt relief	15	28	—
Country programmes, including aid and trade provisions	306	378	—

Provision for technical co-operation, infrastructure projects and consultancy is included in the country programmes.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value in pound sterling of overseas aid forecast to be made in the calendar year 1993 by the European Commission for *(a)* famine relief, *(b)* other aid to improve immediate human conditions, *(c)* technical and financial assistance, *(d)* infrastructural projects, *(e)* debt relief or assistance with prior contractual commitments and *(f)* consultancy; and if he will list figures within these categories by countries or regions of the world.

Mr. Goodlad: The European Community budget for 1993 includes provision for payments of up to the sums shown in the following table, at current exchange rates:

	Total £ *million*	*UK Share* £ *million*
Food Aid	444	73
Humanitarian Aid	118	19
Aid to Asia and Latin America	276	46
Aid to Mediterranean Countries	265	44
Other Aid Programmes (inc non-Governmental Organisations)	292	48
Aid to Eastern Europe/former Soviet Union	539	89
Emergency Aid Reserve	163	27
Aid for Scientific/Technological Research for Developing Countries	23	4

In addition, in 1993 the European Commission made calls on member states for contributions totalling £1,253 million—United Kingdom share around £208 million—in respect of the European development fund which cover aid to Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries. The EDFs are not financed from the EC budget.

Figures are not available showing EC aid spending by the categories listed in the question.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what records the Government have of payments of aid made by United Kingdom-based charitable organisations to third world countries and the sources of funds for these aid payments;

(2) what is the value in pound sterling of overseas aid forecast to be made either in the current financial year or in the calendar year 1993 by United Kingdom-domiciled charitable organisations for *(a)* famine relief, *(b)* other aid to improve immediate human conditions, *(c)* technical aid and assistance, *(d)* infrastructural projects, *(e)* debt relief or assistance with prior contractual commitments and *(f)* consultancy; and if he will list figures within these categories by countries or regions of the world.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government do not keep records of the overall expenditure by United Kingdom-based charitable organisations on overseas aid. Our records reflect only the grants which the Overseas Development Administration has made available to these organisations.

In 1992-93, the latest year for which figures are available, the Government provided over £147 million to non-governmental organisations of which £79 million was for development work and £68 million for humanitarian relief. A further breakdown of this expenditure into the categories requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Charitable organisations receive funds from a variety of sources including Government donors, the private sector and the general public.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Malone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what steps he has taken or proposes to take to ensure payment of Zimbabwe public service pensions to those eligible in this country;

(2) if he will make representations to the Government of Zimbabwe regarding the payment of Zimbabwe public service pensions to those eligible in this country.

Mr. Goodlad: I am not aware of any current problems with payment. However, our high commission in Harare follows up any examples that come to light.

Consultants (Contracts)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list, by value for contracts with a value of over £100,000, contracts made by the Overseas Development Administration with firms of consultants over the last year, giving *(a)* the value of the contract, *(b)* the nature of the consultancy and *(c)* the domicile of the contractor.

Mr. Goodlad: All consultancies let by the Overseas Development Administration in this financial year with a value of over £100,000 have been made with contractors with a business domicile in the United Kingdom. A list of such contracts has been placed in the Library of the House.

EDUCATION

Sex Education

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) when he expects to publish final guidance relating to the proposed circular on sex education in schools;

(2) what guidance will be given in the new sex education circular to ensure that homosexuality as the norm is not promoted in schools;

(3) what guidance will be given in the new circular on sex education to protect the young from homosexual proselytism;

(4) what guidance will be given in the new sex education circular to ensure that schools teach their pupils the basic facts of the law as it relates to sexual activity.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend hopes to issue the final version of the circular on sex education in schools in April. He is carefully considering the views expressed in the consultations on the draft circular, including those on the matters mentioned by my hon. Friend. The draft circular suggested that schools should be aware of the requirements of the law, and that pupils should be taught about the values and knowledge needed to enable them to behave responsibly and morally.

Nursery Education

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the value of and the contribution his Department makes to promote *(a)* nursery education and *(b)* pre-school play groups.

Mr. Robin Squire: Good nursery education and playgroup provision both contribute to the Government's policy of promoting choice, diversity, quality and cost-effectiveness of pre-school provision in the public and private sectors. One half of three and four-year-olds attend maintained nursery and primary schools, and two fifths attend playgroups. In addition to the funding by local education authorities of pre-school provision, my Department makes grants to a number of national bodies concerned with developing such provision, including the Pre-School Playgroups Association, the British Association for Early Childhood Education, and the National Children's Bureau.

Schools, Gloucestershire

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those schools in Gloucestershire whose status has changed from a grammar school to a comprehensive school in the last 20 years, together with the date of the change.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is not available in the form requested. The Department's records indicate that in 1975 there were 11 grammar schools in Gloucestershire; now there are seven.

Performance League Tables

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on what form performance league tables will take this year and the probable date of publication.

Mr. Robin Squire: On 21 February my right hon. Friend launched the consultation on the content, format and distribution of the 1994 school and college performance tables. He proposed that two sets of tables should again be published, covering secondary schools and institutions catering for students in the 16 to 18 age group. The secondary tables would include data on authorised absence, together with data on unauthorised absence published for the first time in 1993, and information on the length of the taught week. The tables would also contain extra information on vocational qualifications. As in previous years, they would be published in November.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Forth: Freephone and freepost facilities are currently being operated by the Department for the following activities:

A self-governing—GM—schools information line which offers an information pack about GM schools. Estimated cost £20,830;

Requests for copies of the further and higher education charters. Estimated cost £38,123; and

Requests for copies of the leaflet "National School Tests in 1994". Costs are unavailable as the campaign has not yet finished.

In 1993, a freephone was available to answer inquiries about GM schools and freephone and freepost were available to request copies of the leaflet on national curriculum testing "How is Your Child Doing at Schoool?" Costs amount to some £29,963.

In earlier years the Department has not directly arranged freephone and freepost facilities. The Central Office of Information has managed campaigns which have included freepost and freepost facilities on behalf of the Department. Figures for these costs are not available from the COI as they would incur disproportionate costs.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the salary of the chairman of the Grant Maintained Schools Mutual.

Mr. Robin Squire: This is a matter for the Grant Maintained Schools Mutual.

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what is the total cost of insurance for grant-maintained schools;

(2) how many grant-maintained schools are insured by *(a)* Sun Alliance and *(b)* Legal and General.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice is given to grant-maintained schools on insurance by the Grant Maintained Schools Mutual and the Funding Agency for Schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The advice given to grant maintained schools on insurance by Grant Maintained Schools Mutual is a matter for the mutual. No advice has been given by the Funding Agency for Schools as it does not become operational until 1 April 1994.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total budget for each grant-maintained junior, infant and secondary school for Sunderland City education authority and Wandsworth education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: The total budgets for the 1993-94 financial year are as follows:

Wandsworth education authority

	£
Primary schools	
Ethelburga Primary School	439,828
Hillbrook Primary School	925,909
Secondary schools	
Burntwood School	4,487,358
Elliott School	3,870,951
Graveney School	5,244,434
John Paul II Roman Catholic School	1,633,050
Salesian College	1,653,473
Southfields School	3,645,574

The amounts shown for total budget include annual maintenance grant, special purpose grants for restructuring, development, premises, VAT, transitional grant, section 11 grant and capital grants payable to the schools in 1993-94.

There are currently no grant-maintained schools in the Sunderland metropolitan borough education authority area.

Pupil Costs

Sir Harold Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the unit cost per pupil in each local education authority for 1992-93 for *(a)* nursery-primary and *(b)* secondary pupils.

Mr. Robin Squire: The provisional figures for recurrent spending per pupil in local education authority maintained schools in 1992-93, for those LEAs who have submitted returns of their expenditure, are as shown in the following table.

Unit Cost Net Institutional Expenditure Per Pupil 1992-93

	Nursery/ Primary £	*Secondary* £
Corporation of London	3,058	0
Camden	1,873	2,558
Greenwich	n/a	n/a
Hackney	n/a	n/a
Hammersmith and Fulham	2,153	2,926
Islington	n/a	n/a
Kensington and Chelsea	2,018	2,900
Lambeth	n/a	n/a
Lewisham	1,727	2,311
Southwark	1,765	2,353
Tower Hamlets	n/a	n/a
Wandsworth	2,078	3,133
City of Westminster	n/a	n/a
Barking	1,630	2,303
Barnet	1,813	2,615
Bexley	1,395	2,122
Brent	1,461	2,258
Bromley	1,471	2,311
Croydon	1,586	2,265
Ealing	n/a	n/a
Enfield	1,564	2,249

	Nursery/ Primary £	Secondary £
Haringey	n/a	n/a
Harrow	n/a	n/a
Havering	1,472	2,254
Hillingdon	1,622	2,734
Hounslow	n/a	n/a
Kingston-upon-Thames	n/a	n/a
Merton	n/a	n/a
Newham	n/a	n/a
Redbridge	1,553	2,220
Richmond-upon-Thames	1,683	2,222
Sutton	1,509	2,079
Waltham Forest	1,511	2,388
Birmingham	1,440	2,417
Coventry	n/a	n/a
Dudley	1,489	2,072
Sandwell	1,467	2,307
Solihull	1,475	2,066
Walsall	1,384	2,189
Wolverhampton	1,476	2,309
Knowsley	1,412	2,271
Liverpool	1,521	2,469
St. Helens	1,314	2,160
Sefton	1,363	2,074
Wirral	1,387	2,340
Bolton	n/a	n/a
Bury	n/a	n/a
Manchester	1,451	2,358
Oldham	1,721	2,401
Rochdale	1,352	2,162
Salford	1,339	2,113
Stockport	1,419	2,195
Tameside	1,443	2,213
Trafford	n/a	n/a
Wigan	1,338	2,179
Barnsley	1,427	2,096
Doncaster	1,318	1,978
Rotherham	1,561	2,220
Sheffield	1,594	2,176
Bradford	1,651	1,822
Calderdale	1,469	2,061
Kirklees	1,392	2,097
Leeds	n/a	n/a
Wakefield	n/a	n/a
Gateshead	1,627	2,222
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1,635	2,051
North Tyneside	n/a	n/a
South Tyneside	1,386	2,104
Sunderland	1,427	2,094
Avon	1,430	2,186
Bedfordshire	1,491	2,103
Berkshire	1,482	2,158
Buckinghamshire	1,509	2,184
Cambridgeshire	1,496	2,170
Cheshire	1,321	2,072
Cleveland	n/a	n/a
Cornwall	1,421	2,035
Cumbria	1,558	2,286
Derbyshire	1,463	2,224
Devon	1,455	2,099
Dorset	1,392	2,037
Durham	1,519	2,083
East Sussex	1,485	2,187
Essex	n/a	n/a
Gloucestershire	1,555	2,144
Hampshire	1,427	2,143
Hereford and Worcester	1,448	1,977
Hertfordshire	1,497	2,110
Humberside	1,449	2,145
Isle of Wight	1,462	2,009
Kent	1,300	1,909
Lancashire	n/a	n/a
Leicestershire	1,453	2,258
Lincolnshire	1,348	2,049
Norfolk	1,450	2,100
North Yorkshire	1,479	2,146
Northamptonshire	1,343	2,039
Northumberland	1,461	1,918
Nottinghamshire	1,479	2,271
Oxfordshire	1,574	2,039
Shropshire	1,513	2,443
Somerset	1,435	2,133
Staffordshire	1,430	2,040
Suffolk	n/a	n/a
Surrey	1,532	2,274
Warwickshire	1,395	2,126
West Sussex	1,433	2,157
Wiltshire	1,549	2,140

Notes:

1. Figures are derived from local education authorities' returns of their net institutional expenditure to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department for Education. The expenditure figures are provisional and are subject to final checking by the Department of Environment and the Department for Education.

2. Net institutional expenditure covers the direct costs in schools of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the costs of school meals, home to school transport, LEA central administration, and financing costs of capital expenditure. The figure also includes unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management of schools schemes.

EMPLOYMENT

Statistical Accuracy

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what changes he plans to improve the accuracy of employment statistics.

Miss Widdecombe: We are satisfied with the accuracy of the unemployment claimant count. Nevertheless, we have introduced a number of major improvements over the last two years, including bringing out the labour force survey quarterly as opposed to annually, and the first full census of employers for 12 years. Work is in hand to deliver more timely employment statistics on completion of the interdepartmental business register in 1995. The Department will continue to assess the need for further improvements.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the use and costs of these services is not held centrally for the Department as a whole.

British Aerospace Redundancies

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has for retraining staff recently declared redundant at British Aerospace, Lostock, Bolton, in skills suitable for employment in other manufacturing industry.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand that both the local training and enterprise council and the Employment

Service continue to be closely in touch with British Aerospace about the services they can offer. This includes a range of Government-funded programmes to help redundant people find jobs, retrain or set up their own businesses.

Financial Sector Employees

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *201*, what account was taken in the figures published in his answer of persons employed in Greater London but not resident in Greater London.

Miss Widdecombe: The figures were from the labour force survey, which is a survey conducted by interviewing people at their home address. They showed the numbers of people employed in banking, finance, insurance and business services who were resident in Greater London. People employed in banking, finance, insurance and business services who are resident outside Greater London are included in LFS analyses according to their area of residence.

Workstart

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of those who participated in the workstart pilots have gone on to find jobs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* The pilots began last July, and we are currently evaluating them. However, since they provide subsidies to employers who recruit eligible long-term unemployed people for 12 months, their effectiveness in helping those people to remain in regular employment without the support of the scheme will not be clear for some time.

Channel Tunnel (Accidents)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when his Department was first notified of an incident which occurred in the channel tunnel in January in which two channel tunnel workers were taken to hospital for treatment after a bolt of electricity arced across from the main cable; what is the standard procedure for notifying his Department of accidents in the channel tunnel; if he will publish a table giving a full list of accidents in or around the channel tunnel notified to his Department, including dates, nature and injuries sustained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[pursuant to his reply, 18 February 1994]:* I regret that the answer given in my reply of 18 February 1994, *Official Report*, column 1024, was incomplete and that the final paragraph was omitted. The correct information is as follows:

The Health and Safety Executive was notified of this incident on 18 January. It notified the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority on 19 January.

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases, and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 apply to the United Kingdom side of the channel tunnel, and reportable accidents and dangerous occurrences must be notified to the HSE. The HSE informs the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority immediately of any fatal accidents or incidents with potential for major consequences. The HSE also reports regularly to the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority other accident information to assist accident prevention on the French side of the project.

The detailed accident information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, between March 1987 and September 1993, the latest date for which information is available, a provisional total of 1,386 accidents which occurred during work on the United Kingdom side of the channel tunnel were reported to the HSE.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

North Korea (Magnox)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have been requested by the International Atomic Energy Agency to provide details of the Magnox nuclear plant design from which the North Koreans developed its nuclear reactor design for the plant currently part of the nuclear inspection effort of the special IAEA safeguards inspection team presently in North Korea.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information has been provided to the International Atomic Energy Agency on Magnox reactor design to allow it to validate a computer programme used for reactor physics calculations. Such calculations can be applied in the safeguarding of any graphite moderated reactor.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Oliver Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to challenge the European Commision's decision to reduce penalties on Italy, Spain and Greece for exceeding the milk quotas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have lodged challenges in the European Court of Justice against the Commission's decisions to reduce the penalties on Italy, Greece and Spain for exceeding their milk quotas in the late 1980s. The challenges affect the 1989 penalties on Italy and the 1990 penalties on all thre countries. We believe the Commission exceeded its powers by reducing penalties for these years and by announcing its intention to reduce them in the accounts for 1991-1993. The rules on milk quotas are rigorously implemented in the United Kingdom and we expect the Commission to ensure that they are properly enforced elsewhere in the European Community. Taxpayers in the Community should not have to shoulder the loss to the Community budget of some £2 billion which the Commission's actions could entail.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration has been given to a United Nations embargo on oil imports into Sudan; and what are the objections to such a move.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A global embargo on oil imports would require the passage of a United Nations Security Council resolution. We have not ruled out recourse to the UN Security Council but would not want to pursue this option unless we were sure that this was the right tactic.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government will take action at the United Nations to insist that previously inaccessible areas of Sudan such as the Nuba mountains are opened up to human rights organisations and international aid organisations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We whole-heartedly supported the recent resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, which called upon all parties to the civil war to permit international agencies, including human rights organisations, and humanitarian organisations access to the civilian population throughout Sudan. We are pressing this point again at the present meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries on the United Nations Security Council are resistant to any further moves being taken to increase pressure on Sudan to improve its record on human rights.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: China voted against the 1993 United Nations General Assembly resolution on the human rights situation in Sudan and was the only United Nations Security Council member to do so.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken to approach the participants in the Sudanese civil war to see if they would agree to the establishment of safe havens in southern Sudan and in the Nuba mountains; and what was their response.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development leaders have yet to succeed in bringing all parties to the civil war to the negotiating table, and have therefore not had the opportunity formally to suggest confidence building measures of the sort suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Armenia

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had about his country's application for membership of the Council of Europe with the President of Armenia during his recent visit.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Armenia has not applied for Council of Europe membership and the issue was not raised during President Ter-Petrossian's recent visit.

Russian Army

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the strength of the Russian Army in Kaliningrad; what assessment he has made as to whether it conforms to the CFE treaty and other commitments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Russian ground forces in the Kaliningrad oblast number about 41,500 of which some 38,000 are Russian army personnel. The equipment and manpower ceilings imposed respectively by the conventional armed forces in Europe treaty and the concluding act of the negotiation on personnel strength of conventional armed forces in Europe do not come into effect until November 1995.

United Nations Human Rights Commissioner

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the role and responsibilities of the new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The creation in December 1993 of the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, with a wide-ranging mandate, marked a significant step forward in the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. The post will complement and reinforce existing human rights machinery.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freephone facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Goodlad: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has not entered into any agreement to subscribe to freephone or freepost number facilities. Staff can use the national freepost number, 0800, but are automatically barred by our telephone exchanges from using the premium rate numbers 0898 and 0891. Consequently there are no costs involved.

Azerbaijan

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had about his country's application for membership of the Council of Europe with the President of Azerbaijan during his recent visit.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Azerbaijan has not applied for Council of Europe membership and the issue was not raised during President Aliev's recent visit.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will lift the embargo on trade with Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Sanctions will not be lifted until Iraq complies with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

Israeli Settlers

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will press the Israeli Government to disarm Israeli settlers, to commit itself to no further settlements in Palestinian-occupied territory and to see that existing settlements are effectively policed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is very important that the Government of Israel disarm extremist settlers. We welcome the actions announced so far by the Israeli Prime Minister including consideration of outlawing two extremist settler organisations. Our view remains that settlements are illegal and an obstacle to peace.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council on 21 and 22 February.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 21 and 22 February.

The Council discussed preparations for the Marrakesh ministerial meeting in April at which the final act of the Uruguay round will be signed. There was agreement that the final act should be signed by both the Commission and the member states and that member states should participate in the world trade organisation. It was also agreed that the European Parliament should be consulted under the assent procedure on the Community's acceptance of the world trade organisation agreement.

The Commission's proposal for a reciprocal agreement between the United States and the European Community on the mutual recognition of spirit designations was agreed by a qualified majority, with Greece and Italy voting against. The agreement will protect the designation of six EC spirits in the United States, including Scotch whisky, and two United States spirits in the EC.

Ministers discussed the safeguard procedures in the EEA internal regulation. No decision was reached. Ministers also discussed the recent Swiss vote to ban all HGV transit traffic within 10 years. The Commission was asked to prepare a report on how this vote would effect the proposed negotiations on EC-Swiss transport agreements.

The Council agreed an European Union position on structural funds for the accession negotiations with the four applicants. The Council was followed by ministerial negotiating sessions with the applicants. A package of secondary issues was agreed with the Finns. The applicants outlined their concerns on the agriculture and regional policy dossiers. Further discussion of these was left for the 25 to 28 February special ministerial meeting on enlargement.

Ministers discussed arrangements for financing costs arising under the intergovernmental pillars of the treaty on European Union and agreed to return to the issue at a future meeting.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Coal Privatisation

6. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss the privatisation of the coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: Both the President and I meet the chairman regularly to discuss the privatisation of the coal industry and other matters.

Electricity Industry

21. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he is meeting the Director General of Electricity Supply to discuss the agreement between OFFER and the two generators, National Power and PowerGen, on electricity prices and the sale of plant.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I meet the Director-General of Electricity Supply from time to time to discuss various issues.

Industrial Growth

22. **Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what forecasts he has made for industrial growth in the United Kingdom and other EU countries.

Mr. Heseltine: United Kingdom and Ireland are estimated to be the only EC economies where industrial production rose last year. Both the OECD and the European Commission are forecasting that the United Kingdom will be the fastest-growing major economy in 1994 and 1995.

Nuclear Industry

23. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the implications of the recent announcement of the part-privatisation of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for the nuclear industry's future.

Mr. Eggar: The AEA provides services to the nuclear industry and to a wide range of non-nuclear customers. I believe that privatisation will lead to a greater cost-effectiveness and better value for money for all the AEA's customers.

Land Mines

24. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a further statement on his Department's policy on the export of land mines.

Mr. Needham: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton on 12 January, *Official Report*, column 168.

Business Confidence

25. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next proposes to meet the Confederation of British Industry to discuss business confidence.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department has frequent contact with the CBI and its members to discuss a variety of matters of mutual interest. I regularly receive the results of the CBI quarterly survey, the most recent of which showed the fifth consecutive rise in business confidence.

Manufacturing Industry

26. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of United Kingdom manufacturing industry is now owned by foreign companies.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry on 23 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *230*.

35. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his strategy to promote the growth of United Kingdom manufacturing industry including research and development.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department's refocused innovation policy seeks to promote manufacturing industry by putting more resources into helping companies—especially smaller companies—gain access to and exploit technology, whether from the United Kingdom or overseas.

Environmental Technology Exports

27. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the value of British exports in environmental technology, at the latest date for which figures are available; and what share this represents of world trade.

Mr. Needham: Exports of pollution control and monitoring equipment totalled some £480 million in 1992. Figures for world trade are not available on the same basis, but in 1991 exports from the United Kingdom are estimated to have accounted for approximately 10 per cent. of exports of this type of equipment from OECD countries.

Small Firms

28. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take steps to amend company law to safeguard small companies threatened as a result of the insolvency of larger companies who are their customers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no such plans.

Pit Closures

29. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss pit closures.

Mr. Eggar: Both my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss a variety of coal industry matters.

Shipbuilding Industry

30. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the future prospects for the British shipbuilding industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is generally expected that there will be an upturn in demand for merchant ships in the second half of the decade, which will provide more opportunities for the shipbuilding industry.

Motor Car Production

31. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the current levels of motor car production in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany.

Mr. Sainsbury: In 1993 the United Kingdom produced 1·376 million cars, France 2·836 million and the provisional figure for Germany is 3·753 million.

Companies (Political Donations)

32. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will seek to amend the Companies Act 1985 to provide for more publicity to be given to political donations made by companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. The present law requires sufficient disclosure. The Companies Act 1985 requires companies to disclose, in their directors' reports, political donations exceeding £200.

Mobile Phones

33. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures his Department is taking to lessen the possibility of theft and fraudulent use of mobile phones.

Mr. McLoughlin: The scale of mobile phone thefts, and their subsequent fraudulent use, is of considerable concern to the Government, the companies involved and the victims of these crimes. I met my hon. Friend and a delegation from the Federation of Communication Services recently to discuss what further steps could be taken to tackle this problem. I welcome the initiatives which the industry is already taking, including wider use of equipment marking schemes and improved control of electronic serial numbers. My Department, with the Home Office and Oftel, are discussing with the industry how these initiatives should be pursued further. The Government are considering the proposals from my hon. Friend and the FCS for introducing a new criminal offence of reprogramming a mobile phone. In doing so, we shall have particular regard to whether mobile phone users can be adequately protected if such an offence is created, and whether any new offence would in practice be at all effective in reducing the problem of mobile phone thefts.

Iron And Steel Scrap

34. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next plans to meet representatives of the British Foundry Association to discuss iron and steel scrap prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I shall be meeting a delegation of hon. Members and representatives of the steel and foundry industries on 14 March.

Wide-bodied Large Aircraft

36. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance his Department will give to the British aerospace industry towards developing the next generation of wide-bodied large aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: Any application for assistance towards developing new wide-bodied aircraft will be considered on merit and in the light of competing calls on public funds.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

37. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to review the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Under the Government's deregulation initiative, Departments are reviewing all 3,500 regulations for which they are responsible which impose burdens upon business.

The document "Deregulation: Cutting Red Tape" published on 19 January sets out at pages 36 to 44 the deregulatory action my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has already taken and is considering taking to revise the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Energy Exports

38. **Mr. Elletson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to assist United Kingdom energy companies to win export orders.

Mr. Needham: The DTI and FCO's overseas trade services provide a broad package of support and market advice which is available to companies in the energy sector, as indeed it is to those in all sectors.

Special initiatives are also undertaken, such as outward missions to markets of particular interest to energy companies. Recent missions arranged by the projects export promotion division of the DTI visited China, Vietnam and India. In addition, the Minister for Energy, has visited south-east Asia, Kazakhstan and Algeria to promote the United Kingdom's wide-ranging expertise in the energy sector.

PEP also provides the secretariat for the power sector working group of the Overseas Projects Board; which is a working group of senior personnel from industries involved in power generation, including generators, manufacturers and distributors. Its aim is to support initiatives to improve the United Kingdom's performance in winning overseas power project contracts.

The DTI's oil and gas projects and supplies office, which provides support for United Kingdom industry's effort to win orders in international oil and gas markets in the upstream, downstream and petrochemical sectors, has increased the resources which it devotes to export promotion. OSO's support for United Kingdom involvement in overseas markets is being given the highest priority.

Motor Industry (Japanese Investment)

Mr. Michael: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to encourage an increase in the level of Japanese investment in the motor industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government welcome inward investment. Japanese automotive companies have brought jobs and helped transform United Kingdom technical and management practices. We believe that the Government's commitment to their success will lead them to make further investments in the United Kingdom.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are his proposals for monitoring insolvency practitioners in the future; and how unfit practitioners will be struck off.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Following discussions between my Department's Insolvency Service and the professional bodies recognised to authorise insolvency practitioners, the professional bodies have begun putting in place programmes for the routine monitoring of their practitioners. This work was previously carried out by the Insolvency Service, which will continue to monitor the activities of practitioners authorised by the Secretary of State.

In addition to the routine monitoring programmes, the professional bodies will continue, as previously, to respond to complaints about practitioners and carry out inspections of practices where necessary. The Insolvency Service will assist the bodies in the early stages of their monitoring programmes and is taking a close interest in the development of standards and consistency of approach in this area.

Each of the professional bodies has disciplinary procedures in place to deal with complaints about practitioners and there is a range of sanctions available to the bodies including withdrawal of authorisation where it appears to the body that the practitioner is no longer fit and proper. Similarly, the Secretary of State has the power to withdraw the authorisation of a practitioner authorised by him subject to the practitioner's right to have the matter referred to the insolvency practitioners tribunal.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the 24,000 kg of plutonium in nuclear fuel rods awaiting reprocessing at Sellafield, listed on page four of his departmental press release P/94/121 of 1 March, comprising the seventh annual publication of plutonium figures, is *(a)* owned by foreign customers and *(b)* destined for reprocessing through the thermal oxide reprocessing plant; and if he will make a statement on the safeguards applied to this plutonium.

Mr. Eggar: All the material in question is subject to the terms of the United Kingdom—International Atomic Energy Agency—Euratom Safeguards agreement. The majority of it is owned by overseas customers and destined for reprocessing in THORP.

Japanese Inward Investment

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the levels of Japanese inward investment for 1995, 1996 and 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Future levels of inward investment are difficult to assess, however it is widely accepted that the current level of interest from Japanese investors is unlikely to increase until the economic situation in Japan improves.

The warm welcome which this Government and country have for long given to investment from Japan remains as positive as ever. It is therefore encouraging to note that, even though the level of investment from Japan has decreased in recent years, the United Kingdom has maintained its position as the preferred location for Japanese companies with over 41 per cent.—by value to March 1993[1]—of the total Japanese investment in the EC. Future investment from Japan is likely to come from small and medium sized companies, expansions by existing investors and research and development investment, including local research and development departments being set up by manufacturers already in Europe.

[1] *Source:* Japanese Ministry of Finance.

Charter Market Franchises

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many charter market franchises will fall to be abolished under the terms of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill; and what estimate he makes of their compensatory value.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: None. The Government have no intention of abolishing the right of local authorities to hold markets and collect rents as they have done in the past. Clauses 21 to 23 of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill would remove rights of local authorities with market franchises to object to proposals to set up competing markets within six and two third miles of their own.

British Coal

Mr. Clapham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's estimate of the cost of inheriting the historical liabilities of British Coal when the coal industry is privatised.

Mr. Eggar: Estimates of the cost of these liabilities are provided in the explanatory and financial memorandum of the Coal Industry Bill.

Child Care

Ms. Harman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much his Department spends on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if he will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* My Department aims to promote a culture where managers are understanding of the need for staff to balance work and child care responsibilities and is committed to exploring child care schemes which give value for money.

For the financial year 1993-94 the DTI, excluding its executive agencies has an allocated budget of £18,000 for the provision of school holiday playscheme places. Up to a maximum of 32 places are available on any one day that the playscheme is in operation.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of Export Credits Guarantee Department credits related to defence exports for each year since 1980.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* The percentage of ECGD support for capital goods business since 1980 which related to defence exports was as follows:

	Per cent.
1980-81	6·56
1981-82	5·23
1982-83	7·47
1983-84	16·50
1984-85	12·29
1985-86	13·71
1986-87	17·14
1987-88	11·51
1988-89	29·17
1989-90	19·30
1990-91	27·83
1991-92	13·17
1992-93	41·85

No sectoral breakdown is available for ECGD short-term business which was privatised in November 1991.

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of the total Export Credits Guarantee Department credit budget was used in relation to defence contracts for *(a)* Bangladesh, *(b)* Ecuador, *(c)* India, *(d)* Indonesia, *(e)* Jordan, *(f)* Malaysia, *(g)* Nigeria, *(h)* Oman, *(i)* Pakistan and *(j)* Thailand in each year since 1980.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* The percentage of total ECGD support for capital goods services since 1980 which related to defence contracts in the named markets was as follows:

ECGD experience on defence business
Defence as percentage of total overall project business for specific markets

	Bangladesh	*Ecuador*	*India*	*Indonesia*	*Jordan*	*Malaysia*	*Nigeria*	*Oman*	*Pakistan*	*Thailand*
1980-81	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5·42	0	0
1981-82	0	0	0·09	0·73	0·40	0	0·53	0·84	0	0
1982-83	0	0	0	0·28	0	0·33	3·31	0·73	0	0
1983-84	0	0	6·84	0	0	0	0·11	0	0	0
1984-85	0	0	0	4·45	0·60	0	1·91	1·16	0	0·17
1985-86	0	0	1·28	5·44	0	0	0	1·10	0·07	0
1986-87	0	0	0·03	1·94	7·76	0	0	1·43	0	0
1987-88	0	0	0·98	0·35	5·32	0	0	0	0	0
1988-89	0	0	0	0·14	4·75	0	0	0	0·29	0
1989-90	0	0	1·25	0	0	0	0	0·02	0	0
1990-91	0	0	0	0·11	0	7·92	0	14·84	0	0
1991-92	0	0	0	0·10	0	13·07	0	0	0	0
1992-93	0	0	0	11·38	0·35	9·72	0	1·13	0	0

No sectoral breakdown is available for ECGD short term business which was privatised in November 1991.

United Kingdom Investment

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of United Kingdom investment in *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* the other EC countries and *(c)* the rest of the world in each year since 1979; and what estimate he has made of the likely income in each case to the United Kingdom in the current year.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

A geographical breakdown of overseas direct investment by the United Kingdom is provided in the annual business monitor MA4 "Overseas Transactions". Figures for total overseas investment, including portfolio investment, bank and other lending are given in the annual "Balance of Payments Pink Book" which also includes some detailed figures for investment in other EC member states. Both of these publications, by the Central Statistical Office, are available in the House of Commons Library. No figures are published for total overseas investment by the United Kingdom in the United States of America.

Comparable figures on investment income are published in the same sources. No estimates of the likely income in the current year are available.

DEFENCE

Headquarters

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the Procurement Executive headquarters in Bristol and the Naval Support Command headquarters at Bath.

Mr. Aitken: Contracts for the site infrastructure and main construction of the Procurement Executive's new headquarters at Abbey wood, north Bristol have been

placed, and work is proceeding to time and cost. A number of options have been identified in the Bath area for the long-term accommodation of the Naval Support Command headquarters. Decisions on both projects will be taken in the light of the outcome of the defence costs study which is presently in hand.

Public Appointments

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who he has appointed to be the next head of the Defence Export Sales Organisation; and what criteria he used in making the appointment.

Mr. Aitken: A successor to Sir Alan Thomas as head of the Defence Export Services Organisation has not yet been appointed. The post was advertised on 29 September and a decision is likely to be made shortly.

Smiths Industries

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contacts he has had with Smiths Industries about that company's possible provision of advanced avionics systems for the contract to sell Skyhawk fighter bombers to the Argentine air force; and what advice he has given.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has regular contact with Smith Industries on a range of export matters. The United Kingdom embargo on the sale of military goods to Argentina remains in force. Smith Industries is aware of this.

British Aerospace, Bolton

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what defence contracts his Department plans to place with the British Aerospace, Lostock, Bolton, factory.

Mr. Aitken: My Department is evaluating a number of tenders from BAe plc; subject to satisfactory contractual negotiations these may result in our placing contracts with the company. It is a matter for the company's commercial judgment as to which of its factories carries out the work.

Defence Contracts

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *383*, what were the dates on which the memoranda of understanding were signed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The memoranda of understanding referred to were signed as follows. With some countries more than one memorandum of understanding has been negotiated.

Algeria: 1983.
Australia: May 1988.
Bahrain: May 1990.
Bangladesh: between November 1976 and January 1994.
Ecuador: March 1991.
Finland: between January 1976 and September 1993.
Germany: June 1991.
Greece: September 1983.
India: between November 1978 and November 1985.
Indonesia: between September 1983 and November 1991.
Ireland: August 1988.
Jordan: between November 1979 and June 1989.
Republic of Korea: September 1993.
Kuwait: December 1992.
Malaysia: between September 1988 and December 1993.
Netherlands: between August 1977 and September 1989.
New Zealand: August 1982.
Nigeria: date not available.
Norway: between December 1970 and January 1990.
Oman: September 1990.
Pakistan: between June 1988 and January 1993.
Portugal: November 1990.
Qatar: May 1993.
Saudi Arabia: between March 1978 and April 1986.
Singapore: February 1993.
Sweden: February 1994.
Thailand: March 1993.
United States of America: December 1985.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *383*, on which dates negotiations for the memoranda of understanding began; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *383*, which of the memoranda of understanding related to specific defence contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The following memoranda of understanding relate to specific defence sales. It is not, however, the policy of this Government to reveal the content of the memoranda of understanding, nor details of any defence contracts to which they relate.

Bangladesh: between November 1976 and January 1994
Ecuador: March 1991
Finland: between January 1976 and February 1985
Germany: June 1991
India: between November 1978 and November 1985
Indonesia: between March 1984 and November 1991
Ireland: August 1988
Jordan: between November 1979 and June 1989
Netherlands: between August 1977 and September 1989
New Zealand: August 1982
Nigeria: date not available
Norway: January 1990
Pakistan: between June 1988 and January 1993
Portugal: November 1990
Qatar: May 1993
Saudi Arabia: between March 1978 and April 1986
Singapore: February 1993

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *383*, which of the memoranda of understanding cover co-operation over a range of equipments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The following memoranda of understanding cover co-operation over a range of equipments. It should be noted, however, that not all of these MOUs necessarily result in any contractual activity. It is not this Government's policy to release details of MOUs, nor to comment on any contractual activity under such MOUs.

Algeria: 1983
Australia: May 1988
Bahrain: May 1990
Finland: September 1993
Greece: September 1983
Indonesia: September 1983

Jordan: September 1985
Republic of Korea: September 1993
Kuwait: December 1992
Malaysia: September 1988
Norway: December 1970
Oman: September 1990
Qatar: May 1993
Saudi Arabia: February 1986
Sweden: February 1994
Thailand: March 1993
USA: December 1985

War Widows

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many war widows are still receiving pensions in respect of British troops killed during the campaign to defeat the communist insurgency in Malaya.

Mr. Hague: I have been asked to reply. The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Postgraduate Research

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the names of the individuals and organisations to whom the consultation paper "A New Structure for Postgraduate Research Training Supported by the Research Councils", has been circulated.

Mr. Waldegrave: A copy of the circulation list has been placed in the Library. I am also arranging for copies to be sent to the hon. Member and the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster).

"Permanent Secretary's Handbook"

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place a copy of the "Permanent Secretary's Handbook" in the Library.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The handbook referred to is a compendium of guidance and other documents which heads of departments and others with similar responsibilities find useful to have collected together. Much of the material in it is already in the public domain—for example, "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", the "Armstrong Memorandum" on the duties and responsibilities of civil servants, the memorandum of guidance for officials appearing before Select Committees, guidance on Government publicity and advertising, the "Radcliffe Rules" on ministerial memoirs, and guidance on access by Ministers to documents of a previous Administration. Other material, for example on security and vetting procedures, is justifiably confidential.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fair Employment (Health Boards)

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total amount of legal costs incurred by each of the Northern Ireland health boards in defending cases involving sexual and religious discrimination.

Mr. Ancram: The total amount of legal costs incurred by each of the Northern Ireland health and social services boards in defending cases involving sexual and religious discrimination is not known since the majority of cases are still on-going and the costs incurred have not yet been established. The figures in the table represent only those legal fees which have actually been paid during the last three years.

	Sex discrimination £	*Religious discrimination* £	*Joint sex/ religious discrimination* £
Eastern	16,950	11,991	[1]13,585
Northern	Nil	17,603	—
Southern	Nil	Nil	—
Western	1,292	1,907	—

[1] For period April 1993 to date.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what co-ordination exists between each of the Northern Ireland health boards and the Fair Employment Commission.

Mr. Ancram: Health and social services boards each have an equal opportunities unit which is in regular contact with the FEC for advice and guidance on employment matters. Each board also has contact in relation to the monitoring of the composition of its work force.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money in total has been spent by each of the Northern Ireland health boards in settling legal cases taken against the board involving sexual discrimination.

Mr. Ancram: The total money spent by each of the Northern Ireland health and social services boards in settling legal cases taken against the board involving sexual discrimination is shown in the table.

	£
Eastern	[1]73,085
Northern	Nil
Southern	Nil
Western	12,150

[1] Includes £49,468 on joint gender/religious discrimination cases.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the Department of Health will order an investigation into the employment policies of the Northern Ireland health boards.

Mr. Ancram: Health and social services boards are subject to selection and appointment procedures which were issued by the Department of Health and Social Services in June 1991. The HSS boards then have detailed policies to supplement and clarify for their staff the application of the selection and appointment procedures. The Department is satisfied these purposes are fair to all staff.

The health and social services boards also have comprehensive policies in respect of other aspects of employment including equal opportunities, sexual harassment, job sharing, career breaks and employment of disabled people. These policies take into account guidance from other agencies such as the FEC and the EOC.

The Management Executive instituted a review of the selection and appointment procedures in November 1993 and all interested organisations—health and social services boards, health and social services trusts, staff, professional interests, the Fair Employment Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission were invited to contribute to the review.

The Department has looked carefully at existing practice. It is conscious that isolated problems have arisen in respect of the implementation of this policy but is confident that the procedures remain valid and therefore sees no requirement for an investigation.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money in total has been spent by each of the last Northern Ireland health boards in settling legal cases taken against the board involving religious discrimination.

Mr. Ancram: The total money spent by each of the Northern Ireland health and social services boards in settling legal cases taken against the board involving religious discrimination is shown in the table.

	£
Eastern	[1]121,991
Northern	52,500
Southern	Nil
Western	19,646

[1] Includes £49,468 on joint gender/religious discrimination cases.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of religious discrimination are currently pending against each of the Northern Ireland health boards.

Mr. Ancram: The number of religious discrimination cases currently pending against each of the Northern Ireland health and social services boards is as follows:

	Number
Eastern	14
Northern	7
Southern	4
Western	6

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish tables showing for each health and social services board in Northern Ireland the *(a)* number of complaints made in each of the last three years about discrimination on the grounds of (i) gender and (ii) religion, *(b)* the number of each category (1) withdrawn, (2) settled out of court and (3) settled at a court hearing, and the *(x)* costs and *(y)* compensation paid in respect of each category in each such year.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

The majority of the cases are still on-going and consequently the legal costs incurred have not yet been established. The figures in the tables showing legal costs represent only those legal fees which have actually been paid over the last three years.

Year lodged	*Number withdrawn*	*Settled out of court*	*Settled in court*	*Pending*	*Total*	*Legal costs* £	*Compensation* £
Eastern Board							
(1) Gender cases							
1991	—	9	—	1	10	1,762	10,000
1992	6	4	—	1	11	4,188	10,750
1993	1	3	—	6	10	10,999	11,768
(2) Religious cases							
1991	3	3	—	1	7	6,081	25,000
1992	8	5	—	7	20	5,734	65,000
1993	5	—	—	6	11	176	20,000
Northern Board							
(1) Gender cases							
1991	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
1992	1	—	—	2	3	—	—
1993	1	—	[1]1	3	5	—	—
(2) Religious cases							
1991	2	—	—	1	3	—	—
1992	—	—	—	2	2	7,050	5,000
1993	1	—	—	1	2	10,553	47,500
Southern Board							
(1) Gender cases							
1991	—	—	—	—	0	—	—
1992	—	—	—	—	0	—	—
1993	—	—	—	3	3	—	—

Year lodged	Number withdrawn	Settled out of court	Settled in court	Pending	Total	Legal costs	Compensation
						£	£
(2) Religious cases							
1991	3	—	—	—	3	—	—
1992	1	—	—	2	3	—	—
1993	1	—	—	2	3	—	—
Western Board							
(1) Gender cases							
1991	1	3	—	4	8	—	1,950
1992	—	1	1	1	3	1,292	3,200
1993	1	—	—	2	3	—	7,000
(2) Religious cases							
1991	8	1	—	1	10	585	—
1992	1	—	—	2	3	—	—
1993	—	—	—	2	2	1,322	7,000

[1]Board dismissed.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps the Eastern health board took to implement the recommendations laid down by the Fair Employment Commission in the remedies judgment following the Duffy case.

Mr. Ancram: The FEC did not make any recommendations in the remedies judgment following the Duffy case. However, the board's internal inquiry made a series of recommendations which were subsequently adopted by the board.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *58*, for what period the field study for bovine tuberculosis was intended to run; whether that period has been extended; and when he now expects it to be completed.

Mr. Ancram: The sampling of herds to assist with the possible development of a blood test for bovine TB was completed as planned by December 1993. Arrangements for the purchase of all the animals which it was considered necessary to examine have now been completed. It is necessary to analyse and interpret the data before an assessment can be made of the effectiveness of a blood test and whether a fully substantiated case can be made to the European Community to obtain agreement to its use. This is expected to continue until late 1994.

Illegal Fishing

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether it was established by the RUC that Fishery Conservancy Board bailiffs and a scientist had been involved in the stripping of eggs from salmon on the Grillagh river in County Londonderry during the salmon seasons 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Sir John Wheeler: At the request of the Fishery Conservancy Board, the Royal Ulster Constabulary carried out an investigation into this matter in 1989. Following the police investigation a file was sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions who subsequently directed no prosecution.

Campaigns

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1034*, if he will publish the number of calls made to the freephones for the organ donor card and Keep Warm Keep Well winter warmth campaigns and the results from monitoring customer awareness and attitudes in relation to the innovation in research and development campaigns.

Sir John Wheeler: There have been 379 calls made to the freephone for the organ donor card and 88 freephone calls for the Keep Warm Keep Well winter warmth campaign.

Monitoring in relation to the innovation in research and development campaigns indicates that improved customer awareness, attitudes and actions are reflected in a 13 per cent. increase in the number of applications for, and a 70 per cent. increase in the numbers of companies participating in, the product and process development scheme in 1993-94 compared with the previous year. The figures also reflect a 79 per cent. increase in the number of first-time users of the scheme. Under the science and technology programme industrial participation has risen from 50 per cent. in 1992-93 to 100 per cent. in 1993-94.

Road Deaths Statistics

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the number of road deaths in crashes where a driver or rider was above the legal alcohol limit.

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

Road deaths in accidents where driver or rider was estimated by the RUC to be above the legal alcohol limit

Year	Total deaths
1984	25
1985	19
1986	38
1987	33
1988	22
1989	27
1990	41
1991	26
1992	30
1993	25

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the road casualty fatalities and serious injuries in each year since 1984.

Sir John Wheeler: The information is set out in the table:

Road traffic accident casualties

Year	Total killed	Total seriously injured
1984	189	2,465
1985	177	1,148
1986	236	1,825
1987	214	1,885
1988	178	1,969
1989	181	2,014
1990	185	1,993
1991	185	1,648
1992	150	1,841
1993	143	1,725

Prison Service (Costs)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average cost to the prison service in Northern Ireland of admitting a male person to prison; and what is the difference in the cost of admitting a person who has been sentenced to a long period of imprisonment and a person who has been sentenced to seven days.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is not available.

Prison Sentences

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were given a prison sentence in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years for which figures are available for stealing cars and joyriding in such vehicles; what was the average sentence in each year; and how many cars were stolen in each of those years.

Sir John Wheeler: The number of cases where prison sentences were given for the theft and for the unauthorised taking of vehicles in 1990, 1991 and 1992 were respectively 72, 66 and 123. The average prison sentence in each of those years for those sentenced to immediate custody was 5·3, 5·1 and 5·2 months respectively. The number of vehicles reported stolen or otherwise taken and driven away without authority was 7,042 in 1990, 8,455 in 1991 and 9,376 in 1992.

SCOTLAND

Salmon Farming

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the Ernst and Young report on subsidies to the Norwegian salmon farming industry; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I have encouraged Scottish salmon producers to provide the European Commission with such information as is available on alleged unfair support for Norwegian salmon farmers. I have read the Ernst and Young report with interest, and I understand that the report is now in the hands of the European Commission which must decide whether it warrants full and formal investigation.

Limb Defects

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when Ayrshire and Arran health board expects to be able to produce the 1993 statistics relating to limb defects within the health board's area; and for what reasons there has been a delay in collating the information;

(2) what procedures are used by Ayrshire and Arran health board to collate information relating to the incidence of limb defects in children within the health board's area.

Mr. Lang: Statistics on the incidence of limb defects and other congenital anomalies are produced for all health board areas by the information and statistics division of the Common Services Agency. The data are compiled using three sources: the neonatal discharge record—form SMR11—the information on which is provided by each health board, the Scottish stillbirth and neonatal mortality study, and admissions to hospital in the first year of life —form SMR1.

Information on all congenital anomalies, including limb defects, is published on each calendar year's birth cohort. A provisional data set based on the first two sources is published in the summer following the calendar year, and a final data set on the same birth cohort a year later, when all hospital admissions have been added to the provisional data.

The provisional data for 1993 on reduction deformities of limbs by area of residence are as follows:

Board area of residence	Upper limb	Lower limb	Unspecified limb
Argyll and Clyde	—	—	—
Ayrshire and Arran	3	—	—
Borders	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—
Fife	3	—	—
Forth Valley	—	—	—
Grampian	2	—	—
Greater Glasgow	1	—	—
Highland	—	—	—
Lanarkshire	1	—	—
Lothian	1	1	—
Orkney	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—
Tayside	2	2	1
Western Isles	—	—	—
Scotland	13	3	1

Source: SMR11 neonatal record.

Prison Visiting Committees

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to alter the composition and membership of prison visiting committees; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The draft revised Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules issued for consultation last September included proposals to change the size of, and local authority representation on, the visiting committees for Scottish adult penal establishments. We are still considering all the comments received, but new rules will be laid before Parliament in the next few months.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the cost to Grampian, Tayside, Highland and Strathclyde regions in 1979, 1989 and 1992 and the latest available date for police involved in mountain area search and rescue activity;

(2) what is the cost per hour of police in Grampian, Tayside, Highland and Strathclyde regions when engaged in mountain search and rescue duty.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information relating to the cost of police involvement in mountain search and rescue is not recorded by Tayside, Highland and Strathclyde regional councils. The approximate, estimated costs for this activity in Grampiam are not available for 1979 and 1989. Those for 1992 and 1993 are estimated at £3,000—cost per hour £10·71—and £2,500—cost per hour £11·36—respectively.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the members of the prison visiting committees, the names of the appointing authorities and tenure of appointments.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table. Tenure of appointment to the visiting committee is four years.

Establishment and name	*Appointing authority*
Aberdeen	
J. A. Proctor	Moray District
Ms Y. Allan	Aberdeen District
A. Dow	Aberdeen District
M. Burnett	Grampian Region
K. A. Forbes	Grampian Region
Miss M. Urquhart, OBE	Grampian Region
J. K. A. Thomanek, FRSA, JP	Grampian Region
A. Dunlop	Highland Region
I. M. Frain	Kincardine and Deeside District
W. Johnston, MBE, JP	Tayside Region
J. Lawrence	Gordon District
J. Mair	Banff and Buchan District
Barlinnie	
G. McElroy, BA, JP	Strathclyde Region
R. Campbell	Strathclyde Region
Ms C. Lyon	Strathclyde Region
R. McGerty	Strathclyde Region
J. McGuire, JP	Strathclyde Region
K. Murray	Strathclyde Region
A. McGhee	Strathclyde Region
E. Torrance	Cumnock and Doon Valley District
Ms Y. Anderson	Glasgow District
A. McCartney	Glasgow District
C. McDonach	Glasgow District
Baillie D. Murphy	Glasgow District
J. Baker	Strathkelvin District
M. Bissett	Falkirk District
Provost E. Cairns, MA, JP	Monklands District
Provost Mrs. J. Cameron, JP	Bearsden and Milngavie District
G. Steven	Cunninghame District
T. Craig, JP	Clydesdale District
Ms A. Dickson	Stirling District
W. Hanlon	Lothian Region
W. McAdam	Clackmannan District
J. McAllister, JP	Clydebank District
Ms C. Lawson	Renfrew District
E. Griffin	Cumbernauld and Kilsyth District
D. Morrison	Inverclyde District
M. Rooney	Hamilton District
I. Simpson	Eastwood District
J. Thomson, JP	Argyll and Bute District
Mrs. S. M. Duke	Central Region
J. Docherty	East Kilbride District
Ms B. Campbell	Kyle and Carrick District
S. McCallum	Dumbarton District
Mrs. M. Scanlon	Tayside Region
W. Graham	Motherwell District
J. Anderson, JP	Kilmarnock and Louden District
Cornton Vale	
Mrs. H. Wright	Dundee District
Vacant	Dundee District
Mrs. B. D. Baker	Borders Region
P. Fishbourne	Borders Region
J. Davidson	Falkirk District
Mrs. F. E. Duncan	Tayside Region
A. W. Shand	Tayside Region
Mrs. L. Graham	Tayside Region
Mrs. M. J. Fitzpatrick	Central Region
W. R. McAdam	Central Region
Mrs. H. Livingstone	Central Region
T. S. Sinclair	Central Region
Mrs. V. Gemmell	Fife Region
Mrs. E. Riches	Fife Region
Mrs. H. Graham	Lothian Region
Ms J. Mitchell	Lothian Region
J. Stephenson	Lothian Region
Ms B. Holliday	Stirling Region
Mrs. M. Brisley	Stirling Region
A. McGarrity	Glasgow District
Ms J. Andrews	Glasgow District
D. Bowman	Glasgow District
Mrs. B. McGeechan	Strathclyde Region
Mrs. Y. Robertson	Strathclyde Region
J. McGuire, JP	Strathclyde Region
Mrs. M. Smith	Strathclyde Region
Ms T. McNally	Clackmannan District
Ms S. Dalgety	Edinburgh District
E. T. McLaughlin, JP:	Edinburgh District
Dumfries	
E. Gray	Strathclyde Region
B. Caldow	Stewartry District
W. Carmichael, JP	Nithsdale District
Mrs. H. Cross	Nithsdale District
J. M. Dowson	Dumfries and Galloway Region
P. B. Walker	Wigtown District
Mrs. S. M. Howat	Dumfries and Galloway Region
Mrs. C. M. Hyslop	Dumfries and Galloway Region
Mrs. J. M. McMurdo	Dumfries and Galloway Region
I. A. Pennie	Dumfries and Galloway Region
T. G. A. Russell	Annandale and Eskdale District
Dungavel	
G. McKillop	East Kilbride District
Mrs. A. Reid	East Kilbride District
J. Baillie	Strathclyde Region
A. McGhee	Strathclyde Region
P. Watters	Strathclyde Region
J. McGuigan	Strathclyde Region
F. McAveety	Glasgow District
Baillie J. Moynes	Glasgow District
R. McFarlane	Tayside District
E. Read	Fife Region
J. Wesley	Lothian Region
C. W. Davidson	Lothian Region
Mrs. E. D. Kennedy	Central Region
Edinburgh	
D. K. Swan, JP	Berwickshire District
Ms A. D. Burnett	Borders Region
A. J. C. Hewat	Borders Region
W. Lamb	Borders Region
J. A. R. Scott, JP	Borders Region
J. Culliven	Tayside Region
W. Drummond, JP	Lothian Region
E. B. Fallon	Lothian Region
H. D. Fraser, MBE	Lothian Region
Ms J. M. Mitchell	Lothian Region
T. V. Ponton	Lothian Region
J. Sibbald	West Lothian District
Mrs. H. Livingstone	Central Region
M. Moore	Midlothian District

Establishment and name	Appointing authority
Mrs. E. J. McFee	Fife Region
M. A. Smith	Fife Region
C. Stanfield	Fife Region
J. McGuire	Strathclyde Region
P. O'Donnell	East Lothian District
A. J. H. Squair	Roxburgh District
P. Schofield	Tweeddale District
Mrs. N. J. R. Bryson	Ettrick and Lauderdale District
Ms I. Kitson	Edinburgh District
D. Cruickshanks	Edinburgh District
D. H. Brown, JP	Edinburgh District
Glenochil	
G. MacDiarmid	Glasgow Central
J. Cameron	Dunfermline District
D. Stewart	Clackmannan District
Vacant	Clackmannan District
W. Dunn	Edinburgh District
J. Johnston	Falkirk District
Mrs. H. Wright	Dundee District
Mrs. F. E. M. Davidson	Central Region
W. T. Dickson	Central Region
I. S. Millar	Central Region
Mrs. C. M. Organ	Central Region
D. Bryson	Central Region
I. Martin	Stirling District
W. Clarke	Fife Region
M. E. Read	Fife Region
W. Hanlon	Lothian Region
T. K. Kinder	Lothian Region
J. McGuigan, JP	Strathclyde Region
E. Gray, JP	Strathclyde Region
J. Whittet	Tayside Region
J. Mathers	Tayside Region
W. S. Courts	Perth and Kinross District
Inverness	
L. Fraser	Nairn District
P. Fulton	Skye and Lochalsh District
Mrs. C. A. Hutchison	Badenoch and Strathspey District
A. I. MacDonald	Caithness District
I. Thorner, DL, JP	Lochaber District
D. I. MacRae	Sutherland District
Mrs. M. C. Doyle	Inverness District
Mrs. J. Wyatt	Inverness District
W. A. Smith	Ross and Cromarty District
R. J. Laing, JP	Grampian Region
Mrs. I. C. Rhind	Highland Region
N. J. O. Graham	Highland Region
J. S. Munro	Highland Region
A. Murray	Highland Region
Low Moss	
E. Devine	Glasgow District
Baillie C. Robertson	Glasgow District
Vacant	Glasgow District
J. Barker	Strathkelvin District
W. Hendry	Strathkelvin District
Ms A. Jarvis	Strathkelvin District
S. Gilmore	Strathclyde Region
K. Moody	Strathclyde Region
T. Rae	Strathclyde Region
J. McMurdo	Fife Region
W. Drummond	Lothian Region
Noranside	
C. Hebenton, JP	Strathclyde Region
J. Collins	Strathclyde Region
R. G. S. McFarlane	Tayside Region
W. McCormack	Tayside Region
H. S. Arbuthnot	Tayside Region
W. A. West	Tayside Region
Mrs. D. Pattulo	Tayside Region
D. McGrouther	Lothian Region
C. S. Meldrum	Angus District
D. Myles	Angus District
B. R. Balcombe	Grampian Region
D. Bryson	Central Region

Establishment and name	Appointing authority
Penninghame	
W. G. Carmichael, JP	Nithsdale District
B. Caldow	Stewarty District
H. Lawson	Annandale/Eskdale District
R. J. Higgins	Dumfries and Galloway District
D. Fulton	Dumfries and Galloway District
A. Nisbet	Dumfries and Galloway District
N. M. Parker	Dumfries and Galloway District
Mrs. C. M. Hyslop	Dumfries and Galloway District
W. Service	Wigtown District
The Countess of Stair	Wigtown District
C. King	Grampian Region
R. Muir	Lothian Region
J. Taylor	Strathclyde Region
Mrs. F. Duncan	Tayside Region
Perth	
R. Hall	Tayside Region
Mrs. M. Lennie	Tayside Region
A. H. Brown	Tayside Region
S. Butcher	Tayside Region
Mrs. F. E. Duncan	Tayside Region
J. E. Mathers	Tayside Region
W. West	Tayside Region
Mrs. M. Martin	Tayside Region
C. S. B. Meldrum	Angus District
J. G. Lewis, JP	Kirkcaldy District
P. G. Hughes	Dunfermline District
P. C. Douglas	North East Fife District
G. Mason	Dundee District
D. Cowan	Dundee District
J. McNicoll	Perth and Kinross District
D. Scott	Perth and Kinross District
F. Saunders	Central Region
P. Tempest	Fife Region
S. Baker	Fife Region
L. B. Lindsay	Lothian Region
J. Reddin	Strathclyde Region
A. McGowan, BEM	Strathclyde Region
Peterhead	
A. P. McLean	Aberdeen District
I. M. Frain	Kincardine and Deeside District
J. Wilson	Moray District
W. Stuart	Lothian Region
G. G. Lumsden	Gordon District
K. Benzie	Grampian Region
Mrs. M. Morrell	Grampian Region
M. C. Howe	Grampian Region
J. R. Lamond	Grampian Region
A. McGowan, BEM	Strathclyde Region
G. McElroy, JP	Strathclyde Region
N. Cowie, OBE	Banff and Buchan District
Mrs. N. Godsman	Banff and Buchan District
W. Johnston, MBE, JP	Tayside Region
Shotts	
M. Adam	Glasgow District
S. MacQuarrie	Glasgow District
P. McCafferty	Central Region
F. Gormill	Motherwell District
J. Robertson	Motherwell District
Mrs. A. Smith	Fife Region
W. Drummond, JP	Lothian Region
J. W. Wasley	Lothian Region
C. B. Hebenton, JP	Strathclyde Region
R. Marshall	Strathclyde Region
G. McElroy, JP	Strathclyde Region
K. Murray	Strathclyde Region
H. Connelly	Tayside Region

Cornton Vale Prison

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to relocate women prisoners from Cornton Vale to mixed sex prisons nearer their own homes.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter fromn E. W. Frizzell to Mrs. Maria Fyfe, dated 9 March 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about what plans there are to relocate women prisoners from Cornton Vale to mixed sex prisons nearer their homes.

There are no plans to relocate women prisoners from Cornton Vale. Some consideration has been given to the possibility of providing open prison opportunities for women prisoners elsewhere but the practical difficulties are such that it is not in prospect at present.

Public Bodies

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public bodies, appointed by himself, provide health care *(a)* at the present date and *(d)* in 1984; and what was the total bill for payment to their chairmen and members in 1993 and 1983.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* In 1984, 15 health boards were responsible for the provision of health care in Scotland. In order to increase responsiveness to patients' needs, health boards are now increasingly responsible for planning and purchasing health care and NHS trusts are responsible for its provision. There are currently 17 NHS trusts.

In 1984, only the chairmen of the 15 health boards received remuneration at a total cost of £88,163. Since 1991 non-executive directors have also received remuneration and the total cost for 208 chairmen and non-executive members of health boards and NHS trusts in 1993 amounted to £1,417,125.

Care of the Elderly

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions he has given to the Management Executive of the Scottish health service requiring the health service purchasers to change the arrangements for provision of care to the elderly.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has issued no such instructions. It remains for individual health boards to determine the care needs for their elderly client group and to purchase accordingly. In so doing, they are expected to have due regard to the Government's community care policy objective of seeking a move away from institutional to community-based care. However, patients who require specialist medical and nursing supervision will continue to be the responsibility of the NHS. This means the NHS will continue to be responsible for providing assessment and rehabilitation facilities, and for retaining long-stay facilities for those whose medical needs or patterns of behaviour would be difficult to manage in a community-based setting.

Those not requiring such hospital services will increasingly have their health needs met within the community, through general practitioners and other members of the primary health care team. Any other care needs will be a local authority responsibility. But in any event we expect shifting the balance of care, from hospitals to community, to be a matter for local discussion and agreement with the emphasis on joint working and joint assessments of needs.

New Local Authorities

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the new local authorities in schedule 1 to the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill as amended in the Standing Committee, giving the *(a)* population, *(b)* electorate, *(c)* area and *(d)* number of (i) secondary and (ii) primary schools for each of those authorities.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* Information on population, electorate and area of the proposed new single-tier authorities is set out in the table. The information requested in relation to schools is not held centrally.

New local authority area	*Population*[1] *(rounded to nearest 000)*	*Electorate*[2] *(rounded to nearest 000)*	*Area (square km)*
City of Aberdeen	217	172	180
Aberdeenshire	221	169	5,870
Angus	112	88	2,640
Argyll and Bute	91	69	7,020
North Ayrshire	139	106	890
East Ayrshire	124	96	1,270
South Ayrshire	114	89	1,230
The Borders	105	85	4,730
Clackmannan and Falkirk	195	150	470
Dumbarton and Clydebank	98	73	180
Dumfries and Galloway	148	117	6,450
East Dunbartonshire	110	83	180
City of Dundee	155	118	50
City of Edinburgh	440	352	260
Fife	346	269	1,320
City of Glasgow	627	475	170
Highland	206	161	25,390
Inverclyde	91	69	170
North Lanarkshire	328	245	480
South Lanarkshire	307	235	1,780
East and Midlothian	165	129	1,010
West Lothian	146	111	430
Moray	85	65	2,240
Orkney Islands	20	16	1,020
Perthshire and Kinross	128	100	5,390
East Renfrewshire	88	68	170
Renfrewshire	174	133	260
Shetland Islands	23	17	1,470
Stirling	81	64	2,240
Western Isles	29	23	3,070

[1] *Source:* GRO(S) Based on mid-1992 population estimates.
[2] *Source:* GRO(S) Based on 1994 electoral registers.

TRANSPORT

British Rail Stations

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Rail stations within the Greater London regional passenger committee area are totally unstaffed.

Mr. Freeman: Of the 462 stations which fall within the boundaries of the London regional passenger committees, 62 are unstaffed.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Rail stations in the Greater London

regional passenger committee area staffed on the basis of less than two full shifts on any *(a)* week day, *(b)* Saturday and *(c)* Sunday.

Mr. Freeman: The information is not readily available in the form required and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on 15 July 1993, *Official Report*, columns *583-84*, which showed that of the 2,551 stations on the British Rail network, 977 were wholly unstaffed.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the timings of the shift rota for British Rail station staff in the Greater London regional passenger committee area.

Mr. Freeman: Comprehensive information cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost. The timings of the shift rota for British Rail station staff vary depending on the requirements of the station concerned.

Central Line

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what travelling assistance his Department is offering to the communities living on or near the Epping-Ongar section of the Central line should London Transport decide to close this section of its operations in March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The decision on this closure proposal is for the Secretary of State for Transport and I cannot comment further while closure procedures are under way.

Registration Plates

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement as to what the current requirements are for Q registration plates to be issued.

Mr. Key: Q prefix registration marks are allocated to vehicles whose age cannot be established. Typically they are allocated to imported vehicles for which registration documents are not available—vehicles that have been extensively rebuilt and vehicles assembled from a kit, using parts from more than one donor vehicle.

Oil Discharges

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the annual volume of oil entering the Irish sea from shipping for each of the last three years; and in each year what proportion of that was intentionally discharged.

Mr. Norris: The annual volume of oil entering the Irish sea from shipping in each of the last three years—1991-93—is estimated as follows:

1991—1,500 tonnes—one incident involving a spill of approximately 1,450 tonnes vegetable oil and 50 tonnes engine oil.
1992—eight tonnes.
1993—figures not yet available.

These figures are based upon information extracted from the annual publication "Oil Pollution Survey Around the Coasts of the UK" produced by the Advisory Committee on Protection of the Sea. The 1993 figures are still being compiled.

There are no recorded figures for the legal operational discharges of oil from shipping traversing the Irish sea.

Railtrack

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many bids were received for the contract for legal work for Railtrack;

(2) whether British Rail was invited to bid for the legal work for Railtrack;

(3) what estimate he has as to the number of staff who will be made redundant as a result of the decision of Railtrack to outsource its legal work.

Mr. Freeman: While Railtrack remains a division of British Rail, these are matters for the British Railways Board.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the illustrative chart, "Financial Flows in the New Railway Industry", published by his Department, there is any statutory connection between the flow from Railtrack entering the box marked, "Public Expenditure Provision for Railways", and the flow which links that box with "Franchising Director".

Mr. Freeman: There is no statutory connection. The external finance limits for BR and for Railtrack and the resources available for passenger rail subsidy in 1994-95 will be published on 10 March. The prospective cash surplus of Railtrack is being taken into account in setting the franchising director's vote. The Government have said that the franchising director will have sufficient resources to meet the costs of existing passenger services.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the formula for the charges to be levied by Railtrack for access to the rail network.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 15 February, *Official Report*, column *716*, which set out the basis on which Railtrack has calculated its charges.

Franchised and BR passenger operators will pay the direct costs that their services impose on Railtrack. Common costs will be specific sections of track, and those which can only be identified to a geographic area, will be recovered from operators in proportion to the number of passenger-vehicle miles they run in each area. Network costs—the core overheads of providing the network which cannot be broken down more specifically—will be recovered in proportion to operators' revenue from fares.

Charges to freight operators and non-franchised passenger operators will be subject to commercial negotiation, but must at least cover direct costs.

The application of these methods is a matter for Railtrack. The rail regulator will consider and approve all access agreements entered into after 1 April 1994.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state on the basis of valuation of assets, in cash terms at current prices, the minimum rate of return sought by the Treasury from Railtrack in each of the next five years.

Mr. Freeman: Railtrack will be set a target rate of return on capital of 8 per cent, to be achieved over its first four years of business. Discussions are continuing with Railtrack on the setting of initial financial targets, including the opening required rate of return on capital.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will describe the basis on which the assets passing to Railtrack have been valued.

Mr. Freeman: In common with other public sector undertakings, Railtrack's assets will be valued on a modern equivalent asset value basis. The valuation will reflect the existing condition of assets and the cost of continuing to provide capacity broadly equivalent to that provided now.

Marine Pollution

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of reported incidents in the Irish sea involving marine pollution from shipping indicating *(a)* the number investigated, *(b)* the number involved in legal proceedings and *(c)* the number resulting in prosecution.

Mr. Norris: Over the last three years the Department of Transport's marine pollution control unit has received the following number of reports of pollution in the Irish sea:

	Number
1991	50
1992	42
1993	54

The majority of these reports will have been related to bilge or tank washings with no ship being identified.

All incidents were followed up by MPCU and investigated where appropriate. The following number of port state control inspections was requested.

	Number
1991	1
1992	1
1993	2

In 1991, one vessel was referred to the flag state for further investigation by the relevant competent authority, who subsequently decided that there was insufficient evidence upon which to effect a prosecution.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to amend the regulations to allow traffic commissioners to take into account suitability of the immediate local road network before determining a heavy goods operators licence application.

Mr. Key: A licensing authority is able to take into account the suitability of the junction of an operating centre with a public road, and also the suitability of any private road between the operating centre and the public road. The suitability of any public roads in the vicinity is a matter for the local highway authority. In determining whether an operating centre is environmentally suitable, however, the licensing authority may also take into account the local environmental effect of vehicles travelling to and from the operating centre. We have no plans to change this.

Diesel Fuel Duty

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Bus and Coach Council regarding changes in the amount of rebate received in respect of dieseal fuel duty following the Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend has recently discussed with the Bus and Coach Council the initial impact of the changes in fuel duty rebate following the Budget and has undertaken to consider carefully its detailed analysis when it has been produced.

M25

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of traffic on the M25 is using that route in preference to the south coast route.

Mr. Key: About 2 per cent. of traffic on the M25 is estimated to be using that route in preference to the A27/A259 south coast trunk route.

A1

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the statutory provisions on his Department's highways powers which would allow him to consider including a bypass for the villages of Wymondham and Thistleton in the A1 widening scheme adjoining the RamJam junction.

Mr. Key: It is expected that the up-grading of the A1 trunk road to motorway standard would generally follow the line of the existing road. Wymondham and Thistleton are some distance from the A1, they are served by local highways and the Department does not have statutory powers to promote bypasses for these villages.

Shipping

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when Her Majesty's Government will ratify the 1988 protocol relating to the international convention on load line 1966 establishing an international agreement on minimum freeboards for ships engaged on international voyages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Government will consider ratification of annex IV of MARPOL when the findings of a comprehensive survey of United Kingdom reception facilities, including those for sewage, are available later in the year.

Penalty Fares Regulations

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make penalty fares regulations under section 130 of the Railways Act 1993.

Mr. Freeman: The Railways (Penalty Fares) Regulations 1994 have now been laid before Parliament. The regulations give the rail regulator the power to make rules in respect of penalty fares, which have the same effect as if they were regulations. A draft copy of these rules, prepared by the office of the rail regulator, has been placed in the Library.

Road Safety

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the expenditure by each local education authority in respect of school crossings and road safety for each year since 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Fuel Duty Rebate

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his assessment of the impact of the decision of the Government to increase the fuel duty rebate in the Budget on *(a)* bus and coach passenger mileage, *(b)* bus and coach fares, *(c)* pollution caused by bus and coach, *(d)* car mileage and *(e)* pollution caused by cars.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* The strategy of increasing fuel duty is designed to encourage reduction of carbon dioxide emissions from all road vehicles as part of our commitment, under the framework convention on climate change, to return such emission to 1990 levels by the year 2000. The increase in fuel duty for bus operators represents less than 1 per cent. of operating costs and therefore the impact on fares and services is likely to be small. The effect on bus and car mileage and on pollution will depend upon the actions taken by vehicle users in response to the measure but its intention is to cause all to think more carefully about the size, age, fuel efficiency, methods of operation and maintenance of such vehicles.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Consumers Committee for Great Britain under the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958.

Mr. Jack: The members of the committee are:

Mrs. Janet Laurence, *Chairman*
Miss Beata Brookes
Mrs. Dorothy Cockrell
Mrs. Majorie Grimes
Mrs. Barbara Hawkins
Mr. John Murphy
Mr. John Tracy

Olive Oil

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the price at which British wholesalers buy olive oil per tonne, *(b)* what she estimates the price of olive oil per tonne would be in a free market without European Community price intervention and *(c)* the cost to the consumer of taxes on imports of olive oil.

Mr. Jack: The price of extra virgin olive oil on Community markets in the week beginning 7 February 1994[1] ranged from 1,850 ecu/tonne—£1,400 per tonne[2] —to 2,430 ecu/tonne—£1,850 per tonne[2]. The EC accounts for approximately 75 per cent. of world production and consumption of olive oil. It is not possible to make precise estimates of the price at which oil would trade without Community support measures or the cost of those measures to the consumer without a large number of assumptions about how the EC and world markets would react if circumstances were to change.

[1] *Source:* Commission.
[2] Exchange rate 1 ecu=£0·75958.

Tobacco

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the price at which British wholesalers buy tobacco per tonne, *(b)* what she estimates the price of tobacco per tonne would be in a free market without European Community price intervention, *(c)* the levels of European Community production and consumption of tobacco, *(d)* the level of common agricultural policy expenditure on tobacco subsidies and *(e)* the cost to the British Exchequer of European Community intervention in the tobacco sector.

Mr. Jack: The answers are as follows:

(a)(b) It is not possible to give a representative wholesale price for tobacco, since values vary significantly in relation both to variety and quality. Neither is it possible to make precise estimates of a potential free market price, without a large number of assumptions about current price levels on world markets and how they would react if circumstances were to change.

(c) The latest Commission estimate of EC tobacco production from the 1993 harvest is 364,219 tonnes. Community consumption amounts to some 630,000 tonnes per annum.

(d) The provisional outturn for Community expenditure for tobacco in 1993 is 1,165 mecu—£915 million[1].

(e) The United Kingdom contributes to the EC budget as a whole, which funds the cost of tobacco support in other member states.

[1] £1=1·2729 ecu.

Milk

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the price at which British wholesalers buy milk per tonne, *(b)* the price at which the European Community sells milk per tonne on the world market, *(c)* the levels of European Community production and consumption of milk, *(d)* the level of common agricultural policy expenditure on milk subsidies, and *(e)* the cost to the British Exchequer of European Community intervention in the milk market.

Mr. Jack: The answers are as follows: *(a)* The average price paid for milk by wholesalers in England and Wales is £230·65 per tonne; *(b)* there is not a world market for liquid milk; *(c)* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) on 1 February, *Official Report*, column *555*, which shows EC production of milk and consumption of liquid milk for 1991, the latest year available; *(d)* the 1993 provisional outturn of common agricultural policy expenditure in the dairy sector as a whole amounts to around £4 billion; *(e)* the Exchequer cost of CAP support in the dairy sector in the United Kingdom is estimated at £296·5 million for the 1993-94 financial year. The United Kingdom also contributes to the EC budget as a whole, which funds the cost of support for the dairy sector in other member states.

Rice

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the price at which British wholesalers buy rice per tonne, *(b)* what she estimates the price of rice per tonne would be in a free market without European Community price intervention and *(c)* the cost to the British consumer of the common agricultural policy in the rice market.

Mr. Jack: The answers are as follows: *(a)* Information on the price of rice to wholesalers is not gathered centrally. *(b)* It is not possible to make precise estimates about what prices might result if there were no market support in the EC. A large number of assumptions would be required in order to assess how domestic and world markets would react if commodity policy were to be changed. *(c)* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on 11 January, *Official Report*, columns *65-6*. For the reasons given, it is not possible to estimate the effect of the CAP on the food bill for individual commodities.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total budget of the common agricultural policy in each year since 1973; what proportion of the EC's total budget it accounted for; and what proportion of the common agricultural policy was allocated to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: The information is as follows:

	Total CAP expenditure (EAGGF guarantee)	*As percentage of total EC expenditure*	*Total UK receipts as percentage of total EC CAP expenditure*
1973	[1]3,660	91	4·15
1974	[1]3,107	69	8·61
1975	[1]4,727	77	17·23
1976	[1]5,570	76	8·41
1977	[1]6,662	75	6·27
1978	[2]8,673	72	13·29
1979	[2]10,441	73	8·89
1980	[2]11,315	69	7·82
1981	[2]10,980	62	9·87
1982	[2]12,406	61	10·37
1983	[2]15,812	65	10·73
1984	[2]18,346	67	11·58
1985	[2]19,744	70	9·62
1986	[2]22,137	65	8·98
1987	[2]22,968	65	7·61
1988	[2]27,687	67	7·20
1989	[2]25,873	63	7·41
1990	[2]27,036	62	7·32
1991	[2]31,939	59	7·49
1992	[2]32,109	55	7·63

Sources: Annual Financial Reports of the Guarantee Section of the EAGGF.
Annual Reports of the European Court of Auditors.
[1]Million units of account.
[2]Million European units of account.
[3]Million European currency units.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will estimate the cost to the United Kingdom of every acre farmed in the European Community.

Mr. Jack: This information is not available.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the budget forecast for the common agricultural policy in 1994; and what proportion of this fund will be allocated to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: The 1994 CAP budget has been set at 36,465 mecu—£27,566 million. It is set in relation to forecast expenditure throughout the Community, and not on the basis of allocations to individual member states. The level of United Kingdom CAP receipts will depend on a variety of factors, such as production levels, quantities exported, and purchases in and sales out of intervention storage. It is forecast at £2,728 million for the 1994-95 financial year.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will raise at the next meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers the cost to member states of the report commissioned by the EC into the future of the common agricultural policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: This study, which has yet to be completed or its findings published, is a matter for the Commission, not the Council of Ministers. The next meeting of the Council of Agricultural Ministers will however be discussing the Commission's proposals for CAP prices for 1994-95 during which my right hon. Friend will be paying close attention to the overall cost of the CAP.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she has taken to obtain a copy of that analysis of the future economic viability of the common agricultural policy by EU economists; if she will place a copy in the Library; and if she will request the European Commission at the next Council of Ministers meeting to publish the report.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* I understand this is an internal European Commission study on which work is not yet fully complete. Eventual publication is a matter for the Commission. If the Commission does decide to make this study available then my right hon. Friend the Minister will seek to obtain a copy for the House Library.

Oilseeds

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the price at which British wholesalers buy oilseeds per tonne, *(b)* what she estimates the price of oilseed per tonne would be in a free market without European Community price intervention, *(c)* the levels of European Community production and consumption of oilseeds, *(d)* the level of common agricultural policy expenditure on oilseeds subsidies and *(e)* the cost to the British Exchequer of European Community intervention in the oilseeds market.

Mr. Jack: The average price for rapeseed on the United Kingdom market was £149 per tonne in 1993. Sunflower seed and soya beans are produced in insignificant quantities in the United Kingdom. EC average prices were £194 per tonne[1] for sunflower seed and £178 per tonne[1] for soya beans in 1993. Under the CAP oilseeds are traded within the EC at prices which are in line with those in world markets. The EC production and consumption of oilseeds—rapeseed, sunflower seed and soya beans—in 1992 was estimated at 11·3 million tonnes[2] and 26·3

million tonnes[2] respectively, the last year for which figures are available. The level of CAP expenditure for oilseeds in 1993 was estimated at £2,261 million[1]. The Exchequer cost of CAP support for oilseeds under the arable area payments scheme in the United Kingdom is estimated at £160 million—excluding the cost of oilseeds grown on set-aside land—for the 1993-94 financial year. The United Kingdom also contributes to the EC budget as a whole, which funds the cost of oilseeds support in other member states.

([1] Source: Commission).
([2] Source: Oil World).

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the price at which British wholesalers buy linseed per tonne, *(b)* what she estimates the price of linseed per tonne would be in a free market without European Community price intervention, *(c)* the levels of European Community production and consumption of linseed, *(d)* the level of common agricultural policy expenditure on linseed subsidies and *(e)* the cost to the British Exchequer of European Community intervention in the linseed market.

Mr. Jack: The average price for linseed on the United Kingdom market was £111 per tonne in 1993. Under the CAP linseed is traded within the EC at prices which are in line with those in world markets. The EC production and consumption of linseed in 1992 was estimated at 380,000 tonnes[1] and 492,000 tonnes[1] respectively, the last year for which figures are available. The level of CAP expenditure for linseed in 1993 was estimated at £143 million[2]. The Exchequer cost of CAP support for linseed under the arable area payments scheme in the United Kingdom is estimated at £75 million for the 1993-94 financial year. The United Kingdom also contributes to the EC budget as a whole, which funds the cost of linseed support in other member states.

([1] Source: Oil World).
([2] Source: Commission).

Potatoes

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the price at which British wholesalers buy potatoes per tonne, *(b)* what she estimates the price of potatoes per tonne would be in a free market without European Community price intervention, *(c)* the levels of European Community production and consumption of potatoes, *(d)* the level of common agricultural policy expenditure on potato subsidies and *(e)* the cost to the British Exchequer of European Community intervention in the potato market.

Mr. Jack: The answer is as follows:

(a) The average price at which registered merchants[1] in Great Britain sold maincrop potatoes was as follows:

Crop year	*Average price (£/tonne) (excluding sacks)*
1988-89	62·51
1989-90	98·65
1990-91	78·17
1991-92	85·73
1992-93	56·71

Source: Weighted average of PMB country details of Maincrop returns from Registered Merchants.
[1] During this period all registered production was sold through Registered merchants to all markets including the retail market.

Northern Ireland recorded maincrop ware prices were as detailed:

Crop year	*Average price (£/tonne) (excluding sacks)*
1988-89	54·43
1989-90	104·07
1990-91	66·15
1991-92	88·56
1992-93	44·52

Source: Department for Agriculture for Northern Ireland; Economics and Statistics.

(b) there is no European Community price intervention;

(c) the latest available figures for European Community production and consumption of potatoes are as follows:

EC member states production and consumption of potatoes

	Harvested production (in 1,000T)				*Human consumption (in 1,000T)*			
Year	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*[1]	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Belgium	1,952	2,002	2,616	2,093	965	929	1,004	1,029
Luxembourg	25	19	26	—				
Denmark	1,483	1,462	1,738	—	331	332	317	294
Germany	7,233	10,201	10,897	12,074	4,465	4,482	5,959	5,940
Greece	996	1,004	980	—	868	850	903	922
Spain	5,331	5,182	5,271	4,158	3,769	4,243	4,146	4,210
France	4,779	5,467	6,676	—	4,100	4,000	4,021	4,112
Ireland	605	571	642	—	506	504	526	535
Italy	2,309	2,219	2,498	2,026	2,233	2,203	2,235	2,230
Netherlands	7,036	6,949	7,641	7,699	1,274	1,329	1,300	1,311
Portugal	1,132	939	1,511	1,160	964	1,100	1,110	1,050
United Kingdom	6,467	6,267	7,802	7,117	5,932	5,615	5,681	5,426
EC12	39,348	42,282	48,298	—	25,407	25,587	27,202	27,059

[1] Provisional.
Sources: Eurostat, Crop Production—Quarterly Statistics, Vol. 4 1993.
MAFF Statistics (for revised UK data)—December 1993 Potatoes Quarterly Review.

(d) there is no common agricultural policy expenditure on potatoes; and, similarly,

(e) there is no cost to the British Exchequer of European Community intervention in the potato market.

Dairy Quotas

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will estimate by how much the continued existence of dairy quotas raises market prices for dairy products above the intervention prices.

Mr. Jack: Prices for dairy products are currently close to intervention price levels.

Banana Trade Advisory Committee

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members of the Banana Trade Advisory Committee.

Mr. Jack: The Banana Trade Advisory Committee was disbanded on 1 July 1993 following the introduction of the EC single market for bananas.

Set-aside

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will she list the June census set-aside figures for England for each year from 1989 to 1994.

Mr. Jack: The June census set-aside figures for England for each year from 1990 to 1993 are as follows:

Year	*000 hectares*
1990	72
1991	97
1992	130
1993	580

Set-aside was not separately identified in the 1989 census. The provisional results of the 1994 June census are expected to become available in August 1994.

Infant Food

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to alter the regulations on the promotion of infant formula and follow-on formula.

Mr. Soames: Draft regulations to implement two EC directives covering the composition, marketing and export of infant formula and follow-on formula have been the subject of a public consultation exercise. The closing date for the receipt of comments was 4 March. The Government will carefully consider all the comments received, before announcing their conclusions on what the regulations should include.

Agricultural Base Rates

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the figures in hectares for *(a)* set-aside, *(b)* pulses and *(c)* oilseed rape and cereals for 1989, 1990 and 1991 which were used to calculate the base rate for England.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on Friday 3 December 1993 to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh), *Official Report,* column *850.*

EC Fisheries Inquiry

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the terms of reference for the European Commission's commission of inquiry into fisheries; whether the inquiry will address the availability of food for sea birds; and if he will list the membership of the inquiry team.

Mr. Jack: At the December Fisheries Council the Commission to establish a working group, composed of marine ecologists and fisheries biologists, to study the implications for the marine ecosystem of fishing in general and of industrial fishing in particular. The group will set priorities for future research work on the effect these have on the marine ecosystem, sea birds and small cetaceans. The Commission is responsible for the membership of the group. We have asked the Commission to ensure that the working group takes account of the recent sea bird deaths in the North sea.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, when she will consult on the Milk Marketing Board's amended scheme for reorganisation.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I and the Secretary of State for Wales have today invited comments from interested parties in England and Wales on the amended reorganisation scheme now before us.

The Milk Marketing Board has made a number of changes to the reorganisation scheme on which we consulted last October. The MMB now proposes a vesting day of 1 November 1994. Its new proposals also include the establishment of Genus as an independent company, with shares issued to eligible registered producers, and the retention of national milk records by the residuary Milk Marketing Board, which would determine its future ownership. The scheme continues to provide for the flotation of Dairy Crest and the issue to eligible producers of shares in Dairy Crest and certificates of entitlement in Milk Marque.

We have asked to receive comments by 8 April.

Copies of our consultation document have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament and will be available for inspection at the Ministry's regional service centres and Welsh Office divisional offices.

Danish Sand Eel Fishing

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she is taking to ensure that Danish sand eel fishing operations off the east coast of Britain do not jeopardise stocks of sea fish and bird life; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Denmark has the major interest in industrial fishing in the North sea, but does not have access to fisheries which lie within the British 12-mile limit, nor to the sand eel fishery south of the Shetlands which has been closed for the last three years.

There is at present no conclusive evidence that current levels of industrial fishing are having an adverse effect on fish stocks. A study group of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea on sea bird-fish interactions last year indicated that there was unlikely to be much competition between sea birds and the sand-eel fishery. Nonetheless, I believe that the implications of industrial fishing should be considered in depth and, following pressure from the United Kingdom, the December Fisheries Council agreed to the establishment of a working group, composed of marine ecologists and fisheries

biologists, to study the implications for the marine ecosystem of fishing in general and industrial fishing in particular. The group will set priorities for future research work on the effect these have on the marine ecosystem, sea birds and small cetaceans.

Fish

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has made to the European Commission in relation to subsidies paid to French fishermen.

Mr. Jack *[holding reply 8 March 1994]:* We have asked the Commission to consider urgently whether the package of aids announced by the French Government has been granted in accordance with EU legal provisions on state aids.

School Milk Scheme

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the change in local authority consumption in terms of value in actual and real terms of milk and other products eligible for the school milk scheme between *(a)* 12 school weeks before and 12 schools weeks after the removal of buttermilk and cheese from the school milk scheme and *(b)* 12 school weeks prior to and 12 school weeks after the reduction in funding for the school milk scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding reply 8 March 1994]:* No information on changes in local authority consumption in terms of the value of milk and milk products eligible under the school milk scheme is available on a 12-weekly basis. The change in local authority consumption in terms of actual value for eligible milk and milk products between the term—spring 1993—before the removal of buttermilk and cheese from the scheme on 1 April 1993 and the term —summer 1993—after was a reduction of subsidy totalling £5,639,666·01. No information will be available on changes in consumption following the 25 per cent. cut in the subsidy and the technical amendments, which came into force on 1 January 1994, until claims for the period have been received.

Public Information Campaigns

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to her reply of 18 February, *Official Report*, columns *1056-58*, what was the budgeted and the actual cost of each public information campaign listed.

Mr. Jack: The cost of each public information campaign listed was as follows:

	Estimated Budgets £	*Actual* £
At the Farmer's Service	371,500	435,000
Balance in the Countryside	343,000	323,000
The Continental Challenge	30,000	22,000
Don't Import Disease	30,000	53,000
Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA's) Campaign	108,000	127,000
Foodsense Campaign	1,240,000	1,600,000
Guidance on the Transport of Casualty Animals for Slaughter	[1]—	30,000
Heat Stress Campaign	11,000	10,000
Joint Imports Campaign	30,000	113,000
Pesticides Poisoning of Wildlife Campaign	30,000	15,000
Plant Health Campaigns	20,000	86,000
Rabies Campaign	100,000	170,000
Small Producers of Food	30,000	23,000
Straw and Stubble Burning Campaign	35,000	19,000
Warble Fly Campaign	17,000	30,000
Exhibition Stands Supporting Animal Welfare Campaigns	50,000	37,000
I.A.C.S.	200,000	163,000
Export and Trade Promotion	400,000	566,000
National Agricultural Exhibitions	300,000	342,000

[1] No budget set.

Estimated budget costs for campaigns are set at the beginning of each financial year. During the year reassessment of policy requirements and the widening of campaigns to meet increased demand for information can cause variations in actual work which affects costs.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *492*, if she will set out the international conventions covering land-based radioactive waste discharges and those to which the United Kingdom is party.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply. The Government do not have a list of all the international conventions to which other states may be parties that cover land-based discharges of radioactive wastes. The following are the treaties and conventions relevant to the interests of the United Kingdom in European waters:

the Eurotom treaty, 1957, to which the United Kingdom is now a party as a member state of the European Community;

the—Paris—convention for the protection of marine pollution from land-based sources, 1974, to which the United Kingdom has been a contracting party since its inception; this will eventually be replaced by the convention for the protection of the marine environment of the north-east Atlantic 1992, which the United Kingdom has signed but has yet to ratify;

the—Helsinki—convention on the protection of the marine environment of the Baltic sea area, 1974, to be replaced in due course by the—Helsinki—convention on the protection of the Baltic sea area, 1992, and the—Barcelona—convention for the protection of the Mediterranean sea against pollution, 1976, in both of which the United Kingdom has interests as a member state of the European Community, since the European Community is, or is in the process of becoming, a contracting party to those conventions.

WALES

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many days per week Mr. Michael Griffiths is contractually bound to spend on work for the three non-departmental public bodies of which he is chairman or member; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The average time commitments expressed as days per week are listed as follows:

Countryside Council for Wales	2½ days per week
Glan Clwyd District General Hospital NHS Trust	3½ days per week
Higher Education Funding Council	1½ days per month

Mr. Griffiths performs daily duties at the offices of these bodies, attends evening meetings and works at weekends preparing for meetings and briefing himself.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much it costs his Department to publicise and administer the operation of the assisted places scheme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Schools and the Independent Schools Information Service publicise the scheme. It is administered in Wales by staff of the Welsh Office Education Department, which has a range of other significant responsibilities. It is estimated that the current cost of its time spent on the administration of the scheme is £6,400.

Health Service Manpower

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many managers and senior managers there were within the NHS; and of those how many are there whose designation as such can be attributed solely to reclassification within the NHS, in each health authority and for Wales as a whole in each year since 1979.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on numbers of managers on 21 February, *Official Report*, columns *89-91*.

Information on the numbers of staff reclassified as managers is not in general readily available. However a special exercise in December 1993 provided some information on the number of staff now classified as managers who were previously employed at other grades within the same authority/trust. This information is shown in the following table. It is not known how many of these staff retained their previous responsibilities on transferring to manager grade and how many were promoted or took on new responsibilities.

Health authority area	[1]*Per cent.*
Clwyd	79·0
East Dyfed	71·0
Gwent	77·0
Gwynedd	78·0
Mid Glamorgan	62·0
Pembrokeshire	100·0
Powys	85·0
South Glamorgan	77·0
West Glamorgan	80·0
WHCSA	58·0
Wales	73·0

[1] Percentage of managers, at December 1993, who were previously employed at other grades within the same authority/trust.

Notes:

1. Includes staff employed by health authorities, NHS trusts, Welsh health common services authority and those family health services authorities using the health authorities payroll system.
2. Managers employed on local payscales but who cannot be identified centrally as managers are excluded. This applies in particular to the Pembrokeshire NHS trust, where the figure quoted excludes all bar one employee.
3. Managers who were previously employed at other grades in other authorities/trusts but not their existing one are not generally counted as reclassified in the figures except where they transferred to an NHS trust from the health authority which had previously managed those services at the time the trust was created.

Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in 1993-94 prices and cash terms the total amount spent from public funds on training in Wales in each year since 1989-90, the expected outturn in 1993-94 and plans for 1994-95.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the following table:

Wales training expenditure in cash and real terms (1993-94 prices) 1989-90 to 1992-93 and expected outturns in 1993-94 and plans for 1994-95

	£ millions
1989-90	
Cash	148·406
Real terms	182·827
1990-91	
Cash	146·132
Real terms	166·594
1991-92	
Cash	145·773
Real terms	156·289
1992-93	
Cash	151·659
Real terms	159·242
1993-94	
Estimated outturn	147·590
1994-95	
Cash	149·679
Real terms	143·922

Land Use

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what figures were used in hectares for *(a)* set-aside, *(b)* pulses and *(c)* oilseed rape and cereals for 1989, 1990 and 1991 to calculate the base rate for Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 29 November 1993, *Official Report*, column 362.

Deaf-blind Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the impact of the grants for the regional deaf-blind service in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Some £25,000 has been given to SENSE, the National Deaf-Blind and Rubella Association, in 1993-94 for the establishment of a development officer post in Wales. A grant application for 1994-95 is currently under consideration.

Grant allocated by the Welsh Office Education Department under the grants for education support and training scheme has led to the establishment of a regional deaf-blind service at Ysgol Hendre, Swansea. An outreach support service is currently in operation and the centre providing educational facilities for children will open shortly.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will extend the time scale of grants for the GEST scheme for deaf-blind children;

(2) what is the amount of cash earmarked for the GEST scheme for the consortium of local education authorities, giving the amounts for each of West Glamorgan, Mid-Glamorgan, Dyfed and Gwent.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have recently allocated grant for 1994-95 on expenditure of £18,800 to each of the four authorities involved in the south Wales deaf-blind project, a total of £75,200 for that year. No decisions have yet been taken about the extension of the grant into 1995-96.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will extend the funding of the GEST project to support the education of deaf-blind children beyond April 1995.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave today to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones).

GPs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *771*, what considerations underlie his decision not to collect information centrally on the number of general practitioners who receive gross payments in excess of £200,000 per annum; if he will consider collecting this information in future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: GPs are paid according to a national contract. Conditions for payment are tightly defined and all GPs have access to income under the same conditions. Individual GP income varies according to a number of factors including list size and range of services provided.

Exchequer control over the remuneration system is achieved through arrangements operated by the Doctors and Dentists Review Body which ensure that, taking one year with another, the profession as a whole earns neither more nor less by way of net income than the amount intended by Government.

The collation of payments to individual doctors would serve no useful central management purpose. However, the information is available at a local management level to family health services authorities.

Council House Sales

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total income received by each district council from the sales of council houses in each of the last 10 years expressed in current prices.

Mr. Redwood: The information is given in the following table:

In-year capital receipts from the sale of council houses[1]
Constant 1992-93 prices

£000

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Alyn and Deeside	730	1,320	1,705	1,353	1,566	2,880	4,442	2,443	1,119	1,030
Colwyn	871	647	803	868	1,032	1,665	1,223	778	393	379
Delyn	1,748	6,060	669	977	1,483	1,365	2,300	1,471	928	806
Glyndwr	1,026	683	2,212	1,043	966	2,393	2,306	958	489	524
Rhuddlan	610	609	926	670	1,149	1,967	1,686	919	556	362
Wrexham Maelor	1,177	1,351	1,949	2,864	4,215	5,657	12,391	4,779	3,314	2,759
Carmarthen	1,576	1,471	933	1,063	1,151	1,977	2,139	1,823	1,227	1,040
Ceredigion	1,952	1,276	856	1,463	1,183	2,924	3,738	2,035	1,337	1,565
Dinefwr	550	513	715	1,102	994	1,529	1,376	1,284	623	450
Llanelli	3,501	2,107	1,685	2,431	2,702	4,158	3,958	2,579	2,139	1,489
Preseli Pembroke	2,726	1,727	1,555	1,611	1,695	4,003	5,028	2,576	1,542	1,774
South Pembrokeshire	2,473	1,572	673	640	991	2,227	2,312	1,241	861	516
Blaenau Gwent	1,645	1,127	5,028	1,988	2,058	3,742	5,678	2,388	1,666	1,031
Islwyn	4,541	2,753	2,275	3,146	3,473	5,255	4,996	1,463	1,578	1,124
Monmouth	4,969	3,994	2,914	2,995	3,763	5,228	5,170	2,487	2,059	1,613
Newport	4,720	4,885	11,123	5,000	4,753	8,897	10,261	3,030	2,193	1,881
Torfaen	4,924	3,977	2,163	6,901	4,810	9,150	10,999	5,138	3,220	3,311
Aberconwy	1,316	1,078	1,084	1,231	1,458	3,275	3,868	1,359	908	515
Arfon	1,183	1,326	809	1,115	1,005	2,661	3,207	1,329	924	669
Dwyfor	399	243	325	205	176	449	594	653	248	271
Meirionnydd	1,087	531	582	584	803	1,345	1,440	471	422	241
Ynys Mon	795	806	1,689	1,320	1,006	3,724	4,483	2,066	1,050	629
Cynon Valley	1,833	873	777	1,523	1,382	1,662	1,840	1,185	913	651
Merthyr Tydfil	1,689	1,323	1,856	2,334	2,508	3,398	3,513	1,516	739	976
Ogwr	14,899	4,993	4,856	5,270	4,083	6,564	7,149	3,864	2,599	1,614
Rhondda	376	315	406	571	483	711	885	686	353	373
Rhymney Valley	3,393	2,679	2,384	4,072	4,324	3,858	5,491	3,798	2,324	1,885
Taff Ely	3,087	2,686	2,660	4,174	4,988	6,007	7,374	3,908	2,769	2,162
Brecknock	1,880	1,582	1,355	1,662	1,803	2,523	2,491	1,250	810	586
Montgomeryshire	1,548	1,010	1,155	1,731	1,450	2,379	2,658	1,192	1,038	878
Radnorshire	1,128	438	468	425	810	988	1,083	635	457	525
Cardiff	6,571	7,852	9,319	16,537	12,500	18,311	20,068	7,760	5,567	3,765
Vale of Glamorgan	4,527	3,543	3,077	4,729	4,013	7,344	6,043	2,488	2,043	2,006
Port Talbot	3,191	2,883	3,071	3,610	4,171	5,374	6,209	2,938	2,468	1,733
Lliw Valley	822	971	1,417	1,968	1,829	2,209	3,539	2,642	1,382	1,024
Neath	1,168	1,476	2,082	2,207	2,538	3,167	3,631	2,112	1,328	991
Swansea	2,997	9,392	2,333	3,242	4,886	10,805	11,046	4,637	3,103	1,986
Total districts	93,627	82,069	79,616	94,623	94,203	151,769	176,618	83,882	56,689	45,134

[1] Includes the repayment of principal on local authority mortgages on council houses.
Sources: Capital payments return up to 1988-89, cash backed accumulated receipts returns for subsequent years.

Amenity Charges

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money was generated by the NHS in Wales from amenity charges; and how many people paid them in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The income receipts received by the NHS in Wales amounted to £30,000 and £65,000 for 1991-92 and 1992-93 respectively. The number of people who paid these receipts is not available centrally.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Redwood: Such purchases are included within my Department's overall administration expenditure which is published every year in the annual report.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was or is the total budget for management agreements for all environmentally sensitive areas in Wales for the years 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is as follows:

Financial year	*Budget £ million*
1992-93	1·505
1993-94	1·537
1994-95	6·863
1995-96	7·015

Notes:
Figures shown for 1992-93 are actual expenditure figures.
Figures shown for 1993-94 to 1995-96 are subject to Parliamentary approval.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the area of each individual environmentally sensitive area in Wales already under management agreements at the most recent date for which accurate figures are available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information as at 28 February 1994 is as follows:

ESA	*Hectares under agreement*
Cambrian Mountains (Original)	8,694
Cambrian Mountains (Extension)	22,373
Cambrian Mountains (Original) Revised	10,327
Lleyn Peninsula	23,478
Ynys Mon	58
Radnor	0
TOTAL	64,930

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers had entered into agreements in each individual environmentally sensitive area in Wales at the most recent date for which accurate figures are available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information as at 28 February 1994 is as follows:

ESA	*Number of current management agreements*
Cambrian Mountains (Original)	80
Cambrian Mountains (Extension)	208
Cambrian Mountains (Original) Revised	63
Lleyn Peninsula	481
Ynys Mon	2
Radnor	0
TOTAL	834

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Redwood: The cost of such receptions is included in the entertainment expenditure for my Department, which is published in the annual report.

Nursery Education

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of three and four-year-olds in Wales have nursery education provided for them *(a)* now and *(b)* in 1979.

Mr. Redwood: The percentage of three and four-year-olds[1] in Wales who were in nursery education provided for them in maintained schools in 1993 and 1979 are as follows:

	Per cent.
January 1993	68·5
January 1979	66·7

[1] Ages as at 31 December—estimated.

Others attend some other form of pre-school education or play group, meaning that most Welsh three to five-year-olds spend time with other children away from home.

Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the number of council houses, *(b)* the amount of housing revenue account subsidy and *(c)* the amount of housing revenue account subsidy per house in each district council in Wales and for Wales as a whole for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the average number of council houses for each district council and for Wales in 1993-94 is given in the following table.

I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave him on 14 February, *Official Report*, column *632-34* in respect of housing revenue account subsidy.

Average number of council houses in 1993-94

	Number
Aberconwy	2,431
Alyn and Deeside	4,815
Arfon	4,748
Blaenau Gwent	9,503
Brecknock	2,510
Cardiff	17,938
Carmarthen	3,182
Ceredigion	3,021
Colwyn	2,386
Cynon Valley	4,661
Delyn	4,386
Dinefwr	2,346
Dwyfor	1,380
Glyndwr	2,694
Islwyn	5,611
Llanelli	6,331
Lliw Valley	4,681
Meirionnydd	1,873
Merthyr Tydfil	6,285
Monmouth	4,521
Montgomeryshire	2,562
Neath	5,090
Newport	12,700
Ogwr	8,711
Port Talbot	5,087
Preseli Pembrokeshire	5,016
Radnorshire	1,105
Rhondda	4,349
Rhuddlan	2,597
Rhymney Valley	9,140
South Pembrokeshire	2,594
Swansea	15,251
Taff Ely	6,145
Torfaen	12,154
Vale of Glamorgan	5,599
Wrexham Maelor	14,489
Ynys Mon	5,142
Wales	213,034

Source:
Local authorities' second advance subsidy claims for 1993-94.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish for each borough, district and county council and in total for England as a whole in constant prices *(a)* the estimated actual spending for 1993-94 net of community care, *(b)* the standard spending assessments for 1994-95 net of community care, *(c)* the amounts by which *(b)* exceeds or falls short of *(a)* and *(d)* the percentage by which *(b)* exceeds or falls short of *(a)*; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish for each borough, district and county council and in total for England as a whole in constant prices *(a)* the estimated actual spending for 1993-94, *(b)* the standard spending assessments for 1994-95, *(c)* the amounts by which *(b)* exceeds or falls short of *(a)* and *(d)* the percentage by which *(b)* exceeds or falls short of *(a)*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is *(a)* the capital expenditure and *(b)* the revenue expenditure for the last year for which figures are available in relation to the number of councillors on (i) London boroughs, (ii) metropolitan boroughs, (iii) shire county councils and (iv) shire district-borough councils.

Mr. Baldry: The information is as follows:

	Revenue expenditure 1993-94	*Capital expenditure 1993-94*	*Number of Councillors*
	£ million	£ million	no
London boroughs	6,498	1,293	1,914
Metropolitan districts	8,946	1,773	2,481
Shire counties	20,213	1,746	2,998
Shire districts	3,280	2,415	13,459

Source: Local authority returns—revenue budget and second quarter capital forecasts—municipal year book 1994.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the European directives for protecting the environment since 1979, including those concerning air pollution, water pollution and wildlife protection; whether each was implemented in the United Kingdom by primary or secondary legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Directives in force are listed in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities "Director of Community Legislation in Force and Other Acts of the Community Institutions—22nd Edition", which is available in the Library.

Details of the methods of transposition are not held centrally. The United Kingdom aims to implement Community legislation in full and on time. The method of implementation depends on the circumstances of each case and the legislation already in force in the United Kingdom, but will usually be by secondary legislation.

Planning Regulations (Water Services)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what rules govern the giving of planning permission where existing water and sewerage provision will be affected;

(2) what planning regulations existing to safeguard people living in areas of poor water pressure where a new building development is planned in the immediate vicinity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: There are no planning regulations which apply specifically to development which might affect existing water and sewerage provision. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities must have regard to the development plan, so far as it is material to the application, and to any other material considerations. Where the development plan is material, the planning application must be determined in accordance with it unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Each planning application must be considered on its merits; water supply and sewerage disposal may be material considerations to be taken into account. The capacity of existing water and sewerage infrastructure and the need for additional facilities should also be considered when development plans are being drawn up. Local planning authorities should consult the appropriate water

or sewerage undertaker on any planning application which is likely to have significant implications for water or sewerage services.

Section 65(1) of the Water Industry Act 1991 places a duty on water undertakers to provide water at such a pressure as will cause water to reach the top of the top-most storey of every building within the undertaker's area. In general, the planning system should not duplicate safeguards for water supply or sewerage disposal already available under water legislation.

Audit Commission (Staff Sickness)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish current sickness absence rates in respect of staff of the Audit Commission.

Mr. Baldry: No. Under schedule 3 to the Local Government Finance Act 1982, the Audit Commission is responsible for the recruitment and management of its own staff. The Government do not involve themselves in this process.

Councillors (Surcharges)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now discontinue the penalty of surcharge on councillors in respect of fraud or incompetence.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what support his Department provided to the centre for environmental chemistry at Brunel university in its preparation of its recent report on the management of used nuclear fuel and high-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has not been involved in the preparation of this report.

Homelessness

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) on what date he received representations from *(a)* Westminster and *(b)* Wandsworth asking that homelessness be used as an indicator for the purposes of standard spending assessment distribution;

(2) what *(a)* evidence of their need to spend in respect of homelessness or *(b)* plans for increased spending was provided by Wandsworth borough council when asking that homelessness be used as an indicator for standard spending assessment distribution;

(3) what *(a)* evidence of need to spend in respect of homelessness or *(b)* plans for increased spending was provided by Westminster city council when asking that homelessness be used as an indicator for standard spending assessment distribution.

Mr. Baldry: As regards the local government finance settlement for 1994-95, representations in support of a separate indicator for homelessness were received from Westminster city council in 1993 on 8 April, 14 July, 5 October, 11 October and 23 December. These representations included an analysis of applications for accommodation over the period 1989-90 to 1992-93, net expenditure on rent allowances 1990-91 to 1992-93 and projections of such expenditure to 1996-97. No such representations were received from Wandsworth borough council.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give an estimate of the number of single homeless people in England and Wales, and what proportion of these are women.

Sir George Young: My Department does not make estimates of the numbers of single homeless people. The only source of national data on persons sleeping rough is the 1991 census of population, which found 2,650 people doing so on census night—21-22 April—at a number of predetermined sites. Of these, 407—15 per cent.—were women.

For information on Wales, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will provide a breakdown of numbers of those accepted as statutorily homeless in England and Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available falling into different priority need categories; and what proportion in each category were women;

(2) how many people were accepted as statutorily homeless in England and Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what proportion of these were women.

Sir George Young: The numbers of households for which local authorities in England accepted responsibility to secure permanent accommodation in the year ending 30 September 1993, the latest 12 months for which figures are available, in each of the priority need categories is as follows:

	Number
Households with dependent children	81,250
Household member pregnant and no other dependent children	17,790
Household member vulnerable due to:	
(a) old age	5,940
(b) physical disability	5,320
(c) mental illness/handicap	5,990
(d) other reasons	15,990
Households homeless in emergency	1,130
Total households in priority need	133,410
Households not in priority need	4,530
Total acceptances	137,940

Information is not collected on the composition of these households so the number of women in each category is not known and my Department has no estimates.

For information about Wales, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the issue of using homelessness as an indicator was first raised and by whom in the 1993 consultation with local authorities on the standard spending assessment settlement.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities in London, and their associations, have repeatedly raised the issue of using an indicator of homelessness in standard spending assessments since the inception of the system in 1990.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of people made homeless in England and Wales as a result of relationship breakdown, the proportion of these cases which involved domestic violence, and the proportion of those cited in the answers who were women, in the last year for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: The latest available information provided by local authorities, on homeless households accepted for permanent rehousing, shows that 25,930 households in England lost their last settled home because of relationship breakdown with a partner in the year ending 30 September 1993, and that 67 per cent. of these were the result of violent breakdown.

Information is not collected by my Department on the composition of these households and so the number of women involved is not held centrally.

For information about Wales, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Housing Tenure

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which six local authorities gained most from the use of nature of housing tenure as an indicator for the purpose of standard spending assessment distribution.

Mr. Baldry: The top six authorities ranked in order of their score on each of the tenure of housing variables are as follows:

Ranking of authorities	*Proportion of household residents under 16 years of age living in rented accommodation*	*Proportion of households living in rented purpose built flats in residential buildings*	*Proportion of household residents of pensionable age living in rented accommodation*
1	Tower Hamlets	Tower Hamlets	Tower Hamlets
2	Southwark	Southwark	Islington
3	Islington	Hackney	Hackney
4	Camden	Islington	Southwark
5	Hackney	City of London	Camden
6	Lambeth	Lambeth	Westminster

These variables are used respectively in the children in need index, within the all other services block social index and the personal social services other social services index, and within the potential elderly domiciliary clients formula and the potential elderly supported residents formula.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has as to the impact of nature of housing tenure on local authorities need to spend on personal social services or the areas of spending covered by the all other services area.

Mr. Baldry: The district level all other services standard spending assessment and personal social services SSA both include housing tenure indicators. The inclusion of these measures was based on detailed statistical analysis. The results of this statistical analysis were discussed in the SSA subgroup meetings where all the local authority associations are represented. The report of the SSA sub-group for 1994-95 is in the Library.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities made representations to his Department seeking the use of nature of housing tenure as an indicator for the purpose of standard spending assessment distribution.

Mr. Baldry: Since my right hon. Friend announced details of the provisional revenue support grant settlement for 1994-95, no local authorities have made representations seeking the use of nature of housing tenure as an indicator in standard spending assessments.

Energy Industries

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment from what source the Energy Saving Trust will obtain its funding following the decision of the Director General of Gas Supply on the E factor.

Mr. Atkins: Funding for schemes sponsored by the Energy Saving Trust comes from a variety of sources. The Director General of Gas Supply has recently questioned longer-term reliance on the E factor mechanism as one of those sources. Officials from my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry are currently reviewing the position with the Office of Gas Supply.

Living Over the Shop

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the budget allocated to the Housing Corporation for living-over-the-shop initiatives; and how much of it has been spent.

Sir George Young: The Housing Corporation does not have a separate or ringfenced budget for flats-over-shops schemes. These form part of its overall investment in rehabilitation activities, financed from its approved development programme. Nevertheless, in 1993-94, it expects to invest £2·48 million in such schemes. To date, claims have been received for nearly 58 per cent. of this, and the corporation hopes to increase this percentage considerably by the end of the financial year. Although the Housing Corporation monitors spend on individual schemes, any underspend represents a shortfall against housing associations' intended programmes of works rather than against national targets as set by the Housing Corporation. In addition, this Department has made up to £10 million in supplementary credit approvals available to local authorities in 1993-94. Where SCAs are awarded, a grant to meet the renovation cost of the scheme will be made through a local authority housing association grant, administered by the Housing Corporation.

Minerals Planning Guidance

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those bodies or individuals who have responded to his consultation paper on minerals planning guidance.

Mr. Baldry: The consultation period for MPG3 is not yet over. I will place a list of those who respond to the consultation exercise together with a summary of their comments in the Library of the House in due course.

Temporary Accommodation

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were living in temporary accommodation in England and Wales on the most recent date for which figures are available; what proportion of these were women; and what proportion were accommodated in women's refuges.

Sir George Young: The latest available information shows that 56,900 households were in temporary accommodation on 30 September 1993, some 8,600—13 per cent.—fewer than a year earlier. These figures cover those households which are awaiting permanent rehousing after having been accepted by local authorities as homeless, and those awaiting the outcome of inquiries into an application, under the provisions of the 1985 Housing Act. Some 870 of these households were in women's refuges.

Local authorities do not report the composition of households in temporary accommodation to my Department and so the number who are women is not held centrally.

For information about Wales I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Contractor Management Information

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *262*, which other Departments use his Department's contractor management information system and the consultants register.

Mr. Baldry: Other Departments which use the contractor management information system and the consultants register are:

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Central Office of Information
Crown Prosecution Service
Her Majesty's Customs and Excise
Ministry of Defence
Department for Education
Department of Employment
Department of the Environment—Northern Ireland
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Department of Health
Home Office
Inland Revenue
Lord Chancellors Department
Department of National Heritage
Department of National Savings
Scottish Office
Department of Social Security
Department of Trade and Industry
Department of Transport
Welsh Office.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial means the Minister will employ to encourage efficiency and conservation improvements in the energy industries following the decision of the Director General of Gas Supply on the E factor.

Mr. Atkins: The energy industries are active in encouraging greater energy efficiency as part of their desire for greater competitiveness and in the interests of their consumers. The Government encourage these and other steps through their best practice programme and other means. The Energy Saving Trust is an independent body promoting energy efficiency. The intention is that funds for schemes sponsored by the Energy Saving Trust will continue to be derived principally from electricity and gas tariff consumers. The mechanisms for achieving this are under review.

Water and Sewage Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the average equated rate poundage for sewerage services for the areas covered by *(a)* Wales Water, *(b)* Severn Trent, *(c)* North West England and *(d)* Thames for 1992-93 and 1993-94 and the estimated figure for 1994-95;

(2) what was the average equated rate poundage for supply of water for the areas covered by *(a)* Wales Water, *(b)* Severn Trent, *(c)* North West England and *(d)* Thames for 1992-93 and 1993-94 and the estimated figure for 1994-95.

Mr. Atkins: Information on water and sewerage companies' tariffs and average charges is published annually in the Centre for the Study of Regulated Industries statistics series publication "The United Kingdom Water Industry—Charges for Water Services", copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with Severn Trent Water regarding water disconnections.

Mr. Atkins: None. However, my right hon. Friend met the chairman of Severn Trent Water on 11 January, to discuss a range of topics relating to water charging issues.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring he is conducting of the number of people who have had water supplies disconnected in the Coventry area; how many households in Coventry have had their water disconnected in 1991-92 and 1992-93; and to what socio-economic categories those people belong.

Mr. Atkins: None. Responsibility for the protection of customers interests rests with the Director General of Water Services who publishes data on the total number of domestic disconnections twice a year, by water company area. Information on disconnections according to socio-economic categories is not available.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for assisting consumers to avoid water disconnections.

Mr. Atkins: The Director General of Water Services issued guidelines to water companies in April 1992 on the subject of debt and disconnection, with the aim of ensuring fair and effective procedures to minimise the prospect of disconnection.

Mobile Homes

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what complaints he has received in the last five years about the operations of the landlords of mobile home parks at Meriden hall; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Records are readily available for the last two and a half years. During that period, we have received four letters about the Meriden hall mobile homes park, two of which are from my hon. Friend. Both these letters concern the operations of landlords. The other two letters are about other matters. The most recent of these four representations is 12 March 1992.

Local Government (Redundancies)

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to table his proposed amendments to the Local Government (Compensation for Redundancy and Premature Retirement) Regulations 1993.

Mr. Baldry: Regulations are being finalised in the light of the recent statutory consultation and will be introduced shortly.

Boundaries Review

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the results of his commissioner's review of the proposed boundaries for the constituencies in the county of Staffordshire.

Mr. Curry: The boundaries of parliamentary constituencies and the progress made by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission are matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how often in the next 12 months the new advisory group on sustainable development will be holding meetings *(a)* amongst themselves, *(b)* with representatives of non-governmental organisations, *(c)* with the Prime Minister and *(d)* with departmental green Ministers.

Mr. Atkins: The panel on sustainable development is expected to meet about four times a year. It will be for the members to decide what other meetings to arrange as their work progresses.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the programme of work of the advisory group on sustainable development.

Mr. Atkins: No. The panel on sustainable development will be drawing up its own work programme.

Careers Service

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the expenditure by each local education authority in respect of the careers service for each year since 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have arranged for the information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Rural Areas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list projects and programmes designed to benefit rural areas which involved co-operation between the Rural Development Commission and *(a)* the Countryside Commission, *(b)* the Department of Employment and *(c)* the English training and enterprise councils in each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: The Rural Development Commission, together with the Countryside Commission and English Nature, jointly fund the rural action programme which was introduced in 1992 and is aimed at helping people in rural communities take action to protect and improve their local environment. The rural action programme will support nearly 400 projects in 1993-94. There are no formal joint programmes which are operated by the Rural Development Commission and the Department of Employment or the English TECs, but the commission operates a training and enterprise fund which provides support for training and economic development projects, often jointly with TECs. In the rural development areas the commisson provides funding for a wide range of economic and social projects in partnership with a number of other bodies including the Countryside Commission and TECs.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the policy documents, publications and consultation documents which set out the policy proposals of the Rural Development Commission produced in the last 10 years.

Mr. Atkins: The Rural Development Commission has published a number of policy documents over the last 10 years which could only be listed at disproportionate cost. The commission publishes an annual report and corporate plan each year. The most recent documents published which set out the policy proposals are:

Policy Documents

(1) "Rural Development Strategy for the 1990s"—first published in December 1993.
(2) "The Future of the Rural Development Programme Process"—December 1993.
(3) "Rural Development Areas"—December 1993.
(4) "The Rural Housing Problem"—November 1993.
(5) "Village Shops—A Report on Community Action"—July 1993.
(6) "Rural Strategies—Advice from the Countryside Commission, English Nature and the Rural Development Commission"—November 1992.
(7) "Countryside Employment Programme"—May 1992.
(8) "Tourism in the Countryside"—February 1992.

Consultation Documents

"Meeting the Challenge of Agricultural Adjustment"—July 1991.
"Review of the Rural Development Commission's Priority Areas"—June 1992.

In addition, the commission has published a number of research reports on policy issues. The most recent are:

(1) "Homelessness in Rural Areas"—March 1992 and February 1994.
(2) "Rural Transport Problems and Needs"—June 1993.
(3) "An Evaluation of the Housing Corporation Rural Programme"—November 1993.
(4) "Rural Development and Strategy Planning"—November 1993.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the publications giving details of partnership programmes between the Rural Development Commission and the *(a)* Countryside

Council, *(b)* Department of Employment and *(c)* English training and enterprise councils in which the voluntary sector can participate.

Mr. Atkins: The only programme operated jointly by the Rural Development Commission and the Countryside Commission is the rural action programme, funded by the Royal Development Commission, the Countryside Commission and English Nature. The programme is managed by Action with Communities in Rural England. The publications detailing the scheme are:

"Rural Action for the Environment—An Introduction"—available from ACRE.

"Rural Action for the Environment—A New Way of Working"—available from ACRE.

There are no partnership programmes run with the Department of Employment and TECS. The commission has, however, collaborated with the Countryside Commission and TECs, as well as other bodies, on a range of publications to assist development in the rural areas.

Drinking Water

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the levels of lead in drinking water.

Mr. Atkins: The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989, as amended, require that drinking water at the point where the water is supplied contains no more than 50 microgrammes of lead per litre. This standard is more stringent than the requirements of the EC drinking water directive. In 1992 97 per cent. of determinations for lead in England and Wales measured in samples taken from consumers' taps contained less than this level. There is virtually no lead in water leaving the treatment works and most of that detected comes from contact with consumers' pipework.

Hedgerows

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action the Government propose to take to protect hedgerows.

Mr. Atkins: We remain committed to legislate when parliamentary time permits.

Air Pollution Control

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will make a statement about the 1994-95 charging scheme for local authority air pollution control under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Atkins: Charges to cover the costs of local enforcing authorities in regulating processes which are subject to part I of the Environmental Protection act 1990 were introduced in April 1991. With the approval of the Treasury, and following consultation with local authority associations and industry, my right hon. Friends the Secretary of state for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Wales have made a revised scheme specifying the scale of fees and charges to take effect from 1 April 1994. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is revising the identical, parallel scheme for Scotland on the same basis.

The application fee is increased by £30 to £965, the substantial change fee is increased by £20 to £620, and the annual subsistence charge is increased by £15 to £585. No change has been made to the remaining fees and charges. The scheme will be laid before both Houses and a copy placed in the Library.

As part of our deregulation review, we commissioned consultants to investigate the potential for bringing in a system of banded charges. I am placing a copy of their report in the Library. In the light of the report and in consultation with interested bodies, consideration will be given to introducing banded charges for the local authority air pollution control regime in 1995-96.

Building Regulation A4

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now repeal building regulation A4, relating to the safeguarding of certain public buildings, shops and shopping malls against disproportionate collapse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Following an extensive review the Government have concluded that the considerable enhancement in structural safety of buildings constructed in recent years has rendered regulation A4 superfluous to the stability and robustness provisions of requirement A1. Such enhancement in the integrity of building structures has resulted from substantial improvements in the quality of guidance material—principally British standards—supporting requirement A1, rather than the imposition of regulation A4. To some extent the guidance material supporting the material and workmanship provisions of regulation 7 has also improved the situation.

Considerable support for the repeal of regulation A4 was registered in the consultation exercise undertaken at the end of last year. The proposal for repeal has now been endorsed by the Building Regulations Advisory Committee.

It is the Government's view that the shortcomings that prevailed in the 1970s, which led to the introduction of regulation A4, have been addressed. This significant regulatory burden on the construction industry can now be removed without compromising public safety. An amendment to the building regulations incorporating this repeal will be laid before Parliament as soon as possible.

Offshore Oil Licensing

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *554*, if he will list the blocks about which his Department expressed concern to the DTI during the 14th round of offshore licensing.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* No. The release of information about these blocks is a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many blocks his Department recommended be excluded from the 14th round of offshore oil licensing.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* My Department recommended that 22 blocks be excluded from the 14th round unless conditions were attached that would allow the prospecting and working of aggregates such that the national aggregates supply would not be jeopardised.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 28 February,

Official Report, column *554*, if he will list all the areas of concern his Department asked the DTI to address in deciding which blocks to licence during the 14th round of offshore licensing.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* My Department expressed concern about blocks which were of considerable importance to the marine aggregates industry. We also drew attention to two areas which were in the vicinity of sites of special scientific interest.

English Nature

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the proposed merger of English Nature and the Countryside Commission; what is the timetable for a decision; and what he is doing to ensure that the interests of the landscape, recreation and those involved in economic development are given priority.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* Public consultation on the proposals for possible merger runs until 28 March. Few representations have been received to date. All aspects of the remits of the two bodies are being considered during the study announced on 27 January by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment which is expected to be completed by July. A decision will be taken as soon as possible thereafter.

Housing Investment Programmes

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the housing investment programmes submitted to his Department indicated how many local authorities and housing associations fix rent levels by reference to the area of usable space in each type of dwelling; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* Local authorities' housing strategy statements and housing investment programme bids are primarily concerned with the use of capital resources, and most contain relatively little information about the detail of council rent-setting policies.

Local authorities are required to set their rents at reasonable levels, and with regard to the pattern of rents for different properties in the private sector.

Housing associations set assured rents in the light of their own individual circumstances. Associations which are registered with the Housing Corporation are expected under the tenants guarantee to set and maintain rents at levels within the reach of those in low paid employment. In the case of housing association secure tenants, fair rents are set by rent officers who are statutorily independent of Government.

Sea Birds

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the extent of the research being conducted into the levels this year of deaths of sea birds in and around the shores of the United Kingdom; and what are the preliminary findings of the research.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* There is no co-ordinated research into the deaths of sea birds in and around the United Kingdom coasts. The Department's statutory conservation advisors consider that it is more useful to monitor large seabird colonies and selected individuals within those colonies when studying bird mortality and overall population levels.

Some of the birds washed up in the recent North sea incident have been taken for post mortem analysis and preliminary results indicate that starvation was the likely cause of death, possibly due to a combination of strong onshore winds which may have disturbed normal feeding activity and, perhaps, a mismatch between bird location and food availability.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 27 January, ref. GA PS0 2213/94.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 8 March.

HEALTH

Financial Information Project Ltd.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the the Secretary of State for Health what consideration has been given by her Department into the unauthorised transfer of £300,000 to the company FIP by West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: In January 1992, the former director of finance of West Midlands regional health authority made a loan of £300,000 to Financial Information Project Ltd. without reference to the RHA board. In March 1993, the loan was ratified by the West Midlands regional health authority board under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968. The district auditor has stated that he is satisfied with the actions taken by the West Midlands regional health authority to regularise the payment. The loan is repayable at the direction of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Emergency Communications

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would be the savings in capital and revenue expenditure of establishing a nationwide managed network emergency communications service.

Mr. Sackville: A study to develop a strategy in the national health service for the provision of mobile communications, principally those used by the ambulance service, is planned to report in April 1994.

Discussions are taking place with the Home Department, which will continue throughout 1994, to examine the feasibility and cost advantages of implementing a communications facility shared by the police, fire and ambulance services.

GP Fundholders

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total sum of the budgets of those general practitioner fundholders who practise in *(a)* Lewisham and *(b)* London for the most recent available year.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information about general practitioner fundholder budgets is collected only at regional health authority level. For more detailed information about the London and Lewisham areas, the hon. Member may wish to contact the four Thames regional health authorities.

Sodium Valproate

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has correlating defects in the newborn with the ingestion of sodium valproate during pregnancy.

Mr. Sackville: Sodium valproate is a drug used in the treatment of epilepsy and like several other anti-epileptics is known to be teratogenic. Articles in the medical literature and spontaneous reports received by the Committee on Safety of Medicines indicate that there is an increased risk of birth defects in children whose mothers take anti-epileptics. In particular, the use of sodium valproate in early pregnancy is associated with neural tube defects. However, the risks to both mother and child of inadequate treatment of epilepsy during pregnancy are also well recognised and need to be balanced against the risk of birth defects. For this reason many women continue taking anti-epileptics during pregnancy.

The risk of birth defects with sodium valproate was drawn to the attention of doctors by the CSM in its bulletin, "Current Problems", No. 9, published in January 1983. A reminder was also issued in June 1993 in "Current Problems in Pharmacovigilance", Volume 19. Information on birth defects associated with the use of anti-epileptic treatment can also be found in the product data sheets produced by the manufacturers and authorised by the Licensing Authority, and in the British National Formulary which is sent free to all doctors. Copies of "Current Problems" are available in the Library.

Manchester University Health Services Management Unit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has studied the survey by Mr. Michael West and Mr. Rod Sheaff of the health services management unit at Manchester university into issues of probity and honesty in the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes. The survey of attitudes towards issues of probity among national health service chairmen and board members was commissioned by the NHS Management Executive's corporate governance task force who expressed the view in their report:

"the attitudes of respondents to the survey, for the most part, supported a strict application of traditional rules of behaviour."

I welcome that finding which is the foundation for the NHS code of conduct issued for comment on 13 January 1994.

Directly-managed Hospitals

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals in England are currently directly-managed; how many there will be on 1 April; and what percentage of total bed provision will be represented by those directly-managed units.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are currently 137 directly-managed units; from 1 April there will be 22. Information giving the percentage of bed provision by current DMUs is not available.

Wharfedale and Seacroft Hospitals

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what public consultations took place before the decision to allow Wharfedale hospital to be taken over by the United Leeds hospital—LGI—trust.

(2) what budget adjustments are planned for the Leeds health authority and St. James hospital trust to reflect the transfer of responsibility for Seacroft hospital from one to the other;

(3) what budget adjustments are planned to reflect the transfer of responsibility for Wharfedale hospital from Leeds health authority to the United Leeds hospital—LGI—trust;

(4) what public consultations took place before the decision to allow St. James hospital trust to take over Seacroft hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: No decisions have yet been taken on future management arrangements for Seacroft and Wharfedale hospitals. The existing Leeds national health service trusts and the two hospitals are discussing proposals to reconfigure their services with the Department and the regional health authority. If expressions of interest are approved in principle, they will be subject to the full application process for NHS trust status, including statutory public consultation, before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State makes her final decision. I have indicated that any proposals will need to ensure that acute services are provided at broadly the same volume on the Seacroft and Wharfedale sites and that the United Leeds teaching hospitals NHS trust and St. James's university hospital NHS trust provide those services but do not simply take over the hospitals.

Drug Abuse

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure by her Department for *(a)* drug rehabilitation and *(b)* health education in relation to drug abuse each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Bowis: The following sums have been or will be made available to health authorities as a contribution towards the cost of drug service provision generally:

	£ millions
1989-90	14·79
1990-91	15·53
1991-92	16·49
1992-93	20·04
1993-94	24·37
1994-95	25·23

A proportion of these resources will have been used to meet healthcare elements of rehabilitation costs. Responsibility for meeting remaining costs of residential care for drug misusers transferred from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security to local authorities on 1 April 1993 with implementation of community care. Local authorities are now responsible for assessing the needs of drug users and purchasing appropriate services to meet those needs.

Expenditure by the Department of Health on national anti-drug and solvent misuse publicity campaigns is:

	£ millions
1989-90	3·81
1990-91	2·42
1991-92	3·92
1992-93	4·96
1993-94	[1]5·42

[1] Estimated.

Pregnancy Terminations

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each district health authority in south Yorkshire, and by year from the last four years for which she has figures available, the proportion of terminations of pregnancy carried out under *(a)* the national health service and *(b)* the independent or private health services.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table for the years 1989 to 1992. For reasons of confidentiality, statistics for district health authorities are presented by DHA of woman's usual residence, not by DHA of termination.

Abortions performed in England and Wales to residents of South Yorkshire, 1989-92

Place of residence	*Total abortions*	*Percentage of abortions carried out or paid for by the NHS*	*Percentage of abortions carried out under private health services*
Barnsley DHA			
1989	655	51·3	48·7
1990	665	50·4	49·6
1991	641	61·3	38·7
1992	591	62·1	37·9
Doncaster DHA			
1989	907	79·9	20·1
1990	871	81·4	18·6
1991	935	84·6	15·4
1992	936	87·2	12·8
Rotherham DHA			
1989	700	66·9	33·1
1990	724	66·2	33·8
1991	666	73·4	26·6
1992	600	69·7	30·3
Sheffield DHA			
1989	1,503	59·1	40·9
1990	1,513	55·4	44·6
1991	1,573	61·3	38·7
1992	1,392	62·8	37·2

St. Albans General Hospital

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on the minor injuries unit in St. Albans general hospital;

(2) if her Department will instruct North West Hertfordshire health authority to provide a minor injuries unit in St. Albans general hospital that is sufficient to meet the accident needs of 14,000 people;

(3) if she will publish correspondence between the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) concerning the minor injuries unit at St. Albans general hospital.

Mr. Sackville: The minor injuries unit at St. Albans hospital opened on 26 April 1993 and such has been its success that it is on course to treat 7,700 patients in its first year of operation. North West Hertfordshire health authority at its meeting on 17 February approved the further development of the unit as a nurse-led service which will enable the unit to treat up to 11,600 patients a year. The correspondence of the hon. Member for St. Albans, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, is a matter between him and the Health Authority.

Hospital Catering

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *927*, what considerations underlie her decision not to collect centrally information on the number of hospital trusts which operate two standards of category for patients, one of which requires a payment by a patient; if she will consider holding this information in future; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: No. We have no plans to collect centrally detailed information on income generation initiatives of this kind.

Local Purchasing Plans

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice her Department has given to local authorities and health authorities on consultation with users and carers in producing local purchasing plans; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 clearly states that when drawing up their community care plans local authorities must consult representatives of users of community care services and their carers. In addition, the National Health Service Management Executive document "Local Voices"

identified the approach that health authorities need to take to ensure that they involve the general public in their purchasing decisions. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Health wrote in January to all district health authorities emphasising the importance the Government attach to responsiveness to the views and needs of local people.

Mental Health

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce monitoring by the Mental Health Act Commission of arrangements made for the aftercare of patients covered by secion 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Bowis: The arrangements for implementation of section 117 are already monitored by the Mental Health Act Commission on its visits to hospitals and at meetings with health and local authorities.

Health Authorities

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what public relations agencies are employed by each of the regional and district health authorities to provide their public relations; what is the annual cost of this service to each of the health authorities; and how these costs have varied since the establishment of NHS trusts.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 16 February at column *866*.

Patient Priority

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy that the prioritisation of patients needing treatment should depend on their relative clinical needs rather than the financial circumstances of their general practitioners' budgets.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department and the joint consultants committee of the British Medical Association issued joint guidance in 1991 stating that all emergencies should be seen immediately, and that there should be common waiting lists for urgent cases. National Health Service Management Executive guidance states that all urgent cases should be given appropriate clinical priority. This was most recently set out in Sir Duncan Nichol's letter to the NHS dated 24 February, EL(94)19, copies of which will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if it is Government policy that medical surgeons should be prevented from giving patients the treatment they need because of financial management;

(2) if she will make a statement on the recent findings from the survey of surgeons of the Royal College of Surgeons of England on the number of surgical divisions which had been told to stop or reduce activity.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no evidence of reduced activity. Overall activity is in fact forecast to increase this year. No hospitals have stopped admissions and cases continue to be treated according to clinical priority. All emergencies continue to be treated immediately.

Abortion

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of apparent failure to report abortions have been investigated by her Department in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; in how many of those cases the matter was referred for further consideration by the Crown Prosecution Service; how many prosecutions were brought; how many convictions obtained; and what were the sentences awarded in each of those cases.

Mr. Sackville: There have been eight investigations. Four have been the subject of referral to the Crown Prosecution Service. In one, the CPS decided that police inquiries were not warranted after preliminary Department of Health investigation. A second case was not pursued further after the initial Department of Health investigation. Two cases are currently under consideration.

Special Transitional Grant

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each English local authority the level of special transitional grant that would have been paid if the 1993-94 formula for distribution had been applied to 1994-95, indicating for each authority the actual grant being paid for 1994; and if she will also state in each case the difference.

Mr. Bowis: The figures for individual authorities will be placed in the Library. The figures in columns 1 and 3 do not take account of the 1994-95 standard spending assessment review or of the boundary changes.

Children (Foreign Trips)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will produce a table showing the numbers of children who have taken foreign trips *(a)* by local authority social services department and *(b)* by length of stay.

Mr. Bowis: A great many children go on foreign visits. The Department does not collect statistics on this.

Population Statistics

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each five-year cohort in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland, the number of persons and the percentage of persons, who were born in (i) each of those countries, (ii) the Irish Republic, (iii) elsewhere in Europe, and (iv) elsewhere.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* Information for England and Wales, from the 1991 census, will be placed in the Library. Figures for Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each five-year cohort the number of persons resident in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland, who are members of each ethnic group; and what percentage this is in each case of the total number in each such cohort, together with her projections until 2010.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* Information for England and Wales, from the 1991 census, will be placed in the Library. Figures for Scottland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. No population projections are available by ethnic group.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 10 March 1994

NATIONAL HERITAGE

D-day Landings (Commemoration)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, columns *793-94*, if he will publish a list of the civilian events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the D-day landings on 6 June, showing for each the date, location and estimated cost and intended public participation.

Mr. Sproat: Details of the Department of National Heritage's programme of civilian events will be announced in mid-April. Information about the large number of other events being planned in different parts of the country by various groups and individuals are available from the regional tourist boards.

Arts Council

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what was the remit of the Arts Council's cultural diversity unit; what were its objectives; and how such objectives will now be served;

(2) what was the remit of the Arts Council's disability unit; what were its objectives; and how those objectives will now be served.

Mr. Brooke: The Arts Council decided at its meeting in May 1993 to wind up in due course its strategic policy units covering cultural diversity, arts and disability and women in the arts, and to pass its continuing responsibilities to all relevant departments of the council.

I understand that the decision to integrate the work of the units with the art form departments reflects the fact that the units have largely succeeded in their aims of changing attitudes and awareness among funded bodies, and bringing about changes in the council's own practices.

The council will continue to take very seriously its commitment to these strategic policies in fulfilling its charter object to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public throughout the country.

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Sproat: The Department of National Heritage has two executive agencies. The chief executives of both agencies are currently paid less than £82,925.

Management Systems

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much his Department's computer-aided facilities management systems cost; from whom they were purchased; how many person hours were required to commission them; what the estimated and actual saving has been from their operation; and to what extent the use of such systems accounts for the apparent rise in theft noted in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *791*.

Mr. Sproat: My Department does not have a computer-aided facilities management system.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since it came into operation.

Mr. Sproat: My Department introduced a freepost facility in January 1994. It will be used when seeking advice or information from organisations, often of charitable status, whose members would provide their services free of charge, or when carrying out consultation exercises. Costs of the facility to date are £300. My Department does not operate a freephone facility.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much his Department spends on child care; on what provision the sum is spent; how many children receive the child care; and if he will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* The Department of National Heritage was established in April 1992.

In the 1993-94 financial year, this Department spent £1,650—excluding running costs—on child care. This provides one day care place in a nursery which opened in November 1993. In this instance, the place is subsidised as it can be justified in value-for-money terms.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of overall development assistance was accounted for by the aid and trade provisions each year since 1978.

Mr. Goodlad: The percentage of the gross aid programme taken up by ATP expenditure since 1978 is:

	Per cent.
1979-80	3·4
1980-81	2·6
1981-82	5·1

	Per cent.
1982-83	4·5
1983-84	2·5
1984-85	5·0
1985-86	3·0
1986-87	6·4
1987-88	3·7
1988-89	4·0
1989-90	4·0
1990-91	5·6
1991-92	5·4
1992-93	4·8

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements have been established by the Overseas Development Administration to ensure the proper use of aid and trade provision funds provided by his Department; and what powers of discovery Overseas Development Administratioin officials have in regard to access to records of foreign nationals involved in ATP projects.

Mr. Goodlad: Following the announcement of the aid and trade provision review on 17 June 1993, *Official Report*, columns *675-76*, ODA appraisal, approval and monitoring procedures for ATP projects have been brought into line with those applied to other bilateral aid projects. Under the Government-to-Government ATP grant agreement, ODA has rights of access to information relevant to the ATP contract between the overseas Government and the contractors.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will investigate allegations that ATP funds, or other public funds provided through ODA programmes, have been used to bribe foreign officials or business men to secure contracts for British companies.

Mr. Goodlad: Yes. If there is any such evidence available, we do and will investigate any allegations.

United Nations High Commission for Refugees

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he is giving to the general programmes budget of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 1994.

Mr. Goodlad: My noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey has approved a grant of £6 million for UNHCR's general programmes budget for 1994. This follows our highest contribution ever in 1993, at over £50 million, to both UNHCR's general and special programmes budgets. We shall be continuing to monitor UNHCR's work and needs during the year with a view to responding appropriately to appeals as they issue.

Pergau Dam

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the proportion of the aid budget for *(a)* 1989 and *(b)* 1994 taken up by the funding for the Pergau dam scheme in Malaysia.

Mr. Goodlad: The estimated percentage of the aid budget taken up by the funding of the Pergau project in the financial year 1993-94 is 0·8 per cent. There was no expenditure on the project in 1989-90.

Overseas Aid Projects

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the build quality and value for money of *(a)* the Rihand power station in Uttar Pradesh, *(b)* Burri power station in Sudan, *(c)* the north Khartoum power station in Sudan, *(d)* the Ashuganj power station in Bangladesh, *(e)* the Pergau dam in Malaysia and *(f)* the Samanalawewa dam in Sri Lanka; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* Under ODA guidelines we appraise and monitor the technical soundness of projects—including their "build quality"—and, whenever appropriate, we undertake contract price investigations to ensure value for money. The following build quality and value for money assessments have been made on the projects listed:

(a) Construction at Rihand power station in India was assessed through ODA monitoring visits and reports during the successful completion of the project. Very high performance indicators for both production and on-line availability of the station indicate a good build quality. Operating costs per kilowatt hour generated by Rihand rank amongst the lowest of recently built coal fired power stations in India.

(b) and

(c) The Burri and Khartoum power stations in Sudan have been evaluated by ODA who concluded that the appropriateness of plant design was correct. There was competitive bidding for the two power stations among United Kingdom companies.

(d) The Ashuganj generating plant in Bangladesh was commissioned in 1982 following United Kingdom competitive bidding. ODA evaluated the project in 1990 and, although there were operational difficulties, the evaluation concluded that the appropriateness of plant design was broadly correct and that it had been well engineered.

(e) The quality of the design and construction of the Pergau project in Malaysia, which is about 50 per cent. complete, is good. A comprehensive value for money check was carried out before signature of the contract.

(f) Construction of the components of the Samanalawewa dam in Sri Lanka part-funded by the United Kingdom —the engineering design, the tunnelling work, and the construction of the powerhouse—were assessed through ODA monitoring visits and regular reports from the United Kingdom contractors during the implementation of the project. Value-for-money checks were undertaken on the tenders for this work. Construction work not covered by the United Kingdom, including the dam itself, is the responsibility of the Japanese co-financiers.

TRANSPORT

M11 Link Road

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contractual provisions apply to compensation to the contractors undertaking security work in respect of the M11 link road if the contract is cancelled.

Mr. Norris: The contract is let under the Institute of Civil Engineers conditions of contract which provide for determination. The form of contract between the main contractor and the security subcontractor is not for me to decide.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the M11 link road contract 4 complies in every respect with the procedure previously used by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: All procedures, including those to comply with EC directives, have been used by the Department to procure this work in the same way as previous contracts.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conditions apply to the payment of legal costs in relation to the possession of the construction sites for the M11 link road.

Mr. Norris: Each party bears its own legal costs incurred in the pursuance of court orders unless the court makes an order as to costs or legal aid is available.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conditions applied to the payment of security guards and policing of the construction site in respect of the M11 link road contract 4.

Mr. Norris: The contract provides for specific security measures which are included in the contract price and also for extraordinary security measures to be charged against a contingency item in the contract where the engineer considers it appropriate.

Oil Wastes (Ships)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the capacity required for the receipt and storage of oil wastes for ships at each United Kingdom port.

Mr. Norris: The Prevention of Pollution (Reception Facilities) Order 1984—SI 1984-862—requires harbour authorities and terminal operators in the United Kingdom to provide oil reception facilities for ships that are adequate to meet their needs without causing undue delay. Advice and guidance on the assessment of the type and capacity of facilities needed to satisfy the provisions of the order are contained in merchant shipping notice No. M1462.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the capacity of facilities at each United Kingdom port for the storage of oily wastes from ships.

Mr. Norris: Information on oil reception facilities in United Kingdom ports, collected by the Department of Transport, is contained in the International Maritime Organisation circular MEPC/Circ.234, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Northern Line

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the refurbishment of trains, track and signalling on the Northern line; and what meetings he has had with London Transport on this.

Mr. Norris: I have received representations on this matter from a wide range of interests, including manufacturers, Members of Parliament, and members of the public. I have discussed it on a number of occasions with the chairman of London Transport.

Transport Links (Ireland)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to undertake a study of combined transport links with Ireland; whether local authorities are to be consulted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Irish and United Kingdom Governments have jointly appointed Mercer Management Consulting Ltd., in association with Indecon International Economic Consultants, to examine the potential for commercially viable combined transport services between Ireland, the United Kingdom and mainland Europe, as part of the EC Commission's PACT—pilot actions for combined transport—initiative.

A number of local authorities have expressed an interest in the study and the consultants will be approaching them in due course.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Norris: My Department does not keep a central record of the use made of freephone and freepost services and could not say what use might have been made of these services in the past. From inquiries made within the Department we have not been able to trace any use of the services at present.

Red Routes

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which organisations are exempt from the parking restrictions imposed on red routes; and if he will list for each organisation the reasons why.

Mr. Norris: The information is as follows:

vehicles being used for the provision of a London bus service, while waiting at an authorised stopping place or stand;

vehicles displaying a current disabled person's badge, when stopping for the purpose of enabling people with disabilities to board or alight from the vehicle;

Royal Mail liveried vehicles engaged in the collection or delivery of letters in accordance with the statutory duty of the Post Office for the provision of services for the conveyance of letters;

licensed cabs stopping for the purpose of enabling a person to board or alight from the vehicle or to load or unload their personal luggage;

vehicles waiting at any place for so long as may be necessary for the purpose of giving help required as a result of an accident or emergency or taking other action in the interests of public safety;

vehicles required by law to stop, or obliged to stop in order to avoid an accident, or prevented from proceeding by circumstances beyond the driver's control;

vehicles when used for fire brigade, ambulance or police purposes;

vehicles waiting with the permission or at the discretion of a police constable in uniform.

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the definitions of loading and unloading for vehicles using the prescribed loading bays on red routes.

Mr. Norris: Loading and unloading is not defined in any statute; it would be for the courts to determine any disputed cases.

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration his Department has given to the impact red routes will have on courier companies and the businesses they serve.

Mr. Norris: Red routes will improve traffic conditions for all road users so that people and goods can move around the capital more easily. Courier firms and the businesses they serve will benefit from more reliable journey times and improved parking and loading arrangements on London's main roads.

British Rail

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to lay before the House orders affecting railway pensions as provided for by the Railways Act 1993.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to lay these orders between Easter and the summer recess, following consultation with the pension scheme trustees and other interested parties, including the railway trade unions.

Infrastructure Investment

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a breakdown by mode, year on year, of Government investment in Britain's transport infrastructure for the period 1979 to 1995.

Mr. MacGregor: Government transport expenditure plans have enabled investment shown in the table. The latest expenditure plans were published on 10 March in the "Transport Report 1994", Cmnd. 2506.

£ million cash

	Nationalised industries			*National roads England*	*Central Government support to local authority capital expenditure (England)*[3]			
	British Rail[1]	*London Transport*[2]	*Civil Aviation Authority*		*Total*	*of which:*		
						Local roads	*Local public transport*	*Local ports and airports*
Outturn								
1979-80	367	—	12	402	—	—	—	—
1980-81	431	—	23	472	—	—	—	—
1981-82	409	—	24	557	—	—	—	—
1982-83	378	—	26	762	—	—	—	—
1983-84	439	—	20	641	—	—	—	—
1984-85	586	—	19	718	—	—	—	—
1985-86	550	—	19	734	—	—	—	—
1986-87	530	225	30	766	—	—	—	—
1987-88	631	233	33	867	596	476	90	30
1988-89	695	270	35	889	672	584	52	36
1989-90	889	350	54	1,239	627	518	70	39
1990-91	1,022	495	74	1,668	747	563	113	71
1991-92	1,293	420	88	1,704	916	715	106	97
1992-93	1,573	782	119	1,784	1,022	838	102	81
1993-94[4]	1,207	736	156	1,920	1,101	967	114	20
Plans								
1994-95	—	997	120	1,829	978	857	109	11
1995-96	—	1,022	86	1,779	1,041	918	111	12

[1] Individual figures for 1994-95 and 1995-96 not available, but in the three year period 1994-95 to 1996-97 total investment will be around £2·7 billion.
[2] Prior to 1986-87, the Greater London council was responsible for London Transport.
[3] Figures not available on a comparable basis prior to 1987-88.
[4] Forecast outturn.

Supplementary Grant and Expenditure

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list for each metropolitan borough council in *(a)* South Yorkshire *(b)* West Yorkshire a summary of the transport supplementary grant made available for each of the past four years, broken down into (i) committed major scheme (gross), (ii) newly supported major schemes, (iii) bridge works, (iv) principal roads carriageways, (v) local safety silencers, (vi) packages, (vii) schemes specific, including bus priority, (viii) bus priority alone, (ix) minor works, (x) European regional development fund schemes and (xi) Industrial Development Act schemes;

(2) if he will list for *(a)* Humberside *(b)* North Yorkshire a summary of the transport supplementary grant made available for each of the past four years, broken down into (i) committed major scheme (gross), (ii) newly supported major schemes, (iii) bridge works, (iv) principal roads carriageways, (v) local safety silencers, (vi) packages, (vii) schemes specific, including bus priority, (viii) bus priority alone, (ix) minor works, (x) European regional development fund schemes and (xi) Industrial Development Act schemes;

(3) if he will list for each metropolitan borough council in *(a)* South Yorkshire *(b)* West Yorkshire a summary of the transport capital expenditure for local authorities for each of the past four years, broken down into (i) committed major scheme (gross), (ii) newly supported major schemes, (iii) bridge works, (iv) principal roads carriageways, (v) local safety silencers, (vi) packages, (vii) schemes specific, including bus priority, (viii) bus priority alone, (ix) minor works, (x) European regional development fund schemes and (xi) Industrial Development Act schemes;

(4) if he will list for *(a)* Humberside *(b)* North Yorkshire a summary of the transport capital expenditure settlement for local authorities for each of the past four years, broken down into (i) committed major scheme (gross), (ii) newly supported major schemes, (iii) bridge works, (iv) principal roads carriageways, (v) local safety silencers, (vi) packages, (vii) schemes specific, including bus priority,

(viii) bus priority alone, (ix) minor works, (x) European regional development fund schemes and (xi) Industrial Development Act schemes.

Mr. Key: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will bring forward legislation to bring public interest immunity certificates within statute law and parliamentary scrutiny.

The Prime Minister: The Government will consider carefully any comments or recommendations Lord Justice Scott makes on this issue when his report is completed.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 March.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Sir Peter Levene

Dame Angela Rumbold: To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements have been made to ensure that there is no conflict of interest between Sir Peter Levene's appointment as chairman of Canary Wharf and his position as the Prime Minister's efficiency adviser.

The Prime Minister: Sir Peter Levene will take no part in Government consideration of any issue which could involve a conflict of interest for him. There will be a review every six months of any prospective issues which could raise such a conflict so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Official Gifts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report,* column *162,* what happens to moneys raised from the sale of official gifts received by recent Prime Ministers.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 9 March 1994]:* Gifts of small value are the property of the Prime Minister; the use of the proceeds from the sale of any such items is therefore a matter for the Prime Minister of the day to determine. Both my predecessor and I have made it our practice to donate all proceeds to charity. If any gifts from the official inventory were sold, the proceeds would accrue to official funds.

Office Costs

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what was the annual total cost of the Prime Minister's office in each year *(a)* between 1974 and 1979 and *(b)* since 1990.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* Figures on a consistent basis are not available. Information on the total costs of the Prime Minister's office is not available before 1979-80. Spending in 1979-80 is recorded as £1.409 million, but that did not include charges for: the use of MOD aircraft; the use of buildings and for services supplied by the Property Services Agency and its successors; the use of the Government car service; the service personnel at Chequers; or for office services supplied by the Cabinet Office.

The present No. 10 budget now includes charges for all these services. On that basis, the total annual cost for the completed financial years since 1990 has been as follows:

Year	*£ thousands*
1990-91	8,226
1991-92	8,664
1992-93	9,866

These figures show payments made in the years in question. In some cases, this may relate to expenditure incurred in the previous financial year.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his question of 11 January, relating to expenditure of his Office.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* I have done so.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the flexibility of the limits on therapeutic work for recipients of invalidity benefit.

Mr. Scott: We are considering the flexibility of the therapeutic work provisions in the context of the conditions which will apply to incapacity benefit.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the amount of voluntary work that may be disregarded in considering entitlement to invalidity benefit.

Mr. Scott: We have received a number of representations. One of the measures introduced by the Social Security (Incapacity For Work) Bill will allow people receiving incapacity benefit or severe disablement allowance to do up to 16 hours voluntary work a week without it affecting their benefit.

Elderly People

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of over-80s who are not entitled to the basic retirement pension; how much it would cost for them to be provided with one; what help they will receive towards value added tax on their fuel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: It is estimated that approximately 75,000 persons in Great Britain who are aged 80 or over do not receive a basic state retirement pension. The estimated net cost of providing standard rate basic retirement pension to them is approximately £85 million per year at April 1994 prices.

Those not in receipt of basic pension but who receive income support will receive an additional 50p per week —single people—or 70p per week—couples. Those not in receipt of basic pension or income support but who receive the non-contributory retirement pension, available to persons aged 80 and over, will receive an additional 20p per week.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley will receive replies to his letters to the chief executive of the Child Support Agency of 16 November and 12 January.

Mr. Burt: I understand that Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive of the Child Support Agency, replied to the hon. Member on 9 March 1994.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the annual numbers with *(a)* terminal illness, *(b)* a prescribed condition and *(c)* the highest rate of the care component of disability living allowance who should be considered for fast-tracking to the higher rate of incapacity benefit.

Mr. Scott: We are considering this issue.

Income-related Benefits

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will reconsider the rules for the treatment of capital made by the DSS in its calculation that for every £250 of saving, or part of £250, over and above £3,000 there could be a reduction of £1 in benefits payable.

Mr. Burt: The arrangements for the treatment of capital in the income-related benefits are kept under review, but we have no plans for change at present. The formula applied for taking account of capital above £3,000 does not imply any particular return on investments. It ensures that help is targeted on those who need it most, while not denying benefit to those with only a moderate amount of capital.

Value Added Tax (Fuel)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what assessment he has made of the number of pensioners in their eighties who will receive less than pensioners in their sixties to compensate for the extra cost of VAT on their fuel bills; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many pensioners in their eighties have no entitlement to a basic retirement pension and how many are in receipt of a special over-80s pension; and what addition they will receive towards the additional cost of VAT on fuel.

Mr. Hague: It is estimated that approximately 75,000 persons in Great Britain who are aged 80 or over do not receive a basic state retirement pension and that approximately 28,000 people aged 80 or over receive a non-contributory retirement pension.

Extra help towards VAT on fuel for those aged 80 or over will be available on the same general basis as for all persons of pensionable age, with the exception that those not in receipt of basic pension or income support but who receive a non-contributory retirement pension, available only to persons aged 80 or over, will receive total extra help of 20p per week.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what compensation for VAT on fuel will be paid to married women with an entitlement to a reduced retirement pension based on their own contributions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) on 28 February at column *615*.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much will be added to war disablement pensions to compensate for the additional costs of VAT on fuel; how much will be received by a war widow also in receipt of a retirement pension towards the additional cost of VAT on fuel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The basic war disablement pension will not be increased beyond normal price indexation. The majority of war disablement pensioners are over pension age and will receive extra help through retirement pension; others will gain through invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance. War pensioners who choose to receive war pension unemployability supplement instead of retirement pension will receive the same extra help as retirement pensioners.

The standard war widows pension will be increased by 50p a week on top of the normal uprating. A war widow who also receives, as a result of her own contributions, the full basic retirement pension, will receive a further 50p a week compensation.

Disabled People

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the preliminary findings of the cost-benefit analysis of legislation to outlaw discrimination against disabled people undertaken by his Department; and when he expects to publish the full findings.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available. A cost-benefit analysis has not been prepared. Should the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill reach Committee stage, a compliance cost assessment will be provided in the normal way.

EDUCATION

Student Numbers

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimates he made of the numbers of students on two-year higher education courses before his recent announcement of notional tuition fee levels for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The Government's expenditure plans, including tuition fee levels, announced at the time of the Budget allowed for a specified total number of students in higher education. In order to translate total numbers into the numbers of new entrants, it is necessary to make

assumptions about a number of factors, including the average length of courses. However, the number of students on two-year higher education courses was not separately assessed or identified.

Management Systems

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much his Department's computer-aided facilities management systems cost; from whom they were purchased; how many person hours were required to commission them; what the estimated and actual saving has been from their operation; and to what extent the use of such systems accounts for the apparent rise in theft noted in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *841*.

Mr. Boswell: The Department has no computer-aided facilities management systems. The information provided on 16 February shows a decline in 1993 in the incidence of theft.

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Robin Squire: None.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Employee Share Schemes

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Inland Revenue next intends to publish updated guidance on approved employee share schemes, to replace versions dated 1991, and updated guidance on profit-related pay to replace the present editions published five years ago.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue published revised versions of its booklets and leaflets on approved employee share schemes on 7 March. Revision of the guidance notes on profit-related pay is currently under consideration.

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how soon he expects to announce details of the introduction and operation of approved employee share schemes and of statutory employee share ownership plans up to the end of March 1993.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue expects to issue the latest figures on the introduction and operation of approved employee share schemes in April 1994—and annually in April thereafter. Similar information for statutory employee share ownership plans is not available.

Inland Revenue (Information Technology Office)

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if employees of the information technology office of the Inland Revenue will benefit from civil service redundancy arrangements if they refuse to relocate consequent upon their being taken over by a private contractor.

Mr. Dorrell: If employees of the Inland Revenue's information technology office transfer with their work to a private company as a result of the current procurement which forms part of the Department's market-testing programme, it is expected that the transfer will be within the scope of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. This means that current terms and conditions of employment will transfer to the new employer. If, following the transfer, the new employer asked employees to relocate, those employees whose terms and conditions did not include a mobility requirement would not be obliged to do so unless the new location was within reasonable daily travelling distance of their home. If the new employer was unable to offer alternative jobs to non-mobile employees, as a last resort they could be made redundant.

Amusement with Prizes Machines

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenue currently accrues to the Treasury from amusement with prizes and jackpot machines from each main category of premises on which they are located.

Sir John Cope: An estimated breakdown of gaming machine licence duty for 1992-93 is as follows:

Amusement with prizes	*£ million*
Pubs	33
Inland arcades	15
Seaside arcades	13
Bingo halls	12
Single sites	3
Others	7
Total amusement with prizes	83
Jackpot machines	15
Total gaming machine licence duty	98

There is no breakdown for jackpot machines.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what calculations he has made as to the potential revenue that would accrue to the Treasury in respect of amusement with prizes machines in licensed betting offices.

Sir John Cope: No calculations have been made.

Licensed Betting Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what calculations the Treasury has made as to the potential loss in tax revenue from licensed betting offices as a consequence of competition from the national lottery.

Sir John Cope: A duty rate of 12 per cent. is to apply to national lottery stakes. This rate has been set so as broadly to offset the anticipated revenue loss from expenditure diverted from other taxed goods. Any attempt to apportion this revenue loss between different taxes would be purely speculative.

Taxation

Sir David Knox: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 3 February, *Official Report*, columns *825-26*, if he will give the percentages of earnings taken in income tax and national insurance contribution from a single-wage married couple at *(a)* half,

(b) three quarters, *(c)* average, and *(d)* twice average male manual earnings, in the years 1990-91, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is in the table:

Income tax and national insurance contributions[1] as a percentage of gross earnings

Multiple of average earnings[2]	*1978-79*	*1990-91*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Half average earnings	14·1	12·8	11·6	12·1
Three quarters average earnings	22·4	19·9	19·0	19·2
Average earnings	26·7	23·4	22·8	22·9
Twice average earnings	31·2	26·1	26·1	26·4

[1] National insurance contributions are at the standard class 1 rate for employees not contracted-out of the state additional—earnings-related—pension scheme. Tax has been calculated assuming that no allowances or reliefs are available other than the standard allowance.

[2] Average earnings are taken to be the gross weekly manual earnings of full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These are £244·50 and £272·00 in 1990-91 and 1992-93 respectively. In 1993-94 these are estimated to be £281·50 using an illustrative growth rate of 3·5 per cent.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish for each year since 1978 a table showing *(a)* average earnings and *(b)* income tax liability on taxable income equal to (i) one quarter average earnings, (ii) one half average earnings, (iii) average earnings, (iv) five times average earnings, (v) 10 times average earnings and (vi) 100 times average earnings.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is in the tables. Because taxable income excludes income covered by allowances, the gross incomes of taxpayers with these levels of taxable income would be significantly higher. The figures show that tax liability as a proportion of taxable income has fallen at all income levels over this period.

Year	*Average earnings[1] £ per week*
1978-79	92·8
1979-80	109·3
1980-81	131·4
1981-82	145·9
1982-83	157·4
1983-84	171·0
1984-85	185·0
1985-86	198·5
1986-87	213·8
1987-88	233·6
1988-89	256·3
1989-90	279·9
1990-91	306·2
1991-92	328·7
1992-93	347·7
1993-94	359·9

Income tax liability[2] on taxable income at multiples of average earnings £ per week

Year	*¼*	*½*	*1*	*5*	*10*	*100*
1978-79	6·50	14·16	29·47	248·77	633·89	7,566·05
1979-80	7·48	15·67	32·07	238·72	566·62	6,468·82
1980-81	9·86	19·71	39·42	295·64	689·84	7,785·44
1981-82	10·94	21·89	43·77	339·14	776·84	8,655·44
1982-83	11·81	23·61	47·22	360·08	832·28	9,331·88
1983-84	12·83	25·65	51·30	385·02	898·02	10,132·02
1984-85	13·88	27·75	55·50	419·62	974·62	10,964·62
1985-86	14·89	29·78	59·55	452·71	1,048·21	11,767·21
1986-87	15·50	31·00	62·00	489·53	1,130·93	12,676·13
1987-88	15·77	31·54	63·07	540·38	1,241·18	13,855·58
1988-89	16·02	32·04	64·08	456·93	969·53	10,196·33
1989-90	17·49	34·99	69·98	500·09	1,059·89	11,136·29
1990-91	19·14	38·27	76·55	552·69	1,165·09	12,188·29
1991-92	20·54	41·09	82·18	589·03	1,246·43	13,079·63
1992-93	19·81	41·54	85·00	625·11	1,320·51	13,837·71
1993-94	20·09	42·58	87·57	649·03	1,368·83	14,325·23

Income tax liability as a percentage of taxable income at multiples of average earnings

Year	*¼*	*½*	*1*	*5*	*10*	*100*
1978-79	28·0	30·5	31·8	53·6	68·3	81·5
1979-80	27·4	28·7	29·3	43·7	51·8	59·2
1980-81	30·0	30·0	30·0	45·0	52·5	59·2
1981-82	30·0	30·0	30·0	46·5	53·2	59·3
1982-83	30·0	30·0	30·0	45·8	52·9	59·3
1983-84	30·0	30·0	30·0	45·0	52·5	59·3
1984-85	30·0	30·0	30·0	45·4	52·7	59·3
1985-86	30·0	30·0	30·0	45·6	52·8	59·3
1986-87	29·0	29·0	29·0	45·8	52·9	59·3
1987-88	27·0	27·0	27·0	46·3	53·1	59·3
1988-89	25·0	25·0	25·0	35·7	37·8	39·8
1989-90	25·0	25·0	25·0	35·7	37·9	39·8
1990-91	25·0	25·0	25·0	36·1	38·0	39·8
1991-92	25·0	25·0	25·0	35·8	37·9	39·8
1992-93	22·8	23·9	24·4	36·0	38·0	39·8
1993-94	22·3	23·7	24·3	36·1	38·0	39·8

[1] Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. The figure for 1993-94 is based on an illustrative assumption of 3·5 per cent. growth over 1992-93.

[2] Assuming all income is earned and that taxable income—income for income tax purposes less allowances and reliefs available at the taxpayer's marginal rate—is equal to the multiple of average earnings shown.

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of a 20 per cent. basic rate of income tax in *(a)* 1993-94, *(b)* 1994-95 and *(c)* 1995-96.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates based on a projection of the 1991-92 survey of personal incomes are given.

Revenue cost compared with a basic rate of 25 per cent. in a full year

	£ billion
1993-94	7·8
1994-95	9·2
1995-96	9·7

Personal Allowances

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the revenue cost to the Exchequer of the personal allowances in 1993-94, 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97 in constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates for 1993-94 and 1994-95 based on information about individuals on Inland Revenue records are given. These costs exclude the value of personal allowances to some individuals whose income is below the tax threshold. The costs for later years will depend on allowance levels for those years.

Revenue cost of personal allowances[1] in a full year at constant 1994-95 prices

	£ billion
1993-94[2]	33·1
1994-95[2]	31·1

[1] This includes the personal allowance, the married couple's allowance and the linked allowances, and the blind person's allowance.
[2] Assuming that prices increase by 2 per cent. in 1993-94 and 3·25 per cent. in 1994-95 in line with the illustrative assumptions in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" 1994-95.

Married Couple's Allowance

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the revenue saving of the abolition of the married couple's allowance in *(a)* 1993-94, *(b)* 1994-95 and *(c)* 1995-96.

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer of the married couples allowance in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 1 March 1994]:* The estimated costs in a full year are given in the table:

Year	[1]Cost £ billion
1993-94	5·0
1994-95	3·9
1995-96	3·1

[1] Includes the cost of allowances related to the married couples allowance, namely the additional personal allowance and the widow's bereavement allowance.

Incomes

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a table showing *(a)* the total number of taxpayers, *(b)* the number of taxpayers with incomes in excess of £100,000 and *(c)* the percentage of taxpayers with incomes in excess of £100,000 for (i) each region and (ii) each county of the United Kingdom for each of the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates for each region in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, the latest year for which information is available below United Kingdom level, are included in the first table. Married couples are counted as one unit in 1989-90 prior to the introduction of independent taxation. The second table includes estimates of the total number of taxpayers in each county in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92. All estimates are derived from the survey of personal incomes and the size of the survey limits the extent to which reliable estimates can be given at the county level for taxpayers with incomes over £100,000. The third table gives approximate numbers and percentages in 1991-92 for those counties estimated to have at least 500 taxpayers with incomes over £100,000.

Table 1. Numbers of taxpayers by region, 1989-90 to 1991-92

	Number of taxpayers (thousands)	Number of taxpayers with total income of more than £100,000 (thousands)	Percentage of total taxpayers with total income of more than £100,000
1989-90[1]			
North	1,060	1	0·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,770	3	0·2
North West	2,270	6	0·2
East Midlands	1,460	4	0·3
West Midlands	1,890	3	0·2
East Anglia	821	3	0·3
South East	7,110	47	0·7
South West	1,710	5	0·3
Wales	954	2	0·3
Scotland	2,060	3	0·1
Northern Ireland	483	1	0·1
1990-91			
North	1,240	1	0·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,160	4	0·2
North West	2,840	5	0·2
East Midlands	1,910	2	0·1
West Midlands	2,340	5	0·2
East Anglia	991	3	0·3
South East	8,850	50	0·6
South West	2,350	5	0·2
Wales	1,220	1	0·1
Scotland	2,340	3	0·1
Northern Ireland	542	1	0·1
1991-92			
North	1,270	2	0·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,140	5	0·2
North West	2,740	7	0·3
East Midlands	1,840	4	0·2
West Midlands	2,260	5	0·2
East Anglia	1,030	4	0·4
South East	8,610	64	0·7
South West	2,270	6	0·3
Wales	1,240	2	0·1
Scotland	2,320	4	0·2
Northern Ireland	513	1	0·1

[1] Married couples count as one taxpayer.

Table 2. Number of taxpayers by English and Welsh County and Scottish Region, 1989-90 to 1991-92

County	1989-90[1]	1990-91	Thousands 1991-92
Tyne and Wear	386	434	445
Cleveland	147	177	178
Cumbria	196	251	266
Durham	219	225	232
Northumberland	112	151	148
Humberside	320	379	345
South Yorkshire	432	486	519
North Yorkshire	291	346	383
West Yorkshire	729	949	898
Cheshire	388	462	442
Lancashire	542	632	631
Greater Manchester	874	1,160	1,090
Merseyside	469	586	582
Derbyshire	345	423	412
Leicestershire	344	435	406

County	1989-90[1]	1990-91	Thousands 1991-92
Lincolnshire	226	285	269
Northamptonshire	209	281	305
Nottinghamshire	338	487	447
West Midlands	835	1,080	1,080
Hereford and Worcester	271	349	332
Shropshire	153	194	177
Staffordshire	424	474	445
Warwickshire	211	245	227
Cambridgeshire	274	321	346
Norfolk	297	334	373
Suffolk	249	336	309
Greater London	2,800	3,470	3,350
Bedfordshire	200	254	248
Berkshire	283	415	356
Buckinghamshire	256	324	302
East Sussex	312	352	332
Essex	600	751	770
Hampshire	606	801	769
Hertfordshire	464	524	497
Kent	575	688	708
Oxfordshire	184	256	265
Surrey	418	574	560
West Sussex	351	371	390
Isle of Wight	56	72	56
Avon	326	467	448
Cornwall	155	231	208
Devon	401	491	527
Dorset	256	336	320
Gloucestershire	212	290	269
Somerset	163	229	221
Wiltshire	198	308	281
Gwent	153	182	161
Mid Glamorgan	172	217	225
South Glamorgan	139	177	177
West Glamorgan	103	142	148
Dyfed	113	149	192
Gwynedd	75	101	73
Powys	31	52	74
Clwyd	167	204	193
Grampian	249	241	231
Tayside	145	174	202
Fife	141	154	150
Lothian	334	418	367
Central	104	143	122
Borders	48	36	72
Strathclyde	902	985	955
Dumfries and Galloway	50	74	76
Highlands	71	91	115
Island Authorities	19	23	26

[1] Married couples count as one taxpayer.

Table 3. Taxpayers with total income over £100,000 by English and Welsh County and Scottish Region 1991-92[1]

County	Number (thousands)	Taxpayers with total income over £100,000 as a percentage of total taxpayers
Tyne and Wear	1	0·2
North Yorkshire	1	0·4
West Yorkshire	2	0·3
Cheshire	1	0·3
Lancashire	1	0·2
Greater Manchester	4	0·3
Merseyside	1	0·2
Derbyshire	1	0·3
Leicestershire	1	0·2
Northamptonshire	1	0·2
Nottinghamshire	1	0·2
West Midlands	2	0·2
Hereford and Worcester	1	0·4
Staffordshire	1	0·4
Warwickshire	1	0·2
Cambridgeshire	2	0·4
Norfolk	1	0·2
Suffolk	2	0·7
Greater London	36	1·1
Berkshire	2	0·5
Buckinghamshire	3	0·8
East Sussex	1	0·3
Essex	4	0·5
Hampshire	2	0·2
Hertfordshire	3	0·7
Kent	3	0·4
Oxfordshire	1	0·4
Surrey	8	1·4
West Sussex	1	0·3
Avon	2	0·5
Devon	1	0·3
Gloucestershire	1	0·2
Wiltshire	1	0·2
South Glamorgan	1	0·3
Grampian	1	0·4
Lothian	1	0·2
Strathclyde	2	0·2

[1] Only counties where there are estimated to be at least 500 taxpayers with total income over £100,000 appear.

Alcohol and Tobacco Imports

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the European directive relating to the importation of wine, spirits and tobacco products by postal or other services without carriage by those claiming importation for personal consumption.

Sir John Cope: Excisable goods cannot be imported into the United Kingdom by post or otherwise without paying United Kingdom rates of duty on them, except when the goods are accompanied by the purchaser and are for his or her personal consumption.

Coronation Crown

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, columns *271-72*, what were the results from monitoring the sales of the £5 coronation crown before and after the advertising campaign.

Mr. Nelson: Research showed that the advertisements increased public awareness of the circulating standard £5 coronation anniversary crown. There were also significant increases in the number of crowns issued after the advertisements appeared. Total issues of 1·7 million coins were therefore higher than they would otherwise have been.

Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will call for a report from LAUTRO as to how many life assurance salesmen have left the register during 1993; for what reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: I understand that LAUTRO recorded a net decrease of around 48,000 salesmen from the register during 1993. It believes that this reduction reflets mainly the higher standards now required by virtue of the training and competence arrangements introduced in April 1993.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the public sector borrowing requirement was funded from overseas in each year since 1991.

Mr. Nelson: Data on "External and foreign currency financing of the public sector" are published by the Central Statistical Office in "Economic Trends" in the table "Counterparts to changes in money stock M4".

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *96*, if he will provide whatever information is available of those occasions on which he, or other Ministers in his Department now or in the past, have signed public interest immunity certificates, and for what reasons.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member on 9 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *223*.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is his estimate of the net cost to the Treasury of providing legal aid in personal injury cases *(a)* at all levels of claim and *(b)* for claims of up to £2,500.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is estimated that in the financial year 1992-93 the net cost to the legal aid fund of all personal injury cases was £25 million. It is not possible to break this down according to size of the claim. Other factors, such as the cost to the court service and legal aid administration, and the impact on the Department of Social Security's compensation recovery unit, none of which can be readily quantified, also have a bearing on the total net cost to the Exchequer of such cases.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Frederick West

Mr. Bates: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received over the media coverage of the arrest and subsequent court proceedings against Frederick West in Gloucester magistrates court.

The Solicitor-General: Representations have been made to my office by solicitors representing both Mr. West and his wife in respect of certain published material. They were both arrested on 25 February 1994 and at that time the proceedings became "active" within the meaning of paragraph 4 of schedule 1 to the Contempt of Court Act 1981. Mr. West is now charged with three offences of murder and his wife is on police bail. Proceedings therefore remain "active" in relation to both. Editors are under a legal obligation not to publish material which gives rise to a substantial risk of serious prejudice in the proceedings. I shall consider any material submitted to me in the context of the 1981 Act and other relevant legislation.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Plugs and Sockets

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether there is a deliberative process within the EC's current policy formulation within the field of telecommunications that might lead to the standardisation of plugs and sockets for the connection of consumer equipment to *(a)* the public switched telephone network, *(b)* the integrated services digital network and *(c)* the public data networks.

Mr. McLoughlin: I can confirm that deliberative processes on possible standardisation of plugs and sockets are at different stages depending on the network and method of access used. For *(a)*, the public switched telephone network, study by the Commission and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute remains at the information-gathering stage. On *(b)*, requirements for direct attachment to the integrated services digital network have been technically defined prior to final adoption. For *(c)*, any public data networks not covered by *(a)* and *(b)* above, there is much less clear agreement at the European level on the extent to which public data networks should be harmonised and deliberative processes have not advanced to any extent so far.

Coal Privatisation

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list in table form *(a)* the number of commercial advisers, brokers and underwriters his Department has employed in preparation for coal privatisation, *(b)* the names of such commercial advisers, brokers, underwriters, etc. and *(c)* the fees and commission (i) already paid and (ii) projected to such companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: N M Rothschild and Son Ltd. is employed as the Department's financial advisers on coal privatisation. Payments to the company are commercially confidential. My Department currently employs no brokers or underwriters in connection with coal privatisation.

English Estates (Copeland)

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the total amount spent by English Estates in providing new factory premises and serviced sites in Copeland since June 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: English Estates has spent £4·1 million in Copeland.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many acres of serviced industrial land have been provided by English Estates in Copeland since 1991 under the Cumbria special support initiative announced by the Government in June 1991.

Mr. Sainsbury: English Estates has bought 49 acres of land of which 26 acres have been serviced.

Post Offices

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *165*, what plans the Post Office has to franchise the operation of Irvine and Kilwinning Crown post offices; and if he will make it his policy not to franchise the operation of these two Crown post offices.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that there are no present plans to franchise the operation of either Irvine or Kilwinning Crown post offices, but, if suitable opportunities arose, they do not preclude conversion of these offices to agency status. Decisions on the conversion of individual Crown post offices are an operational matter for the Post Office.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *168*, how many Post Office staff have left the Post Office under voluntary redundancy terms.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that records of voluntary redundancies are not held centrally and the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which post offices in Scotland are currently being considered for franchising; and within which parliamentary constituency each lies.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that local consultations prior to conversion to agency status have taken place in respect of the following post offices in Scotland:

Post Office	Parliamentary constituency
Peterhead	Banff and Buchan
Kirkcaldy	Kirkcaldy
Stranraer	Galloway and Upper Nithsdale
Annan	Dumfries
Thurso	Caithness and Sutherland
Livingston	Livingston
Partick	Glasgow Hillhead
Renfrew	Paisley North
Anniesland	Glasgow Garscadden
Elgin	Moray
Wester Hailes	Edinburgh Pentlands
Milngavie	Clydebank and Milngavie
Greenock	Greenock and Port Glasgow
Newington	Edinburgh South
Charing Cross	Glasgow Hillhead

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, columns *166-67*, within which parliamentary constituency each of the post offices in Scotland converted to agency status between April 1989 and January 1994 lies.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that the parliamentary constituencies in which the post offices in Scotland converted to agency status between April 1989 and January 1994 are as follows:

Post Office	Parliamentary Constituency
Alexandria	Dumbarton
Anstruther	Fife North East
Arbroath	Angus East
Banchory	Gordon
Banff	Banff and Buchan
Barrhead	Eastwood
Bearsden	Strathkelvin and Bearsden
Beith	Cunninghame North
Bishopbriggs	Strathkelvin and Bearsden
Bo'ness	Linlithgow
Blairgowrie	Tayside North
Brechin	Angus East
Brodick	Cunninghame North
Broughty Ferry	Angus East
Broxburn	Livingston
Bruntsfield	Edinburgh South
Buckhaven	Fife Central
Buckie	Moray
Burns Statue Ayr	Ayr
Burntisland	Kirkcaldy
Campbeltown	Argyll and Bute
Carnoustie	Angus East
Cathcart	Glasgow Cathcart
Coldstream	Rosburgh and Berwickshire
Cowdenbeath	Dunfermline East
Crieff	Perth and Kinross
Cumnock	Carrick Cumnock and Doon Valley
Cupar	Fife North East
Dalbeattie	Galloway and Upper Nithsdale
Dalmuir	Clydebank and Milngavie
Dingwall	Ross Cromarty and Skye
Dunbar	East Lothian
Dunblane	Stirling
Dunoon	Argyll and Bute
Duns	Roxburgh and Berwickshire
Ellon	Gordon
Forfar	Tayside North
Forres	Moray
Forrest Road	Edinburgh Central
Fraserburgh	Banff and Buchan
George Street Aberdeen	Not indentified
Girvan	Ayr
Glasgow Airport	Renfrew West and Inverclyde
Gourock	Renfrew West and Inverclyde
Grangemouth	Falkirk East
Grantown on Spey	Inverness Nairn and Lochaber
Hawick	Roxburgh and Berwickshire
Helensburgh	Dumbarton
Hillhead	Glasgow Hillhead
Huntly	Gordon
Invergordon	Ross Cromarty and Skye
Inverurie	Inverness Nairn and Lochaber
Jamaica Street	Cunninghame North
Jeburgh	Roxburgh and Berwickshire
Johnstone	Paisley South
Kelso	Roxburgh and Berwickshire
Kelvinbrige	Glasgow Maryhill
Kilmacolm	Renfrew West and Inverclyde
Kilsyth	Cumbernauld and Kilsyth
Kinross	Perth and Kinross
Kirkcudbright	Galloway and Upper Nithsdale
Kirriemuir	Tayside North
Kyle of Lochalsh	Ross Cromarty and Skye
Lairg	Caithness and Sutherland
Larkhall	Clydesdale
Lanark	Clydesdale
Largs	Cunninghame North
Leith	Edinburgh Leith
Leith Walk	Edinburgh Leith
Leven	Fife Central
Lochee	Dundee West
Lochgelly	Dunfermline East
Lochgilphead	Argyll and Bute
Lockerbie	Dumfries
Lossiemouth	Moray
Maryhill	Glasgow Maryhill
Maybole	Ayr
Melrose	Tweeddale Ettrick and Lauderdale

Moffat—Dumfries
Montrose—Angus East
Musselburgh—East Lothian
Nairn—Inverness Nairn and Lochaber
Newton Stewart—Galloway and Upper Nithsdale
Newlands Glasgow—Not Identified
North Berwick—East Lothian
Norton Park—Edinburgh East
Oban—Argyll and Bute
Parkhead—Glasgow Shettleston
Peebles—Tweeddale Ettrick and Lauderdale
Penicuik—Midlothian
Pitlochry—Perth and Kinross
Pollock—Glasgow Pollock
Port Ellen—Argyll and Bute
Port Glasgow—Greenock and port Glasgow
Portobello—Edinburgh East
Portree—Ross Cromarty and Skye
Prestonpans—East Lothian
Prestwick—Ayr
Rothesay—Argyll and Bute
Selkirk—Tweeddale Ettrick and Lauderdale
Shawlands—Glasgow Pollock
Shotts—Motherwell North
St. George's Cross—Glasgow Maryhill
St. Rollox—Glasgow Central
Stevenston—Cunninghame North
Stonehaven—Kincardine and Deeside
Strathaven—East Kilbride
Stromness—Orkney and Shetland
Tain—Ross Cromarty and Skye
Tollcross—Edinburgh Central
Tranent—East Lothian
Troon—Ayr
Turriff—Banff and Buchan
Uddingston—Hamilton
West Kilbride—Cunninghame North

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: Comprehensive information about the Department's use of toll-free telephone lines is not collated centrally; but the Department currently operates three national toll-free telephone inquiry services. Their purposes and costs are as follows:

ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE HELPLINE (0800 500 200)
The line provides information and a single, comprehensive ordering point for literature about the Department's services for business.

The service is bought in. Since its establishment costs have been as follows:

Year	*£*
1987-88	67,000
1988-89	106,700
1989-90	163,600
1990-91	166,400
1991-92	120,500
1992-93	124,200
1993-94	118,000

ENVIRONMENTAL ENQUIRY POINT (0800 585 794)
The line provides United Kingdom businesses with an information and signposting service on environmental issues.

The service is operated by Warren Spring Laboratory. Its costs, excluding staff costs, since inception have been as follows:

	£
1990-91	2,076
1991-92	3,311
1992-93	4,184
1993-94	2,262

INNOVATION ENQUIRY LINE (0800 44 2001)
The purpose of the line is to help raise awareness about innovation by providing a single telephone contact for those seeking information about the Department's innovation services, and to dispatch relevant literature and/or signpost inquirers to other sources of help.

The line is operated in house. Its costs, excluding staff costs, since establishment have been as follows:

	£
1991-92	3,700
1992-93	[1]3,700
1993-94	5,400

[1] (est)

Free-post arrangements are made from time to time according to need, but details are not held centrally.

Radio Spectrum

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will publish the report of the stage 3 radio spectrum review committee; and if he will make a statement on the future management of the radio spectrum.

Mr. Heseltine: The stage 3 radio spectrum review committee, chaired by Sir Colin Fielding and examining use of the spectrum from 28 to 470 MHz, has completed its task and I am pleased to announce that, in agreement with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Defence, Home Affairs, Scotland and National Heritage, I am today publishing the Committee's report. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

The review was initiated as part of a rolling programme recommended by the Merriman committee, to audit present use of the radio spectrum, to analyse emerging developments and to assess potential new demands. The report addresses both civil and military use of the spectrum, and builds on previous work by the stage 1 and stage 2 spectrum review committees which examined use of the spectrum from 470 to 3400 MHz and 3400 MHz to 30 GHz respectively.

I am sure that industry, commerce, service providers and users will all welcome this comprehensive analysis of the current uses and future demands of one of the most congested portions of the radio spectrum. Growth in mobile radio services and increasing competition in the provision of all manner of telecommunication services make this part of the spectrum of vital interest to the economic and social welfare of our nation.

Sir Colin Fielding and members of the committee are to be congratulated on completing a comprehensive analysis of a complex and heavily used part of the spectrum. I am especially pleased that they have included management aspects of the spectrum under review, and addressed the potential of new technology as a means of making more efficient use of this scarce and valuable resource.

The Government will now give careful consideration to the Committee's recommendations and will respond to the report in due course. The recommendations on spectrum management and the role of the Radiocommunications Agency have implications that go beyond the part of the spectrum that was the subject of the review and the Government would now like to promote a wide-ranging discussion on these important matters. A consultative document on the future management of the radio spectrum will be published shortly. This will address the important issue of how to make more efficient use of the radio spectrum. This is the key to stimulating innovation and competition in the supply of radio services and boosting competitiveness through the increased use of radio technology. I will arrange for copies of the document to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

The decison to publish a consultative document means that it would not be appropriate for the Government to respond fully to the spectrum review recommendations until the end of the consultation period for the consultative document.

Letters (Delivery)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many *(a)* first class and *(b)* second class letters were delivered by how many postmen or postwomen in the past year; at what cost; what were the comparable figures, five, 10 and 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 9 March 1994]:* I understand from the Post Office that the information requested is as follows:

Year	First class letters Million	Second class letters Million	Postmen/ women Thousands	Total cost £ million
[1]1993-94	6,454	9,456	125·5	3,968
1988-89	6,067	7,137	132·9	2,539
1983-84	4,398	5,790	129·0	2,661
1978-79	3,620	5,718	125·5	1,410

[1] Budget figures for 1993-94.

Prior to 1986-87 letters and parcels prepared combined accounts and it is therefore difficult to draw comparisons between the present business performance and that of 10 and 15 years ago.

The staff numbers given are for those actually in post at the financial year-end and are not the average number in post during the year. Part-timers have been included on the basis of a 0·5 full-time equivalent.

Direct comparisons of costs over the period could be misleading as there have been changes in accounting procedures and in the classification of costs during the period.

Cable Networks

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to ensure that extensions to cable networks in the United Kingdom are carried out in rural areas as well as business and urban areas.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* I am keen to see the benefits of cable TV and telephony extended to as many communities as possible. Some existing cable TV franchises, under which the franchisee must make services available to every home, already cover rural as well as urban areas. The new franchising arrangements in the Broadcasting Act 1990 were specifically designed to encourage the extension of cable TV to semi-rural and rural areas, by giving franchisees the option of using radio as well as cable to deliver services, and allowing applicants to tailor build programmes to local conditions. The Independent Television Commission advertises new franchises where a credible interest in providing services has been received.

Fibre Optic Cable System

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects that a fibre optic cable system will cover all areas of the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* The Government's policy of promoting competition in telecommunications infrastructure is encouraging a large number of companies to install modern telecoms networks. The inter-exchange elements of the networks installed by BT, Mercury and Energis are already almost exclusively optical fibre. So are an increasing number of the links to individual businesses. Cable TV companies are installing optical fibre well down the network towards individual homes. I expect to see these trends accelerate. However, it is not for the Government to require the use of any particular technology. It is for telecoms operators to decide whether and when it is economic to use optical fibre or other technologies such as coaxial copper cable, copper wire, radio or satellite.

EMPLOYMENT

Ballots (Industrial Action)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the judgment between Blackpool and Fylde college and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education and its implications for trade union members and trade unions in conducting ballots for industrial action.

Miss Widdecombe: It is for the courts to decide, on the facts of each individual case, whether or not a union has complied with the requirements of the law on the organisation of industrial action.

Sheltered Employment

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what changes will be made to the funding arrangements for sheltered employment following the responses to the Employment Service's sheltered employment funding system consultative document; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My hon. Friend the Minister of State announced to the House, on 28 June 1993, *Official Report*, columns *345-46*, a consultation process on the funding of sheltered employment provided through local authorities and voluntary bodies. The arrangements for Remploy agreed in 1992 are unaffected. This consultation is now complete and we have received many helpful comments, which we have considered carefully.

The main changes that will now be introduced are:

To set up formal contracts with targets, between the Employment Service and providers, to make explicit what is expected and to improve the effectiveness of our expenditure; Contracts will be for three years in principle, with annual renegotiation of details, and with arrangements for termination at six months' notice where specific reasons are given;

Providers will be free to switch provision between factory places and placements, and between wage subsidies and other forms of support, provided minimum contract terms are met and cash limits are observed;

Determining maximum grant by a formula derived from what it would cost to support someone with a specified productivity level at specified earnings in an employer placement;

Increasing maximum grants per head to local authorities to the level offered to voluntary bodies; this will involve a small transfer of resources from the revenue support grant;

All clients to have development plans regularly reviewed with providers;

Subsuming the sheltered workshop training budget, currently focused on a few people, into the general grant for the programme;

Host firms are to be allowed, and encouraged, to be legal employers of a client where this is in the client's interests;

Encouraging better assessment, including more thorough exploration of alternatives, for those being considered for sheltered employment and, where appropriate, more progression to open employment;

Contracts will specify a minimum number of places overall for a block grant—based on a maximum revenue grant per head; providers will be encouraged to offer more places and better quality through greater efficiency.

These changes will ensure that as many severely disabled people as possible are supported from the resources available, and that provision is better targeted.

As we discussed in our consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities", there is need to consider whether the balance of places in sheltered workshops should be moved more towards sheltered placements. Further details were promised once decisions were made on funding.

The balance between different forms of provision must respond to the assessed needs and the wishes of disabled people, and be decided in discussion between the ES and our local authority and voluntary body partners. Those needs and wishes can best be established locally. We intend, therefore, to proceed, not by setting national targets for different kinds of provision, but through the ES and providers discussing the right balance for particular localities when contracts are reviewed annually.

In deciding the balance between workshop places and employer placements, we propose that regard should be paid to the following principles:

The need to provide as many work opportunities, over as wide a range of occupations as possible and to the full range of eligible disabled people;

The need to meet the wishes of very many severely disabled people to work alongside non-disabled people in integrated conditions;

The need also to provide work in sheltered conditions for those who require it.

We recognise that if, in a particular situation, it is agreed that the balance of provision should be changed in favour of placements, this might involve providers in extra costs in implementing the changes. We are prepared to help with these costs where the change is in the interests of disabled people, and more disabled people are helped as a result. Applications for capital grants to expand or improve workshop provision will continue to be dealt with under current arrangements, and we will continue to help workshops, where appropriate, through consultancy grants and through helping promote the products of sheltered industry.

Since the programme is moving increasingly towards encouraging a wide range of ways of helping severely disabled people, we agree that the recommendations of the National Advisory Council on the Employment of People with Disabilities should be adopted and the name of the programme should be changed to the supported employment programme.

I believe that these decisions will create a modern framework within which we and our partners can work together successfully to help people with severe disabilities to obtain opportunities for productive work.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Goodlad: Such purchases are included within this Department's overall administration expenditure which is published every year in the annual report.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Goodlad: Disaggregated information of this sort could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Goodlad: The cost of such receptions is included in the entertainment expenditure for this Department which is published in the annual report.

Indonesia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what visits have been made to East Timor by Her Majesty's Government's representatives in Indonesia.

Mr. Goodlad: As the United Kingdom does not recognise Indonesia's annexation of East Timor, the British ambassador in Jakarta does not visit the territory. Other members of staff visit whenever a suitable opportunity arises. Most recently, a member of the staff visited East Timor in January.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings the military attaché to the British embassy in Djakarta has had with the Indonesian military concerning operations in East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: The defence attaché in Jakarta is in regular contact with the Indonesian military authorities. He took part last year in an attachés' visit to East Timor organised by the Indonesian Defence Ministry.

Sudan

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures the European Union and its member states have taken in recent weeks in response to the continued conflict in Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 21 February the European Union and its member states issued a declaration condemning the latest offensive by the Government of Sudan, pressing for adequate access for the civilian population to humanitarian relief, commending the peace initiative of the Kenyan, Ethiopian, Eritrean and Ugandan Governments, and urging the parties to the civil war to respond positively to it. A copy of this statement has been placed in the Library of the House.

On 8 March the Foreign Affairs Council agreed the establishment of a European Union arms embargo on Sudan as a further expression of our abhorrence of the continuing bloodshed. We were one of the prime movers behind this decision. The embargo covers weapons designed to kill and their ammunition, weapon platforms, non-weapon platforms and ancillary equipment. It also covers spare parts, repairs, maintenance and transfer of military technology. Contracts entered into force prior to the date of entry into force of the embargo are not affected. The text of the decision will be placed in the Library of the House.

In our national implementation of this embargo, we will apply it to all categories of goods prefixed "ML" in group 1, part III, schedule 1 to the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1992, as amended. The United Kingdom will interpret the embargo as also applying to goods prefixed "PL" in the above-mentioned group 1.

European Union

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement on the forthcoming business in the Council of the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The following meetings are planned:

4 March: Research Council
7-8 March: Foreign Affairs Council
10 March: Internal Market Council
21 March: ECOFIN Council
23 March: Justice and Home Affairs Council
24-25 March: Environment Council
28-29 March: Agriculture Council

The following subjects are likely to be discussed:

Research Council: 4 March
- Fourth framework programme
- Comitology
- Joint Research Centre
- Coal and steel research
- socio/economic research programme
- EURATOM
- White Paper—follow-up

Foreign Affairs Council: 7-8 March
- White Paper: Follow-up
- Relations with Hungary
- Relations with Poland
- CFSP financing
- Dual use goods
- EEA: Interim acquis and implementing regulation
- Ex-Yugoslavia
- Middle east
- South Africa
- (poss) Relations with the EP
- (poss) Cohesion fund
- Budget discipline
- Own resources decision
- (poss) Russia
- Steel imports from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan
- Trade policy
- (poss) Anti-dumping: cement imports from Turkey, Tunisia and Romania
- Asylum and immigration
- EC/China
- AOB: Relations with FSU countries
- Enlargement, completing negotiations with Norway
- First association councils with Hungary and Poland

Internal Market Council: 10 March
- Operation of the internal market
  - progress report on strategic programme
  - progress report on trans-European networks
- Counterfeit goods regulation
- Amendment to directive 83/189 on technical standards
- (poss) Vehicle coupling device
- Legal protection of data bases
- (poss) Motor cycle speed, torque and power
- Novel foods
- Food additives other than colours and sweeteners
- Equipment for use in explosive atmospheres

ECOFIN Council: 21 March (draft agenda)
- Danish convergence programme
- Own resources decision
- Court of Auditors 1992 report
- Relations with central and eastern Europe
- Planning for the IMF interim committee meeting
- Taxation of savings
- Transitional VAT system
- Anti-fraud programme
- White Paper follow-up

Justice Council: 23 March
- agenda not yet available

Environment Council: 24-25 March (draft agenda)
- Commission White Paper
- VOCs—volatile organic compound—stage I
- Birds directive
- Landfill
- Large combustion plants amendment
- Noise from earthmoving machinery
- Four-year statistics programme
- (poss) Car emissions
- Coastal zones resolution
- Integrated pollution control

Agriculture Council: 28-29 March
- agenda not yet available

HEALTH

Hospital Doctors (Negligence)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital doctors have been struck off in each year since 1979 for medical negligence or incompetence.

Dr. Mawhinney: The General Medical Council produces information annually about doctors who have been struck off the medical register. These statistics are published in the GMC's annual report and in the annual volumes of council minutes, copies of which are available in the Library. Information can also be obtained from the GMC press office.

Dentistry

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental surgeons have been appointed by the Avon family health services authority in the Bristol area to undertake NHS treatment, for the last three years for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The total number of general service dentists, including principals, assistants and vocational trainees, under contract to Avon family health services authority, for the last three years are:

Year	Number
1991	374
1992	374
1993	382

Census carried out on 30 September in each year.

Ethics

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she proposes to take to maintain traditional ethical standards at top-level NHS management levels.

Dr. Mawhinney: In January 1993, the national health service management executive issued guidance, HSG(93)5, to NHS trusts and health authorities about standards of business conduct for NHS staff, copies of which are available in the Library.

In addition, from 1 April 1994 the boards of all NHS bodies will be required to comply with a new code of conduct which will ensure that public service values continue to underpin all decision-making at board level.

Consultants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultants had full-time, and how many part-time, contracts in each health authority and trust in each year since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: The tables showing the numbers of full-time and part-time consultant contracts in each of the regional health authorities and in those trusts that were in existence in 1991 and 1992 will be placed in the Library. Information for all district health authorities is not available centrally.

Care Orders

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many teenage mothers in care between 1986 and 1993 have had care orders placed on their babies.

Mr. Bowis: The age of mothers and whether they themselves are in care is not information required when local authorities make returns on children in care to the Department.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by her private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: Disaggregated information of this sort could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of new furniture for her private offices during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: Such purchases are included within my Department's overall administration expenditure which is published every year in the annual report.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by her Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much her Department and its predecessor has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The Department uses freephone and freepost facilities for the public to request and receive free information or materials on health-related subjects and on their rights as national health service patients. The facilities include the health information service and the health literature ordering service.

Costing information for all the Department's freephone and freepost facilities could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Microwaves

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the comparative standards in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France, *(c)* Germany and *(d)* the USA for field strengths of electro-magnetic energy within the microwave wave-bands relative to harmful effects caused to human beings.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom is one of the few countries which have formulated guidance, not standards, on restricting exposure. In November 1993 the National Radiological Protection Board published guidelines on restricting exposure to electromagnetic fields, copies of which are available in the Library. These are based on comprehensive reviews of relevant biological and human health studies carried out by NRPB staff and on the advice of the advisory group on non-ionising radiation set up by the director of the NRPB. In the United Kingdom, for populations including children, the levels range from 75 volts per metre, V/m, at 300 megahertz to 194 V/m at 300 gigahertz.

Other countries, for example, France and Germany, have guidelines based on those issued in 1988 by the international non-ionizing radiation committee of the International Radiation Protection Association. For the general public, the levels range from 27·5 V/m to 61 V/m and for occupationally exposed people from 61 V/m to 137 V/m.

In the United States of America, the Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers 1991 standard set levels based on "controlled" and "uncontrolled" environments. For uncontrolled environments the levels range from 27·5 V/m to 194 V/m and for controlled environments from 61·4 V/m to 194 V/m.

Maternity Units

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department last gave advice on security in maternity units.

Mr. Sackville: The revised "National Health Service Security Manual", funded by the Department and issued to the service on 29 April 1992, provides guidance and recommendations on general security matters, including patient safety. Copies of the manual are available in the Library.

Hospital Construction, Buckinghamshire

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the major hospital building projects in Buckinghamshire completed since 1978-79 or now under way, giving in each case the amount of public money spent.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the tables.

Completed schemes

Project/scheme	*Public expenditure*[1] *£*	*Completion date*
Amersham—dermatology unit	2,306,769	21 January 1994
Amersham operating theatres	1,333,653	24 June 1983
Amersham phase 1	6,193,487	22 July 1991
Buckingham—phase 1	1,263,502	16 February 1990
Milton Keynes DGH—end unit	1,202,638	24 September 1992
Milton Keynes DGH—MI unit	2,495,264	24 November 1988
Milton Keynes DGH—OPD	3,578,463	13 November 1989
Milton Keynes DGH—phase 1	16,358,544	12 September 1983
Milton Keynes DGH—phase 2	17,333,464	21 August 1991
St. Johns EMI	1,816,779	11 March 1991
Stoke Mandeville—maternity unit	6,030,648	5 May 1991
Stoke Mandeville—OPD/hospice	1,598,049	18 July 1989
Stoke Mandeville—pathology	1,545,574	5 May 1989
Stoke Mandeville—X-Ray	1,287,006	10 July 1987
Tindal MI development	3,831,237	7 May 1991
Tweed Drive—nursing home	1,224,958	17 November 1989
Wycombe pathology	1,314,300	5 July 1985

DGH—District General Hospital.
EMI—Elderly Mentally Infirm.
OPD—Out-Patients Department.
MI—Mental Illness.

Schemes under construction

Project/scheme	*Public Expenditure*[1]	*Completion date*
Wycombe X-Ray extension and alterations	955,526	16 September 1994
Milton Keynes—secure unit phase 2	1,577,374	28 November 1994

Note: Information is not available for schemes before 1980.
[1] Includes construction costs, fees and equipment. Information is not available centrally on total costs for schemes. For example VAT and Land Purchase costs are excluded.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS trusts have had their audited accounts qualified; and if she will list them.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* Qualifications were made to the audit opinions of five national health service trusts accounts for the financial year 1992-93. These were:

Ashford Hospital NHS Trust
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Mental Handicap NHS Trust
North East Essex Mental Health NHS Trust
Walsgrave Hospital NHS Trust
Wellhouse NHS Trust

London Implementation Group

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what meetings she has had with members of the London implementation group; and what directions she gave them.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State meets the chairman and chief executive of the London implementation group at regular intervals to discuss matters relating to London's health services.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the total number of fundholding general practitioner practices in Greater London; and if she will list them by name and health district.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are currently 304 general practitioner fundholding practices in the four Thames regions. Detailed information is not available centrally, but is available from the regional health authorities concerned.

Asthma

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being taken by her Department to co-ordinate research into the causes of asthma among *(a)* adults and *(b)* children; and how much is spent on research in this area.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health is a founder member of the Respiratory Research Liaison Committee, which includes the major organisations with a research interest in respiratory diseases. The committee has a considerable interest in asthma. I also refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 14 February at column 627. In addition, the national health service research and development strategy is determining research priorities on a range of difficult problems of direct relevance to the NHS and work is planned to establish detailed priorities in the field of respiratory diseases across all age groups.

The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In 1992-93 the MRC spent £759,000 on research into asthma and a further £757,000 on research which may be relevant to the condition.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions have been held with the Department for Education concerning children's asthma and the effect on education; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Recent discussions have related to inquiries from teachers about children in need of medication for the relief of asthma. It has been agreed that teachers should, in consultation with parents and with appropriate medical advice, do all that is reasonable to enable these children to obtain maximum benefit from education and to participate as fully as possible in school life. Where possible children should be encouraged to manage their own condition with the support, as necessary, of teaching and school health service staff.

University College Hospital

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what special assistance is to be given to University College hospital in 1993-94 and planned for 1994-95.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1993-94 to date, £10,634 million transitional funding support has been agreed in respect of University College London hospitals. The level of transitional funding support for 1994-95 has not yet been determined.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the non-executive directors appointed to health trusts in the city of Salford, together with their full-time occupations and current places of residence.

Dr. Mawhinney: Non-executive directors of national health service trusts are expected to live or work in the area covered by the trust, or have connections with it. Information on the place of residence of those appointees is available from NHS trusts.

Details of appointees are:

Salford Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. J. Moorhouse—Public relations consultant
Mr. N. Eldred—Business school director
Mrs. P. Morris—Management consultant
Professor R. Tallis—Professor of geriatric medicine
Mrs. L. Fairfield—Solicitor

Salford Community Health Care NHS Trust
Mrs. M. Wilkinson—Regional manager, community services
Ms J. Marchant—Company secretary
Mrs. P. Banning—Social worker
Mr. J. Jesky—Managing director
Mr. N. McArthur—Company chairman

Mental Health Services of Salford NHS Trust
Miss L. Frank-Riley—Enterprise manager
Professor P. Huxley—University professor
Mr. M. Jowett—Solicitor
Mr. A. Freeman—Chartered accountant
Mr. W. Smith—Retired company chairman

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *623*, (1) what is the estimated cost of each campaign provisionally scheduled for 1994-95;

(2) what is the budgeted and actual cost of each campaign listed;

(3) during what months in 1994-95 it is intended that each of the community care, children's services, family health services complaints, GP fundholding, "The Health of the Nation", help with NHS treatment costs, "Keep Warm Keep Well", open government and patients charter campaigns will operate.

Mr. Sackville: Actual costs for 1993-94 will not be available until the final outturn figures are available. Final decisions on campaigns and campaign budgets for 1994-95 have not yet been made. Provisional figures for 1994-95 were listed in the reply I gave the hon. Member on 14 February at column *623*.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *623*, if she will publish the telephone response and coupon response to each advertising and publicity campaign where applicable.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table:

Campaign	*Coupon/ order card response*	*Telephone response*
Travel Safe July 1993 to February 1994	11,453	2,748
Blood Donor Recruitment April 1993 to February 1994	n/a	120,242
Community Care April 1993 to February 1994	103,558	28,038
Drugs and Solvent Misuse April 1993 to February 1994	45,425	37,763
Organ Donation April 1993 to February 1994	n/a	11,022
Health Service Professions Recruitment April 1993 to February 1994	2,939	n/a

Blood Donations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was *(a)* the number of blood donors, *(b)* the quantity of blood donated and *(c)* the amount of blood required for each region for each month since April 1993;

(2) in which of the English health regions there is a surplus of donated blood; and in how many regions blood plasma is in short supply.

Mr. Sackville: National stocks are sufficient at present to meet the needs of all health regions in England. Surplus stocks held in individual regions are transferred by the National Blood Authority if needed to satisfy requirements elsewhere.

The additional information available centrally will be placed in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Illegal Fishing

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current status of the bailiff who uncovered the unauthorised removal of salmon for the purpose of stripping eggs from them and which resulted in the RUC investigation into allegations against bailiffs and a scientist in 1990.

Mr. Ancram: This officer is a current employee of the Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will investigate allegations that 4 in immature roach are being caught in Northern Ireland, blast frozen, offered to Northern Ireland tackle dealers and sold in Dublin tackle shops.

Mr. Ancram: No. Juvenile roach may be captured lawfully for use as bait under licence from the Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any disciplinary action was taken by the Fisheries Conservancy Board against those members of staff about whom allegations of salmon egg stripping had been made in 1990.

Mr. Ancram: One member of staff was cautioned about the misuse of powers conferred by permit issued by the Department of Agriculture under section 14 of the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966.

Fish Farms

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether all commercial fish farms have a consent to discharge.

Mr. Tim Smith: All fish farms known to the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland hold current discharge consents.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how frequently river bed sampling for residues of chemicals in use on commercial fish farms is carried out.

Mr. Tim Smith: Discharge consents granted under the Water Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 for fish farms specify concentration limits for chemicals used in the industry. On the basis of the scientific data available on the chemicals used, there is no evidence to indicate that these compounds would accumulate in river bed sediments. The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland regularly undertakes biological monitoring of invertebrates at locations downstream of fish farms. To date there is no evidence from this monitoring to indicate any accumulation in sediments giving rise to stress in invertebrate populations. For these reasons it is considered that there is no need for river bed chemical sampling.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether inspections are carried out to ensure the safe storage and minimum use of chemicals, anti-bactericides and disinfectants regularly used on fish farms.

Mr. Ancram: Department of Agriculture officials carry out regular inspections to ensure the safe storage of chemicals and to monitor the use of chemical substances on fish. Fish farmers are also required to keep a record of chemical usage. Water discharge consents issued under the Water Act (NI) 1972 lay down the maximum discharge concentration of chemicals which may be discharged into watercourses. As there are no major fish diseases present in Northern Ireland, the use of chemicals, anti-bactericides and disinfectants is generally well below the maximum levels permitted by the discharge consents.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what evidence he has of a build-up of copper derivatives in river bed soils downstream from commercial fish farms.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is not aware of any use of chemicals containing copper in the fish farm industry in Northern Ireland. Monitoring of river bed soils for such substances downstream of fish farms is not, therefore, considered necessary.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how frequently samples of discharge into rivers/watercourses from commercial fish farms are taken.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has a rolling programme for monitoring fish farms for compliance with consents granted under the Water Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. Composite sampling is carried out over a continuous period of up to seven days. In addition, discharges from fish farms are monitored annually on a selective basis employing spot sampling.

As part of the river monitoring programme undertaken by the Department in Northern Ireland, monitoring stations are located downstream of the vast majority of consented discharges. These stations are monitored on between four and 24 occasions annually.

Crime

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were sentenced to a prison term under each offence category in the latest year for which figures are available; and what numbers and percentage of the total were fine defaulters.

Sir John Wheeler: The numbers of people received into prison under sentence of immediate custody for each offence category for 1992 are given in the table and total 1,312. The number of people received into prison for fine default was 1,716. Therefore, the percentage which fine defaulters comprise of the total number received into prison—under sentence of immediate custody and for fine default but exclusive of remand receptions—was 57 per cent.

Receptions under sentence of immediate custody, by offence 1992

	Number
Violence against the person	256
Sexual Offences	72
Burglary	191
Robbery	128
Theft	245
Fraud and Forgery	39
Criminal Damage	79
Drugs Offences	10
Motoring Offences	173
Other Offences	119

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to is answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1034*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the results of any surveys or research undertaken in relation to the advertising and promotion campaigns listed.

Sir John Wheeler: A copy of any surveys which are not confidential will be placed in the Library as soon as they become available.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1034*, what is the budgeted and actual cost of each advertising and publicity campaign listed for 1993-94.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is set out in the table:

Campaign	*Budgeted cost*	*Actual cost (to date)*
Annual Fire Safety Week	30,000	27,000
Drink Driving	333,000	312,000
Speeding	58,000	20,000
Seat Belts	139,000	139,000
Dipped Headlights	38,000	25,000
Organ Donor Card	20,000	17,000
Keep Warm, Keep Well Winter Warmth Campaign	40,000	39,648

Campaign	Budgeted cost	Actual cost (to date)
NIE Share Offer	621,000	527,813
Energy Management Assistance Scheme	10,000	12,441
Help the Earth Week	200,000	236,882
Homes Insulation Scheme	35,000	34,840
Airport Signs	19,500	19,500
To promote the role of Innovation and Research and Development	30,000	27,381
Confidential Telephone	608,000	608,000
Crime Prevention Awareness	163,000	[1]115,000
The Business Radio Programme	14,000	14,000
NVQ General Awareness Campaign	46,000	46,000
YTP Campaign to Increase Recruitment	15,000	14,800
Jobscene (Northern Ireland) Exhibition	15,500	15,580
Overseas Export Marketing Programme	10,000	12,000
Disablement Advisory Service Campaign	33,500	33,786
Employers Forum on Disability	10,000	10,000
National Continence Week (13-18 March 1994)	30,000	[2]—
European Year of Older People	None	21,798
Overseas Awareness Raising Programme	385,000	[2]—

[1] Estimate.
[2] Not yet available.

Reservoirs (Filter Sludge)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether contaminated filter sludge from reservoirs is being regularly dumped into rivers; if such dumping requires the approval of the Department of Environment (Northern Ireland); and where contaminated sludge from Killylane reservoir is dumped.

Mr. Tim Smith: It is not the practice of the Department of the Environment to discharge filter sludges produced as part of the water treatment process to rivers. Sludge from Killylane water treatment works is spread on land within the catchment area above the reservoir.

Teachers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many newly qualified teachers were appointed to permanent teaching posts by each education board in 1993.

Mr. Ancram: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the latest figures available from the annual survey carried out by the Northern Ireland Council for Educational Research indicate that, in the spring term 1993, of those teachers holding permanent posts in grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland, 292 had qualified from initial teacher training institutions in 1992.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people *(a)* graduated or qualified and *(b)* failed in teacher training in each of the teacher training colleges and universities in 1993.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

1993	Number who graduated or qualified	Number who failed the final year examinations
Stranmillis College of Education	203	1
St. Mary's College of Education	186	0
Queen's University	220	0
University of Ulster	160	2

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fire Services (Merseyside)

5. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the standard spending assessment for fire services in Merseyside.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Merseyside fire and civil defence authority's standard spending settlement for 1994-95 has been determined by reference to a distributional formula which was discussed with the local authority associations.

Right of Silence

17. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had from the police regarding his proposals on the right of silence.

Mr. Howard: The police have expressed their support for these proposals.

War Crimes Act 1991

18. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers are currently employed on work flowing from the War Crimes Act 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are 11 police officers, who form part of the Metropolitan police war crimes unit, engaged full time on work flowing from this Act.

Fire and Civil Defence Authorities

19. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department at which point in the financial year he had discussions with the Secretary of State for the Environment over the funding of fire and civil defence authorities for the execution of their statutory duties in the following financial year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Decisions about the local government finance settlement and service provision are taken collectively by Ministers and announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment.

Discussions between the Department of the Environment and the Home Office at official level take place from time to time on the lead up to these decisions. My *right hon. and* learned Friend the Home Secretary did not have separate discussions with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment about fire and civil defence authorities.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the reasons for exemption from the requirement for local public inquiries of the combination schemes relating to proposed new fire authorities in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The proposal to establish three combined fire authorities in Wales in place of the present eight was made in the White Paper on the future of local government in Wales published in March 1993. It has since been discussed in the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council and interested parties have had the opportunity to make representations and, in the case of three of the existing fire authorities in Wales, to meet me to discuss the proposals. Also, clause 23 of the Local Government (Wales) Bill requires my right hon. and learned Friend to give notice of the general nature of the proposed combination schemes to the appropriate authorities and to consider any representations that they make. In the light of these factors, we see no need for public inquiries.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

20. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are being held in police stations in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of prisoners held in police cells in Greater Manchester overnight on Tuesday 8 March was 169.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners on average were being held in each of the police stations in the Merseyside area for each month since January 1993, and for each day so far in March 1994; what is the consequent cost in police overtime in each police cell on Merseyside for these duties; how many police officers are being taken off other duties for these purposes; and what reasons he has established for the trends in these figures.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: From 1 January 1993 to 5 February 1993 an average total of 30 prisoners were held each night in police stations in the Merseyside area. The use of police cells ceased on 6 February 1993.

Police cells in the Merseyside area came into use again on 20 February 1994, as follows:

	Police Stations					
	Bridewell	*Stanley Road*	*Kirby*	*Crosby*	*St. Helens*	*Total*
1994						
February 20	54	0	0	0	0	54
February 21	54	0	0	0	0	54
February 22	54	0	0	0	0	54
February 23	54	0	0	0	0	54
February 24	62	0	0	0	0	62
February 25	60	0	0	0	0	60
February 26	65	0	0	0	0	65
February 27	27	12	12	0	0	51
February 28	39	10	9	10	0	68
March 1	35	10	8	10	0	63
March 2	41	3	3	10	0	57
March 3	41	8	0	8	8	65
March 4	44	7	0	7	7	65
March 5	44	7	0	7	6	64
March 6	44	7	0	7	6	64
March 7	36	10	9	11	9	75

Information about costs is not yet available. The Prison Service will deal with reimbursement of expenditure incurred by police in accordance with the provisions of Home Office circular 36/1993, issued on 6 October 1993 to clerks to police authorities and chief officers of police.

Details of number of police officers performing duties concerned with the holding of prisoners is not yet available centrally. It is understood these duties are being carried out by officers working their rest days.

Between the end of December 1993 and the end of February 1994, the prison population in the north of England rose by just over 1,200. Prison accommodation pressures in the North will be eased by the reopening of Manchester prison, now under way, and the opening of the new prison at Doncaster in June. Rescheduling of refurbishment work at other prisons will also increase the availability of places during 1994.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of prisoner nights for which prisoners were held in police cells, for the months of January and February, broken down by police authority, and the cost to each authority.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 10 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoner nights for which prisoners were held in police cells in January and February.

Details are as follows:

Month	*Prisoner nights*	*Police force*
January 1994	16	Greater Manchester
February 1994	3,394	Greater Manchester
February 1994	474	Merseyside

Month	Prisoner nights	Police force
February 1994	315	Lancashire
February 1994	156	Humberside
February 1994	139	South Yorkshire
February 1994	91	Northumbria
February 1994	3	Cumbria

Information about costs is not yet available. The Prison Service will deal with reimbursement of expenditure incurred by police in accordance with the provisions of Home Office Circular 36/1993, issued on 6 October 1993 to Clerks to Police Authorities and Chief Officers of Police.

Drugs

21. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on his proposals to combat the use of drugs.

Mr. Maclean: Apart from several general inquiries from members of the public, we have had forwarded by Members of Parliament nine letters this year on the proposed increase in fines for the illegal possession of class B and class C drugs.

Prison Officers (Attacks)

23. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of attacks made on prison officers in prisons in England and Wales during the year 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of 2,835 prisoners were found guilty of assaults on prison staff in 1993 under the prison disciplinary system. This includes offences of attempting, inciting and assisting assaults.

Crime Detection

24. **Ms Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what extra resources he is going to make available for the detection of crime.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since 1978-79 the Government have increased expenditure on the police service by 87 per cent. in real terms and we are introducing measures to free up more police officers from administrative tasks for front-line duties.

It is for the chief constables to decide how to deploy their resources to the best effect within their force area and the Home Secretary has set key national objectives to assist them in determining their priorities.

Police Gloucestershire

25. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about police levels in Gloucestershire.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has received 12 letters from hon. Members and 20 letters from members of the public. A request from Gloucestershire police authority for additional officers is currently being considered.

Gallows

26. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many operational sets of gallows there are in the United Kingdom; and when he next expects them to be used.

Mr. Maclean: There are no operational gallows in any Prison Service establishments in the United Kingdom.

Motor Vehicle Insurance

27. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will require police authorities to take further steps to ensure that motor vehicles are properly insured and licensed.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. The enforcement of road traffic law is an operational matter for individual chief officers of police.

Police Negotiating Board

29. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he has received from the Police Negotiating Board concerning progress with the current round of negotiations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None. My right hon. and learned Friend has asked the Police Negotiating Board to let him have its recommendations by 3 April 1994.

Criminal Justice System

30. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what weight he attaches to the prison population as a measure of the success of the criminal justice system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's criminal justice policy objectives include the prevention of crime as well as the conviction and appropriate punishment of those who commit it. Prison population figures cannot in isolation be seen as a measure of either the success or the failure of the criminal justice system in its response to crime.

Persistent Offenders

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he intends to ensure that cautions are not used for persistent offenders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The new guidance on cautioning which I am about to issue to the police will make it clear that a second caution should be considered only where the second offence is trivial, or where it has been committed long enough after the first caution to suggest that the first one had some effect. People who offend persistently must expect to be prosecuted.

House Breaking

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the percentage increase in crimes of house breaking made known to the police over the most recent five-year period for which figures are available.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Recorded offences of burglary in a dwelling increased by 47 per cent. in England and Wales between 1987 and 1992.

Hilda Murrell

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will re-examine the case of the murder of Hilda Murrell of Shrewsbury.

Mr. Howard: The investigation of this murder is the responsibility of the chief constable of West Mercia constabulary, who will consider any new evidence which becomes available.

Terrorism

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve the legislation dealing with terrorism.

Mr. Howard: We keep the legislation under close review. In last year's Criminal Justice Act we strengthened the measures against terrorist finance. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which is currently in Committee, contains new powers for the police to stop and search vehicles and persons for counter-terrorist purposes and creates two new terrorist offences.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of victims compensated for criminal injury during the past year; what was the total and average paid to them in that year and five, 10 and 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement on proposals to alter the terms of compensation for victims of criminal injury.

Mr. Maclean: Details of the new arrangements for compensating blameless victims of violent crime were published in a White Paper on 15 December 1993—Cm. 2434. The new scheme is based on a tariff of awards and starts on 1 April. Victims will find the new scheme simpler and quicker than the one it supersedes. It will help restrain the spiralling costs of the present arrangements and make future expenditure more predictable and controllable.

Annex A to the White Paper gave full historical details of awards made under the scheme. The information is extracted from that table.

Financial year	*Number of awards made*	*Total compensation paid £ (million)*	*Average award (£)*
1992-93	36,638	152·5	4,162
1987-88	20,991	52·0	2,479
1982-83	19,733	29·4	1,492
1977-78	14,052	10·1	719

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the number of claims, *(b)* the total sum paid out, *(c)* the average amount per case and *(d)* the maximum, minimum and average time taken to deal with claims for criminal injuries compensation for the last available year.

Mr. Maclean: In the year ended 31 March 1993 the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board received 65,977 new applications and paid out a total of £152·217 million. The average award was £4,162.

The board does not maintain statistics on the time taken to deal with cases in the form requested. However, paragraph 6 of the 29th annual report of the board—Cm 2421—a copy of which is held in the Library of the House, provides some information about the time taken to resolve cases.

Amusement with Prizes Machines

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what discussions he has had with the Department of Trade and Industry over the task force recommendation in respect of amusement with prizes machines in licensed betting offices; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) what correspondence he has received in respect of amusement with prizes machines in licensed betting offices; whether he will make a statement;

(3) whether he has plans for future discussions with the Betting Office Licencees Association in respect of amusement with prizes machines in licensed betting offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Policy on this issue is currently under review following the task force recommendation, and we will consult as necessary with interested parties. The outcome of the review will be made known in due course.

Correspondence on the issue has been received from a number of Members of the House.

Mandatory Life Sentences

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners serving the mandatory life sentence for murder have been released on life licence during the last 15 years.

Mr. Maclean: The available information is published annually in successive volumes of "Prison Statistics England and Wales"—table 8·5 of the latest volume, for 1991, Cm 2157—a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a list of those prisoners serving the mandatory life sentence for murder who have been released on life licence during the last 15 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member.

Bridgewater Three

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the safety of the convictions of the Bridgewater Three; and when he plans to make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: A number of representations have been received from hon. Members and others about the safety of these convictions. The latest representations from the men's solicitors were received between June 1993 and February 1994. We understand that more may follow. We have asked the police to make inquiries into some of the matters raised. When those inquiries have been completed, my right hon. and learned Friend will consider, in the light of all the information available, whether there are grounds on which it would be right for him to take action in respect of any of the convictions.

Neck Holds

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the police forces whose officers have been trained in the use of neck holds as a restraint technique-procedure; in the case of each such

police force, what guidelines, advice or training has been given to officers as to the potential dangers of the use of neckholds; and when such guidelines, advice or training were issued;

(2) whether police officers in Cleveland police force had had the benefit of guidelines, advice or training in the use of neck holds in July 1990;

(3) whether police officers in the West Midlands police force had had the benefit of guidelines, advice or training in the use of neck holds in February 1987;

(4) what circular instructions, guidelines or advice the Home Office has issued to police forces in England and Wales concerning the potential dangers of the use of neck holds as a restraint.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Training in self-defence and restraint is included in the initial training given to all police probationers at police district training centres. Cleveland and West Midlands police officers have received the same basic training as all forces. In 1992 a manual on police self-defence and restraint was issued by the central planning unit. A copy of the manual is in the Library of the House.

The manual is being reviewed and the incidents in Cleveland in July 1990 and in the West Midlands in February 1987 will be taken into account. It is not feasible for the guidance to be prescriptive. What particular means of restraint is reasonable will depend on the circumstances of the case, the nature of any struggle and any weapons which the subject may be attempting to use to resist arrest. In all circumstances, police officers are bound by section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967 which provides that only such force as is reasonable to the circumstances may be used in making an arrest.

Doncaster Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Doncaster prison will receive its first prisoners; how many prisoner places it will provide; and when he expects that it will reach full capacity.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 10 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about Doncaster Prison.

The present plan is that Doncaster Prison will receive its first prisoners in July, although we shall accelerate this if possible. Premier Prison Services are contracted to provide 771 prisoner places, which is the certified normal accommodation. We expect to reach this level approximately two months after opening, depending on the requirements for places at the time.

Escorted Prisoner (Death)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Prison Service has yet received a copy of Commander Alex Marnoch's report into the death of Ernest Hogg, the prisoner who died while in the custody of Group 4 Court Escort Services Ltd.; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs Joan Ruddock, dated 10 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about Mr. Marnoch's report into the death of Mr. Ernest Hogg.

I have not yet received Mr. Marnoch's final report but I expect to do shortly.

It is not intended to place a copy of the report in the Library. It is not our practice to publish the reports of internal investigations which the Prison Service carries out for its own management purposes. There are two main reasons for this.

First, given the closed and potentially volatile nature of the prison environment, publishing reports into incidents could cause problems for the day to day operation and management of the prison system. Knowledge of their contents and conclusions could, for example, lead to reprisals against staff. Second, the prospect of publication could discourage witnesses from being totally candid in the information they provide. If they knew their identities were to be revealed, they might be at risk of being treated as informers. This could make it more difficult for the Prison Service to discover the truth, learn the appropriate lessons and take prompt and effective follow up action.

We will, however, publish the substance of Mr. Marnoch's main recommendations and the action taken to implement them as soon as we are in a position to do so.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Bosnia asylum applicants are waiting to be dealt with.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 8 March 1994, 1,937 applications for asylum from nationals of Bosnia-Herzegovina were outstanding. This figure relates to principal applicants and does not include dependants.

Voter Registration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research his Department has commissioned into the effectiveness of its publicity campaign for voter registration; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the latest opinion research available on this matter.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Pre and post-campaign omnibus research was commissioned for the autumn 1993 television advertising campaign.

A copy of the research has been sent to the Library.

National Alliance of Women's Organisations

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will invite the voluntary services unit to review its decision for core funding for the National Alliance of Women's Organisations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The demands on the resources of the voluntary services unit are too great to enable it to core fund the National Alliance of Women's Organisations.

Young Offenders

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many 16 and 17-year-olds are currently being held on remand in adult prisons; and how many were held on average in the years 1979, 1984, 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Jean Corston, dated 10 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many 16 and 17-year-olds are currently held on remand in adult prisons and how many were held on average in the years 1979, 1984, 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

The available information is given in the attached table. No information is available for 1979, 1984 and for 17-year-olds in 1989.

Remand population held in Adult Prison Service Establishments

	16-year-olds	*17-year-olds*
31 December 1993	0	16
30 June 1992	0	70
30 June 1991	6	166
30 June 1990	10	167
30 June 1989	2	n/a

Take-away Restaurants (Licences)

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines are issued to local authorities regarding the granting of late-night licences for take-away restaurants following the consultation exercise carried out last year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office has issued no guidelines to local authorities on their licensing of late-night refreshment houses under the Late Night Refreshment House Act 1969, and did not undertake consultation on the matter last year.

Bail Hostels

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many proposals to open new bail hostels in the last year have been halted due to objections.

Mr. Maclean: None.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many new bail hostels have been opened in 1993; how many new places have been created; and where these hostels are located.

Mr. Maclean: One new bail hostel opened in 1993 at Normanby road, Scunthorpe. This hostel can accommodate up to 22 men.

Police

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) of 18 January, *Official Report*, columns *465-66*, what considerations underlie his decision not to collect information centrally on the number of incidents requiring police deployment *(a)* per officer and *(b)* by 100,000 population by police and by year for each police authority; if he will consider holding the information in future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Two of the police perfomance indicators introduced jointly by the Home Office, the Audit Commission, Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary and the Association of Chief Police Officers cover police deployment: the number of incidents per 100 police officers and the number of incidents requiring immediate police response. These indicators will be collected annually, starting with the financial year ending March 1994, and will be collated by HMCIC.

European Community

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the directives, regulations and resolutions of the European Community which give citizens of Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden the right of free movement, establishment, family reunification and equality of treatment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the agreement on the European Economic Area presented to Parliament in October 1992, Cm 2073. Part III of the agreement and the associated annexes deal with free movement of persons, services and capital.

WALES

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many Welsh Development Agency staff will be involved in rural policy planning after the implementation of the agency's new structure at *(a)* regional and *(b)* national levels;

(2) how the Welsh Development Agency plans to consult on issues affecting rural Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I have arranged for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Member, and for a copy of his response to be placed in the Library of the House.

Rural Areas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list projects and programmes designed to benefit rural areas which involved co-operation between *(a)* the Welsh Development Agency and *(b)* the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales, Department of Employment and the training and enterprise councils in Wales in each of the last five years;

(2) if he will list the publications giving details of partnership programmes between *(a)* the Welsh Development Agency and *(b)* the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales, Department of Employment and Welsh training and enterprise councils in which voluntary organisations may participate.

Mr. Redwood: I have arranged for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Member, and for a copy of his response to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the policy documents, publications and consultation documents which set out the rural policy proposals produced by *(a)* the Welsh Development Agency and *(b)* the Development Board for Rural Wales in the last 10 years.

Mr. Redwood: I have arranged for the chief executives of the Welsh Development Agency and the Development

Board for Rural Wales to write to the hon. Member, and for copies of their responses to be placed in the Library of the House.

Fire Authorities

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the standard spending assessments for fire authorities in Wales for the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1993-94.

Mr. Redwood: There are no standard spending assessments for fire authorities in Wales. The standard spending assessments for county councils in Wales include provision for fire services.

Deaf-blind Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to introduce services for the deaf-blind in north Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is for local authorities and health authorities to identify the need for, and the priorities for the provision of, services for deaf-blind people in their area in their local strategies for health and social care plans.

The responsibility for making appropriate educational provision for children who are deaf and blind rests with the local education authority.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the area of each individual environmentally sensitive area in Wales already designated or to be designated, estimated to be eligible for management agreements.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is as follows:

	Eligible area (ha)
Cambrian Mountains (Original) ESA	27,600
Cambrian Mountains (Extension) ES	65,000
Lleyn Peninsula ESA	39,700
Ynys Mon ESA	60,000
Radnor ESA	80,000
Preseli ESA	104,000
Clwydian Range ESA	26,000

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers are estimated to be eligible for participation in each individual environmentally sensitive area in Wales already designated or to be designated in 1994.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is as follows:

	Number of farmers
Cambrian Mountains (Original) ESA	300
Cambrian Mountains (Extension) ESA	660
Lleyn Peninsula ESA	960
Ynys Mons ESA	1,576
Radnor ESA	1,035
Preseli ESA	2,300
Clwydian Range ESA	619

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the area of each individual environmentally sensitive area in Wales already designated or to be designated in 1994.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is as follows:

	Total area (ha)
Cambrian Mountains (Original) ESA	72,800
Cambrian Mountains (Extension) ESA	80,200
Lleyn Peninsula ESA	45,400
Ynys Mons ESA	72,000
Radnor ESA	100,500
Preseli ESA	120,900
Clwydian Range ESA	28,000

Public Bodies

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to consult the leaders of the Opposition parties in Wales prior to making appointments to the chairmanship of non-departmental public bodies within his Department's responsibility.

Mr. Redwood: I have consulted the leaders of the Opposition parties in Wales on my proposals for the appointments of chairman and members to the Local Government Boundary Commission and await their response. I and my officials take into account the views of all correspondents on other appointments, if Members of Parliament wish to support particular people on the list.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish a register of new appointees to executive bodies or advisory bodies to show previous and present political affiliations, together with financial contributors to any political parties.

Mr. Redwood: Political affiliation is not usually relevant and in most cases is unknown.

Euro-link

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all agreements concluded under the Euro-link arrangements with companies and organisations from European regions, together with the region concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The information is contained in the table.

Regional distribution of "substantive links" secured for Welsh companies/organisations engaged in "Euro-link" programme

	Number
Germany	
Baden-Württemberg	25
Saxony	7
Bavaria	1
Berlin	1
Hamburg	1
Italy	
Lombardy	7
Piedmont	2
Veneto	1

	Number
Spain	
Catalunya	5
Madrid	4
Galicia	1
France	
Paris	3
Rhone-Alpes	1
Provence	1
Total	60

Details of individual "substantive links" are not given in this answer as companies regard such information as "commercial in confidence".

Written agreements are a commercial matter to be dealt with by companies as required.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Redwood: Disaggregated information of this sort could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Orimulsion

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now make it his policy to forbid the burning of orimulsion bitumen in any power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are currently no applications before Government for the burning of orimulsion at power stations in Wales. Any application to do so would be subject to the pollution control provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and would need to be determined in line with the statutory procedures.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will revise the formula for the allocation of Welsh revenue support grant so that local authority areas with high unemployment, housing needs and deprivation, receive an increase which is at least equal to the rate of inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The formulae for distributing revenue support grant in 1994-95 are set out in the Local Government Finance Report—Wales—1994-95 which received the approval of Parliament on 15 February. The formulae are agreed with the local authority associations and represent a fair and objective way of distributing revenue support grant to all local authorities in Wales.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the reasons underlying the cash allocations of Dwyfor, Cynon Valley, Ogwr and Port Talbot in the Welsh revenue support grant and their relation to the Welsh average; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: For 1994-95 the standard spending assessments per head of population for Dwyfor, Cynon Valley, Ogwr and Port Talbot are £220, £204, £153 and £174 respectively. These compare with a district average of £159. SSAs are calculated with reference to a wide range of factors which reflect the relative need of Welsh local authorities to spend on services.

NHS (Consultant Appointments)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional steps he intends to take to reduce the waiting time for consultant appointments in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Measures to reduce the time that people have to wait for a first out-patient appointment will be announced shortly.

Air Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the measures he proposes to monitor air pollution in Wales in the light of the report published on 24 February by the Institute of Public Health.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I understand the hon. Member may be referring to a recent report on air quality in London. In Wales, the Government operate a comprehensive monitoring network for the main air pollutants—including nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, particulates and ozone. Monitoring to date has shown that air quality in Wales is good and generally within the World Health Organisation and European Community guideline limits.

Forensic Unit, Gwynedd

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to discourage Gwynedd health authority from building a medium secure forensic unit for mentally unstable criminal offenders in the grounds of Bryn-y-Neuadd hospital at Llanfairfechan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: On 29 April 1993, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales announced a £9·25 million package for new hospital facilities in Wales for mentally ill offenders. The package includes capital funding of up to £3 million for a new 25-bed medium secure unit for north Wales which will be the first purpose-built medium secure facility within the Principality. In England, over 650 places have been developed within 20 sites.

The development of such a unit in north Wales was recommended by the all-Wales advisory group on forensic psychiatry. Ten potential sites were considered and the preferred proposal for Bryn-y-Neuadd hospital, Llanfairfechan was confirmed at the meeting of Gwynedd health authority on 22 November 1993 in the light of a thorough appraisal and advice from experts in the field. The decision was and remains entirely a matter for the health authority.

Grapes

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the potential effect upon vineyards in Wales of European Union proposals concerning the sugar content of grapes.

Mr. Redwood: The European Union has not made any proposals concerning the sugar content of English and

Welsh grapes. Reform proposals for the wine regime are expected soon and are likely to propose an increase in the minimum natural alcoholic strength of grapes.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is fully aware of the concerns of the Welsh industry and will seek to ensure that these are properly reflected in the forthcoming negotiations.

Blood Supplies

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether there are any regions of Wales where there is a surplus of donated blood; and whether there are any regions where blood plasma is in short supply.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: For the area covered by the national blood transfusion service—Wales—there is a surplus of donated blood and there is no shortage of blood plasma.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the number of blood donors, *(b)* the quantity of blood supplied and *(c)* the amount of blood required for each region in Wales for each month since April 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Details for the area covered by the national blood transfusion service—Wales—are set out in the table.

National blood transfusion service (Wales) (1993-94)

	Donors attending	*Quantity of usable donations (units)*	*Major blood components required (units)* Red cell[1]	Platelet
April	10,602	9,038	7,521	2,935
May	9,367	7,806	7,237	2,947
June	10,295	8,640	7,345	3,376
July	10,583	8,866	7,607	3,607
August	9,181	7,724	6,896	3,014
September	10,242	8,647	7,527	2,501
October	10,567	8,844	7,316	2,878
November	9,932	7,936	7,257	2,901
December	10,379	8,868	7,464	3,277
January	10,414	8,783	7,291	3,663

[1] These figures include whole blood units which equate to approximately 5 per cent. of the total.

Historic Buildings Council for Wales

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to present the next report of the Historic Buildings Council for Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The 37th report of the Historic Buildings Council for Wales has been presented today. The report covers the financial year 1992-93 and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Public Appointments

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the answer of the Secretary of State for Scotland of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *774*, if he will list those hon. Members defeated in the general election of June 1987 who, at any subsequent date, have been appointed to public bodies by him or his predecessor; and if he will list those appointments.

Mr. Redwood: The following hon. Members were defeated in Wales in the general election of June 1987:

Harvey R. L.—Clwyd, South-West
Hubbard-Miles P. C.—Bridgend
Robinson M. N. F.—Newport, West
Terlezki S.—Cardiff, West

None of the above have held, or currently hold, an appointment on bodies for which my Department has responsibility.

ENVIRONMENT

Overseas Visits

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his Department on (i) internal and (ii) overseas travel by the Secretary of State since 27 May 1993.

Mr. Gummer: My budget for travel and subsistence for this financial year is £55,000. Since 27 May 1993 I have spent £5,588 on travel throughout the United Kingdom, attending projects in which my Department has been involved, explaining Government policies and listening to the views of local people. During the same period I have spent £15,274 on overseas travel. This has included attending EC Council of Ministers meetings, a United Nations conference on sustainable development in New York, a visit to eastern Europe to discuss environmental issues, and supporting Britain's Olympic bid in Monte Carlo.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by region those sites of special scientific interest that have been damaged or destroyed during each of the last three years; and if he will indicate the nature of the damage in each case.

Mr. Atkins: Information on loss of and damage to SSSIs generally and on the principal causes of such loss or damage is contained in the annual reports of English Nature and of the former Nature Conservancy Council, copies of which are in the Library. Information on individual sites is not available to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the maximum fines under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for a landowner *(a)* carrying out a potentially damaging operation to a site of special scientific interest and *(b)* contravening a nature conservation order under section 29.

Mr. Atkins: The maximum fines for offences under section 28 and 29 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are set at levels 4 and 5 on the standard scale. They are currently £2,500 and £5,000 respectively.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many man hours have been spent by English Nature and its predecessor the Nature Conservancy Council in dealing with the protection of the site of special scientific interest at Westhay moor in Somerset since 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: There are some 65 owners and occupiers of this SSSI. Detailed records are not maintained of work on individual sites, but English Nature estimate that at least three and a half man years have been spent since 1987 in protecting Westhay moor.

Women's Refuges

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an estimate of *(a)* the number of places in women's refuges in England and Wales and *(b)* the number of women passing through women's refuges, in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: My Department does not hold information on the number of places in women's refuges nor the number of women passing through them. The Housing Corporation in 1992-93 provided funding for 1,730 bedrooms in 132 refuge schemes managed by housing associations. This provision is part of the Housing Corporation's revenue funding. The corporation also provides capital funding to women's refuges managed by housing associations.

Coastal Conservation Areas

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new measures he will introduce to help conserve and manage those areas of coastline and sea which are to be designated as special areas for conservation under the European Union directive on the conservation of flora, fauna and habitats.

Mr. Atkins: The Government set out their policies and proposals for legislative changes in a public consultation paper issued on 4 October 1993. We are currently considering the responses to the consultation. The wider objectives for the conservation of our natural heritage were further addressed in the biodiversity action plan, published on 25 January 1994. Copies of both documents were placed in the House of Commons Library.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in support of a single-tier structure of local government.

Mr. Baldry: Since we issued our consultation paper on the structure of local government in England in April 1991, we have received many representations in favour of single-tier local government structures. They have come from local authorities and other local and national organisations, and from individuals including Members of this House. It is not possible, however, to produce a definitive list except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he expects the transitional costs of reorganisation in the Isle of Wight and Cleveland to amount to in total.

Mr. Baldry: We have made no such estimate. We have announced that we are prepared to make available to authorities in the Isle of Wight and Cleveland supplementary credit approvals up to a limit of £9 million in 1994-95. Subject to the approval of their applications for SCAs these arrangements will enable the authorities to borrow to meet specified transitional costs. The amount of SCAs issued will depend on the amounts incurred.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how the local authorities in Cleveland and the Isle of Wight are expected to raise the funds to cover the interest on the Government loan to cover the transitional costs of reorganisation;

(2) what interest rate will be charged by the Government on the loan to Cleveland and the Isle of Wight to cover the transitional costs of reorganisation.

Mr. Baldry: The authorities in Cleveland and the Isle of Wight will receive supplementary credit approvals up to a specified limit. These will enable them to borrow to meet specified transitional costs and the interest incurred on the borrowing. It is anticipated that the borrowings and rolled up interest will be repaid out of the savings arising from the reorganisations. The rate of interest incurred will depend on the pool, or other, rate at which each authority borrows.

Eviction

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department has provided to local authorities on the advice to be given to those who face eviction by bailiffs.

Sir George Young: None.

Groundwork Trusts

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *710*, if he will give a breakdown, using the categories used in his previous answer of money spent by Groundwork trusts which was collected from *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* the private sector for each year from 1988-89 to 1993-94.

Mr. Atkins: The tables show the income received from the local authorities and the private sector as devoted to expenditure on projects and running costs for the groundwork trusts in England. The information is not available in the categories specified in the previous question, *Official Report*, column *710*, which referred to the breakdown of Groundwork's grant in aid, nor is it available on a comparable basis for earlier years.

	Project costs £	Running costs £
1992-93		
Local authorities	2,619,042	1,240,551
Private sector	3,371,103	247,363
1993-94[1]		
Local authorities	3,357,715	1,825,514
Private sector	3,435,145	357,620

[1] Estimated.

Council Tax

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council tax banding appeals have been submitted to the Colchester valuation office; how many appeals have been decided; what is the likely time scale for resolution of the remaining appeals; and what assessment he has made of whether sufficient resources are available to the Colchester valuation office.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 17 February, *Official Report*, column *967*. We are continuing to monitor closely the settlement of appeals in all offices of the Valuation Office agency. The agency is responsible for the allocation of resources to its individual offices.

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Bird Deaths

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the results of the veterinary analysis of dead birds found recently on the east coast of Scotland and northern England.

Mr. Atkins: Some birds have been taken for post-mortem analysis and preliminary results indicate that they had low body weights and little or no fat reserves. Tissue samples were also analysed for heavy metal and organochlorine compounds but residues found were insufficient to have been the cause of death.

In the recent North sea incident, it is believed that the sea-bird deaths were caused by starvation, possibly due to a combination of strong onshore winds which may have disturbed normal feeding activity and, perhaps, a mismatch between bird location and food availability.

Ministers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the dates between which each Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has held office in his Department since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: The Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State who have held office in this Department since 1979 are:

Lady Birk—March 1974 to January 1979
Ernest Armstrong—June 1975 to May 1979
Kenneth Marks—December 1975 to May 1979
Guy Barnett—April 1976 to May 1979
Lady Stedman—January 1979 to May 1979
Lord Bellwin—May 1979 to 6 January 1983
Hector Monro—May 1979 to September 1981
Geoffrey Finsberg—May 1979 to September 1981
Marcus Fox—May 1979 to January 1981
Giles Shaw—January 1981 to 8 June 1983
Sir George Young—September 1981 to 10 September 1986
Neil Macfarlane—September 1981 to 2 September 1985
William Waldegrave—9 June 1983 to 2 September 1985
Lord Avon—10 September 1984 to 25 March 1985
Richard Tracey—2 September 1985 to 15 June 1987
Angela Rumbold—2 September 1985 to 10 September 1986
Christopher Chope—11 September 1986 to 23 July 1990
Lord Skelmersdale—11 September 1986 to 15 June 1987
David Trippier—15 June 1987 to 24 July 1989
Colin Moynihan—15 June 1987 to 23 July 1990
Marion Roe—15 June 1987 to 25 July 1988
Virginia Bottomley—25 July 1988 to 27 October 1989
Lord Hesketh—1 February 1989 to July 1990
Lord Strathclyde—23 July 1990 to 7 September 1990
Patrick Nicholls—23 July 1990 to 11 October 1990
Robert Atkins—23 July 1990 to 30 November 1990
David Heathcoat Amory—27 October 1989 to 30 November 1990
Lady Blatch—7 September 1990 to 21 May 1991
Robert Key—11 October 1990 to 13 April 1992
Tony Baldry—30 November 1990 to date
Tim Yeo—30 November 1990 to 13 April 1992
Robin Squire—14 April 1992 to 27 May 1993
Lord Strathclyde—14 April 1992 to 17 September 1993
Baroness Denton—17 September 1993 to 11 January 1994
The Earl of Arran—11 January 1994 to date

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he expects the cost of setting up the single regeneration budget offices to be.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 15 February, *Official Report*, column *734*.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the setting up of the single regeneration budget has cost.

Mr. Baldry: The single regeneration budget combines 20 existing Government expenditure programmes to provide flexible and responsive support for local initiatives which promote regeneration, economic development and industrial competitiveness. As such no additional costs have been involved in setting up the Budget; indeed, the combination of programmes should improve value for money so that public investment will go further.

European Funding Schemes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *566*, if he will list the European funding schemes for which local authorities can apply.

Mr. Baldry: The principal sources of European Community funding available to local authorities are the European Community's three structural funds. These are the European regional development fund, the European social fund and the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. Local authorities may also be able to obtain grants or loans for specific purposes from various other European sources.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 14 February,

Official Report, column 566, what was the total amount of funding obtained by local authorities from Europe in each year since 1979 for which figures are available without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has records of European regional development fund grants to local authorities in England. This information is set out in table 1. The figures represent the total value of ERDF grant approvals for local authority projects falling within my Department's policy responsibilities. However, it does not include grants to local authority companies, nor grants approved under programmes managed by other Departments.

Table 1—ERDF approved for local authority projects from 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1993 (by calendar year)

Year	ERDF approved (£s)
1979	13,423,340
1980	10,711,800
1981	22,600,866
1982	45,059,387
1983	43,009,044
1984	78,125,916
1985	79,045,299
1986	80,781,998
1987	81,965,476
1988	69,794,279
1989	39,459,150
1990	113,679,498
1991	180,328,261
1992	170,427,853
1993	236,223,117
Totals for all calendar years	1,264,635,284

Figures are also available for European Social Fund grants. Table 2 shows the total value of ESF grants approved or paid to local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales since 1990. Figures covering years prior to 1990 are not readily accessible.

Table 2—ESF granted for local authority projects from 1 January 1990 to 31 December 1993 (by calendar year)

Year	ERDF granted (£s)
1990	83,680,023
1991	118,969,706
1992	126,532,128
1993	203,714,216
Totals for all calendar years	532,896,073

Local Goverment Finance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to improve the standard spending assessment system.

Mr. Baldry: We will be looking carefully at the priorities for future work and research into the standard spending assessment system in consultation with the local authority associations. We are always prepared to consider new evidence in support of changes in SSAs.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the standard spending assessments for each of the local authorities in Greater Manchester for 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry: The standard spending assessments for the local authorities in Greater Manchester for 1993-94 are as follows:

Authority	£ million	£ head
Bolton	188·498	715
Bury	12·651	622
Manchester	412·867	958
Oldham	169·177	768
Rochdale	158·355	770
Salford	175·339	754
Stockport	175·121	602
Tameside	149·805	678
Trafford	144·103	664
Wigan	202·121	654
Greater Manchester police authority	157·194	61
Greater Manchester fire and civil defence authority	73·054	28

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the total level of Government grant per head of population for 1994-95 for *(a)* Wandsworth, *(b)* Westminster and *(c)* each of the district councils in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Baldry: Authorities receive revenue support grant annually and, where their standard spending assessment for 1994-95 has been reduced by more than 2 per cent. as a result of incorporating the results of the SSA review and 1991 census data, will receive SSA reduction grant. The figures, expressed as pounds per head, for Wandsworth, Westminster and the district councils in Greater Manchester are given.

Authority	RSG	SSA reduction grant	Total
Wandsworth	507	105	612
Westminster	760	41	801
Bolton	386	—	386
Bury	282	—	282
Manchester	635	—	635
Oldham	443	—	443
Rochdale	442	—	442
Salford	430	—	430
Stockport	247	—	247
Tameside	349	—	349
Trafford	310	—	310
Wigan	329	—	329

In addition, these authorities will receive redistributed national non-domestic rates of £196 per head.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total amount of capital receipts currently held by each of the district authorities in Greater Manchester; and what is the total amount of reserved receipts held.

Mr. Baldry: Figures for usable receipts and for unapplied provision for credit liabilities are given. No separate figures are available for unapplied reserved receipts set aside as provision for credit liabilities.

	Usable receipts at 31 March 1993 £ million	Provision for credit liabilities (PCL) at 31 March 1993 £ million
Bolton	1·8	2·0
Bury	0·6	14·5
Manchester	1·4	70·2
Oldham	Nil	35·9
Rochdale	3·8	23·8
Salford	0·5	19·5
Stockport	Nil	15·3
Tameside	2·0	[1]15·8
Trafford	7·6	29·5
Wigan	1·4	25·1

[1] At 31 March 1992.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when regulations will be laid before Parliament to extend the home energy efficiency scheme to pensioners and disabled people, as announced in the Budget on 30 November.

Mr. Atkins: Proposals to amend the regulations governing the home efficiency scheme which would extend eligibility for the scheme to those receiving disability living allowance and those aged 60 and over were laid before Parliament yesterday.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a decision about the removal of Crown exemption from planning legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: My Department issued a consultation paper in November 1992 inviting comments on proposals to remove Crown exemption from the planning system. Similar consultation papers were issued by the Scottish and Welsh Offices and the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. The principle behind these proposals was that in future all Crown bodies should be required to apply for planning permission, hazardous substances consent, listed building consent, conservation area consent, and scheduled consent in the normal way.

This principle received overwhelming support. My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Secretary of State for Wales and the Secretary of State for Scotland therefore intend to remove Crown exemption from the planning system as soon as a suitable legislative opportunity arises. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will introduce similar changes in Northern Ireland.

We propose to introduce minor refinements to our original proposals, in response to comments on the consultation paper. In particular, we shall seek to provide an informal appeal mechanism to deal with disputes between local planning authorities and Crown bodies in relation to alleged breaches of planning control. This remedy would be in addition to a High Court declaration.

Once implemented, these proposals will mark a significant increase in the openness and accountability of Government Departments.

SCOTLAND

Forestry Commission

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date Ministers received the report of the Forestry Commission review group; and which Ministers received a copy.

Sir Hector Monro: The report of the forestry review group was submitted on 28 February to those Ministers who were represented on the review group.

Car Boot Sales

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider measures to address the situation that whilst antique shops must be licensed and pay a fee as such, dealers selling at car boot sales are not subject to such a fee.

Mr. Lang: District and island councils may resolve to license the activities of second-hand dealers under the provisions of part II of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. Antique dealers may be licensed as second-hand dealers under section 24 of that Act, and some authorities license car boot sales as private markets in terms of section 40, though such sales are exempt if held by charitable and certain other organisations. Licensing authorities may charge such reasonable fees as they may determine in relation to such licenses by virtue of paragraph 15 of schedule 1 to the 1982 Act. Any fee charged to participants selling goods at a car boot sale is at the discretion of the operator.

Hospitals

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hospitals are currently directly managed by health boards; how many there will be on 1 April; and what percentage of total bed provision those hospitals will represent.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table:

Numbers of directly managed hospitals and bed provision

	Numbers of hospitals in:		Percentage bed provision[1] in:	
	DMUs	Trusts	DMUs	Trusts
At 30 September 1993	195	80	68	32
At 1 April 1994[2]	81	194	16	84

[1] Average available staffed beds during quarter ended 30 September 1993.

[2] Figures for 1 April 1994 are an estimate based on bed provision at 30 September 1993.

Amenity Charges

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was generated by the NHS in Scotland from amenity charges; and how many people paid them in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Stewart: The information available in respect of income from amenity beds is as follows:

	1991-92 £	1992-93 £
Single Rooms and Small Wards	292,362	258,323

Figures are not available on the number of patients using amenity beds who paid for them.

Charities

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made towards identifying defunct charitable accounts, with a view to reallocation of their funds, in terms of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have undertaken a preliminary trawl of banks and building societies in Scotland which indicates that the total amount held in dormant charitable accounts is likely to be between £100,000 and £150,000. We are at present considering the next steps and hope to make an announcement shortly.

Housing, Dreghorn

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many tenants have been decanted from their homes in Dreghorn while the refurbishment of their homes by Scottish Homes takes place; and whether all tenants were offered the opportunity to be decanted when it became apparent that the work on their homes was of a major nature;

(2) if he will make a statement about the current programme of works being undertaken by Scottish Homes in Dreghorn; and how many homes are involved in the work;

(3) what measures have been adopted by Scottish Homes to monitor the refurbishment work being undertaken by contractors operating on their contracts in Dreghorn;

(4) what arrangements have been made by Scottish Homes for safeguarding the health and welfare of tenants living in Dreghorn while their homes have been subject to major refurbishment;

(5) whether all Scottish Homes tenants in Dreghorn were advised of the nature of the refurbishment work to be undertaken on their properties before it began; what degree of choice tenants were given as regards agreeing to the work being carried out or not; and how many tenants opted not to be part of the programme of refurbishment;

(6) what arrangements exist for Scottish Homes to compensate tenants living in Dreghorn whose properties have been damaged while the work on their homes has been carried out.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is a matter for Scottish Homes. I have asked its chairman, Sir James Mellon, to write to the hon. Member.

Community Nursing

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if any health board or trust within any board area has plans to put community nursing out to compulsory competitive tender, or privatise this service by any other means.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* My right hon. Friend is not aware of any plans by health boards or NHS trusts to market test or privatise community nursing services. No proposals have been made to him or officials.

NHS Privatisation

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for further privatising within the NHS.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* The Government are committed to a publicly funded health service with national health service units, both trusts and directly managed units, firmly within the public sector. However, our policy is to encourage the health service to concentrate its management skills on the core activities of the NHS and to use its expertise, where possible, to seek best value for money and improved quality in the provision of non-care services. I would expect such services to be competed for by both in-house and commercial contractors.

Parole Board

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to increase the number of persons appointed to the Parole Board; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 March 1994]:* The size of the board will be kept under review in the light of the volume of cases, and the board's responsibilities under the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 1993, which include interviewing prisoners.

School Boards

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding *(a)* the number of schools without a constituted school board and *(b)* unfilled school board vacancies in each local education authority area in Scotland as at 28 February.

Mr. Lang: Statistics are currently being collected on the number of schools with and without a school board, following the 1993-94 round of biennial parental elections. The information will be published in a statistical bulletin in late spring. The most up-to-date figures available, relating to May 1992 and based on the 1991-92 round of elections, show that 657 schools in Scotland did not have school boards.

Information on the number of unfilled school board vacancies is not held centrally.

Schools Inspectors

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Scotland have had teaching experience in primary schools of *(a)* 10 years or more and *(b)* less than 10 years; and what proportion of the total number of school inspectors have had any teaching experience in primary schools.

Mr. Lang: Nineteen of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools have qualifications to teach in primary schools which represents 18 per cent. of the total number of inspectors whose duties include inspection in primary, secondary and special schools, further education, teacher education and community education. Of these, six have

more than 10 years' teaching experience in primary schools; seven have less than 10 years' teaching experience in primary schools; and six, although qualified to teach in primary schools, pursued teaching careers in other sectors of education for which they are also qualified. Nine have been head teachers of Scottish primary schools.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Scotland were appointed *(a)* after 1990, *(b)* between 1985 and 1989, *(c)* between 1980 and 1984 and *(d)* before 1980.

Mr. Lang: Of the 107 members of the schools inspectorate *(a)* 30 were appointed after 1990, *(b)* 27 between 1985 and 1989, *(c)* 19 between 1980 and 1984 and *(d)* 31 before 1980.

Milk Marketing Schemes

Mr. Kynock: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the provisions in the Agriculture Act 1993 for the revocation of the north of Scotland milk marketing scheme, the Aberdeen and district milk marketing scheme and the Scottish milk marketing scheme.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend has made an order under section 1(3) of the Agriculture Act 1993 to extend the deadline for the revocation of the three Scottish milk marketing schemes from 1 April 1994 to 1 January 1995. This is in recognition of the fact that a vesting day of 1 April 1994 is not achievable but does not preclude a vesting day earlier than 1 January 1995, provided the reorganisation schemes have been approved.

Health Service Contracts

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many members of Ayrshire and Arran health board's evaluation committee tendered their resignations from the committee over the wording of the recent urology contract and subsequently withdrew them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* No members tendered resignations from the evaluation committee.

Cottage Hospital Closures

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice his Department gave to Tayside health board in the years 1989 to 1990 regarding the board's plans for the future of Meigle cottage hospital.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* At the accountability review meeting in 1990 the board's proposal for service developments throughout Tayside were discussed and the health board was advised that these might best be considered together as a package of changes.

Dentistry

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate (i) the average annual income of salaried dental officers employed by health boards in Scotland and (ii) the average annual income of general dental practitioners within the national health service in Scotland; and if he will provide the average practitioner profiles for each category.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* The current salary scale for full-time salaried dentists employed by health boards in Scotland runs from £19,036 to £27,714. The current salary for salaried plus bonus dentists is £18,176 plus bonuses in proportion to the amount of work carried out. The dental fee scale is currently set to pay to independent general dental practitioners as a whole a target average net income. For 1992-93 this is £36,352. The practitioner profiles for 1992-93 for salaried dentists in Scotland and for general dental practitioners in Scotland are shown in the table.

Practitioner profiles for salaried dentists and general dental practitioners in Scotland: 1992-93
Fees authorised

		Percentage	
		Salaried dentists	*General dental practitioners*
Total gross fees	—	100·00	100·00
Item of service fees			
Pre 1990 scale			
Fees	—	0·21	0·12
1990, 1991 and 1992 scales			
Fees	—	72·75	75·12
Registration fees			
Continuing care (current rate)	—	8·57	7·67
Continuing care (old rate)	—	0·50	0·26
Referral fees	—	0·03	0·01
Capitation (current rate)			
Item 41(a) ages of patients	0-2	0·09	0·13
	3-5	1·10	0·99
	6-9	3·53	3·03
	10-14	5·20	4·65
	15-17	4·18	3·98
	All	14·09	12·79
Item 41(b) ages of patients	0-2	0·00	0·00
	3-5	0·00	0·00

		Percentage	
		Salaried dentists	General dental practitioners
	6-9	0·00	0·00
	10-14	0·00	0·01
	15-17	0·00	0·01
	All	0·00	0·02
Capitation (old rate)	—	0·29	0·08
Weighted entry fees			
Weighted entry (current rate)			
Item 42(a) No. of decayed teeth	2-3	0·32	0·24
	4-5	0·43	0·46
	6-7	0·37	0·43
	8 or more	0·69	1·19
	Total	1·82	2·31
Item 42(b) No. of decayed teeth	2-3	0·10	0·06
	4-5	0·20	0·10
	6-7	0·18	0·12
	8 or more	0·53	0·51
	Total	1·02	0·78
Item 42(c) ages of patients	0-2	0·00	0·00
	3-5	0·00	0·01
	6-9	0·00	0·02
	10-14	0·02	0·03
	15-17	0·06	0·06
	All	0·09	0·12
Weighted entry (old rate)	—	0·68	0·55
DSS and prior approval fees			
DSS remissions	—	17·50	14·82
Item of Service fees for DSS remission cases	—	24·48	21·98
Item of Service fees for prior approval cases	—	1·39	4·66

Capitation and Continuing Care Patients

		Percentage	
		Salaried dentists	General dental practitioners
Continuing care		75·30	75·30
Capitation			
Item 41 (a) ages of patients	0-2	0·75	1·28
	3-5	4·71	4·39
	6-9	6·91	6·64
	10-14	8·33	8·19
	15-17	4·01	4·20
	Total	24·70	24·70
Item 41 (b) ages of patients	0-2	0·00	0·00
	3-5	0·00	0·00
	6-9	0·00	0·01
	10-14	0·00	0·01
	15-17	0·00	0·01
	Total	0·01	0·03
Item 42 (c) ages of patients	0-2	0·00	0·00
	3-5	0·01	0·05
	6-9	0·01	0·07
	10-14	0·07	0·09
	15-17	0·07	0·11
	Total	0·17	0·31

Regional Denial Officer References

	Average Number	
	Salaried Dentists	General Dental Practitioners
Referrals	1·53	3·95
Failed to attend	0·64	1·42

Analysis of item of service 1992-93

	Percentage	
	Salaried dentists	General dental practitioners
Diagnosis		
1. (a) Examination and advice	9·27	8·58
(b) Extensive examinations and advice	0·54	1·27
(c) Full case assessment	0·43	0·44
(d) Treatment summary	0·00	0·00
2. X-Rays	1·59	1·91
Study models	0·29	0·43
3. Colour photographs	0·00	0·00
Preventive treatment		
6. Intensive instruction	0·00	0·00
7. Surface applications	0·02	0·01
Periodontal treatment		
10. (a) Simple scale and polish	8·11	9·17
(b) Scale and polish>one visit	1·66	2·02

	Percentage	
	Salaried dentists	*General dental practitioners*
(c) Periodontal disease	0·05	0·15
Other	0·00	0·00
11. Surgical treatment	0·01	0·02
Conservative treatment		
14. Amalgam fillings	15·39	13·46
Fillings-other materials	8·20	8·63
Sealants	0·12	0·30
Pin or screw retention	0·30	0·46
15. Endodontic treatment	2·48	4·60
16. Porcelain veneers	2·09	2·38
17. Inlays	0·01	0·31
Crowns	9·46	15·76
Core and post, pin or screw	0·65	1·34
Re-cement	0·16	0·38
18. Bridges	2·17	3·68
Re-cement—adhesive	0·01	0·05
Other	0·00	0·02
Surgical treatment		
21. Extractions	3·84	3·13
22. Surgical extractions	0·35	0·50
23. Post-operative care	0·06	0·13
24. General anaesthetics	0·46	0·46
Sedations	0·02	0·20
Non-orthodontic appliances		
27. Acrylic dentures	14·46	11·57
Metal dentures	4·49	2·34
Treatment prior to provision of dentures	0·00	0·02
Soft lining	0·01	0·05
Special trays	0·43	0·44
Metal strip	0·05	0·01
28. Denture repairs/alterations	0·75	0·89
Re-line dentures	0·23	0·46
Denture additions	0·39	0·54
29. Obturators and splints	0·04	0·03
Treatment involving other appliances	0·09	0·08
Orthodontic treatment		
32. Active appliances	0·70	0·70
Other forms of treatment		
35. Domiciliary visits	0·43	0·71
Recalled attendance	0·36	0·65
36. Miscellaneous	0·19	0·20
37. Acute conditions	0·06	0·17
40. Any other treatment	0·15	0·13
Occasional treatment		
48. Issue of a prescription only	0·36	0·01
49. X-rays	0·14	0·02
50. Dressings/other palliative treatment	2·21	0·07
51. Inlays, crowns and bridges	0·38	0·04
52. Extractions	4·55	0·17
53. Post-operative care	0·21	0·01
54. General anaesthetics/sedations	0·19	0·03
55. Denture repairs/alterations	0·29	0·08
56. Acute conditions	0·15	0·02
57. Domiciliary visits	0·00	0·00
Recalled attendance	0·35	0·32
58. Additional items—conservative	0·07	0·07
59. Additional items—appliances	0·01	0·00
Incomplete treatment		
62. Dentures	0·27	0·16
63. Fillings and endodontic treatment	0·15	0·10
65. Crowns	0·04	0·08
73. Any other treatment	0·01	0·00
Porcelain veneers	0·03	0·01

Footnote: Sub-totals may not add exactly owing to rounding.
Data provided by dental practice division of Central Services Agency.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, columns *1056-58*, if she will make a statement on *(a)* the response of delegates attending the continental challenge conference to the campaign on continental market opportunities, *(b)* the assessment of improvements in animal welfare monitored by veterinary officers and animal health inspectors, *(c)* the qualitative measurement of the plant health campaign, *(d)* the responses to the small producers of food campaign and *(e)* the qualitative assessment of the warble fly campaign.

Mr. Jack: *(a)* One hundred and sixty delegates attended the conference to launch "The Continental Challenge". Evaluation will take place throughout the course of the campaign, which runs throughout the year.

(b) The Government have a continuing policy of seeking improvements for the welfare of farm animals. Nearly 160,000 leaflets dealing with animal welfare issues have been distributed in the current year. No data are collected centrally about the transport of casualty animals or heat stress in farm animals. However, the Government are satisfied that the advice offered will contribute to a better understanding of animals' needs in circumstances where unnecessary suffering might otherwise occur.

(c) From its contacts with commercial growers and the general public, the plant health and seeds inspectorate considers that the plant health campaign has been effective in achieving its objective of raising awareness of the requirements of the single market.

(d) The primary objective of the small producers of food booklet was to provide advice to small businesses on sources of help available. Some 30,000 booklets have been distributed and, of those who have chosen to comment, nearly all have said that they found it helpful.

(e) Monitoring of the warble fly campaign is still taking place but early indications are that it has been successful.

Fisheries Policy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list those areas of fisheries policy she has so far identified where her Department has responsibilities towards achieving the objectives of the United Kingdom biodiversity national action plan; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: In making fisheries policy, Ministers take account of the objectives for conserving biodiversity which are set out in the United Kingdom biodiversity national action plan.

While EC fisheries policy is based on the sustainable exploitation of fish stocks for commercial—human consumption—reasons, less emphasis has been given to the impact of fishing on other species and on the marine environment. During our presidency of the EC at the end of 1992, the basic EC regulation governing the common fisheries policy was amended to include a clear obligation that the CFP must provide for rational and responsible exploitation on a sustainable basis taking account of implications for the marine eco-system.

Subsequently, at the December 1993 Fisheries Council I pressed for a re-examination of the industry fishing problem. As a result, the Commission is establishing a working group of marine ecologists and fisheries biologists to study the implications for the marine ecosystem of fishing in general and industrial fishing in particular.

Wherever appropriate the United Kingdom introduces national conservation measures in addition to those applicable throughout the EC. Most recently fishing for nephrops with twin-rig trawls has been restricted to help improve conservation of this species. The United Kingdom Fisheries Departments currently undertake research to discover what, if any, long-term effects heavy fishing gear including beam trawls have on the sea bed and its benthic communities.

It is clear that fishing effort should be reduced against many of the stocks around our shores, as elsewhere in the EC. To this end, the Government announced a package of conservation measures in February 1992. These included various changes to the licensing regime, a £25 million decommissioning scheme and restrictions on time at sea. Since then, license changes have been implemented and the first round of decommissioning has removed approximately 5,000 tonnes of fleet capacity, but the time at sea element of the package has been suspended pending a ruling by the ECJ. The industry's view is that technical conservation measures could play a much more significant role, and we are discussing its proposals with it.

Cereals

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the cost in *(a)* 1994 and *(b)* 1995 of the increase in set-aside compensation for cereal growers by 12 ecu per tonne, agreed last May by EC Agriculture Ministers.

Mr. Jack: The Commission has estimated that the increase in set-aside compensation will add 352 mecu—£267 million—to the Community's 1995 and subsequent budgets.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the price at which British wholesalers buy cereals per tonne, *(b)* what she estimates the price of cereals per tonne would be in a free market without European Community price intervention, *(c)* the levels of European Community production and consumption of cereals, *(d)* the level of common agricultural policy expenditure on cereal subsidies and *(e)* the cost to the British Exchequer of European Community intervention in the cereals market.

Mr. Jack: *(a)* It is not possible to provide a single figure for the price of cereals in Britain per tonne which wholesalers have to pay. The following are average ex-farm prices for wheat and barley in pounds sterling per tonne.

(b) It is not possible to make precise estimates about what prices might result if there were no market support in the EC. A large number of assumptions would be required in order to assess how domestic and world markets would react if commodity policy were to be changed.

(c) The latest estimates for 1992-93 put cereal production at 166 million tonnes and consumption at 137 million tonnes.[3]

(d) Total EC cereals expenditure in the 1993 calendar year was £5,154 million.[4]

(e) The Exchequer cost of CAP support of cereals in the United Kingdom is estimated at £948 million for the 1993-94 financial year.[5] The United Kingdom also contributes to the EC budget as a whole, which funds the cost of cereals support in other member states.

	Bread wheat	*Milling wheat*	*Feed wheat*	*Feed barley*
Average 1992-93 marketing year[1,2]	142·60	125·50	119·30	113·00
Week-ending 24 February 1994[1]	114·30	100·40	99·10	103·20

[1] *Source:* Home Grown Cereals Authority.
[2] Ex-farm prices for the week ending 24 February 1994 reflect a reduction in prices this year as against 1993 as a result of CAP reform.
[3] *Source:* European Commission.
[4] The first payments under the arable area payments scheme will fall under the 1994 EC budget.
[5] Includes set-aside payments for oilseeds and proteins as costs for the individual elements are not available.

Butter

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the price at which British wholesalers buy butter per 250 g pack, *(b)* the price at which the European Community sells butter per 250 g pack on the world market, *(c)* the levels of European Community production and consumption of butter, *(d)* the level of common agricultural policy expenditure on butter subsidies and *(e)* the cost to the British Exchequer of European Community intervention in the butter market.

Mr. Jack: (a) The first-hand delivered price of butter in the United Kingdom is between 62p and 79p per 250 g pack; (b) the price of butter on the world market fluctuates, but the current minimum price under the international dairy agreement is $1,350 per tonne; (c) production of butter in EC dairies was 1,636,000 tonnes in 1992 and is estimated to be 1,658,000 tonnes in 1993; consumption of butter in the EC was 1,591,000 tonnes in 1992 and is estimated to be 1,567,000 tonnes in 1993; (d) the 1993 provisional outturn of CAP expenditure on butter support in the European Community amounted to £1 billion; (e) the Exchequer cost of CAP support of butter in the United Kingdom is estimated at £67·5 million for the 1993-94

financial year. The United Kingdom also contributes to the EC budget as a whole, which funds the cost of butter support in other member states.

Flood Defence Committees

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether the national code of local government conduct—DOE circular 8/90—applies to the flood defence committees of the National Rivers Authority;

(2) what advice she has given to county councils regarding the national code of local government conduct—DOE circular 8/90—and the benefits that farmers and landowners may receive from the National Rivers Authority flood defence operations.

Mr. Jack: The code does not apply directly to the flood defence committees of the National Rivers Authority, but members of local authorities appointed to the committees are subject to the provisions in paragraph 33 of the code. No advice has been given to county councils regarding the code in relation to the flood defence operations of the National Rivers Authority because the pecuniary interests of all members of flood defence committees are governed by provisions in sections 94 to 98 of the Local Government Finance Act 1972 and these provisions are specifically included in the terms of appointment issued to ministerial appointees.

Sugar

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the price at which British wholesalers buy sugar per kilogramme, *(b)* the price at which the European Community sells sugar per kilogramme on the world market, *(c)* the levels of European Community production and consumption of sugar, *(d)* the level of common agricultural policy expenditure on sugar subsidies and *(e)* the cost to the British Exchequer of European Community intervention in the sugar market.

Mr. Jack: (a) Sugar manufacturers' list prices for bulk white sugar are currently around £0·66 per kilogramme, though the actual price paid is subject to negotiation between sugar producers and their customers.

(b) Currently, quota sugar is being sold on the world market, with the aid of export refunds, at around 0·30 ecu per kilogramme—£0·22 per kilogramme[1].

(c) The latest figures from the European Commission estimate total Community sugar production for 1992-93 at 15,602,179 tonnes, of which 13,336,888 tonnes is quota sugar. Consumption is estimated at 11,818,179 tonnes.

(d) The provisional outturn for Community expenditure for sugar in 1993 is 2,189 mecu—£1,720 million[2].

(e) The Exchequer cost of CAP support for sugar in the United Kingdom is estimated at £123,853 million for the 1993-94 financial year. The United Kingdom also contributes to the EC budget as a whole which funds the cost of sugar support in other member states. Around 55 per cent. of the costs of the regime are recovered from levies raised on growers and processors, which contribute to EC own resources.

[1] £1 = 1·3228 ecu—[2] £1 = 1·2729 ecu.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will estimate the proportion of common agricultural policy spending that does not go to farmers but is *(a)* paid to middlemen who store unwanted surplus food and *(b)* is used to subsidise this surplus for export on to world markets.

Mr. Jack: Information on EC expenditure on storage of intervention produce prior to its sale and on export refunds is contained in annex 9 and annex 5, respectively, of the annual financial reports of guarantee section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. These have been deposited in the Library of the House.

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will arrange for a copy of the report of the European Commission on the common agricultural policy to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Jack: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 9 March to the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), *Official Report*, column 277.

Horticultural Imports

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about the operation of minimum import prices for horticultural products, particularly blackcurrants, imported into the European Community.

Mr. Jack: The Europe agreements between the Community and Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria provide for minimum import prices for fresh and frozen blackcurrants from these countries. They may come into force when:

during each three-month period of the marketing year, the average unit value for each product imported into the Community is lower than the minimum import price for that product; and

during any period of two weeks, the average unit value for each product imported in the Community is lower than 90 per cent. of the minimum import price for that product, in so far as the quantities imported during this period are not less than 4 per cent. of the normal annual import.

The Commission is responsible for implementing and monitoring the arrangements in the Europe agreements.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list those aspects of agricultural, aquaculture and fisheries policy, with United Kingdom relevance, on which she transfers responsibility for answering oral parliamentary questions to another Department.

Mr. Jack: Ministers in this Department answer parliamentary questions on all agriculture, fisheries and food matters with United Kingdom relevance. Questions will only be transferred if the allocation of responsibilities between Departments suggests that in the particular case an answer could best be given by a Minister in another Department.

Bovine Immunodeficiency Virus

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence her Department has of increased severity of symptoms induced by bovine immunodeficiency virus in non-experimental infections or of a syndrome of superinfection.

Mr. Soames: Disease induced by bovine immunodeficiency virus in non-experimental cattle has not been diagnosed in this country. Extremely detailed investigations are in progress in a herd in Cheshire in which cattle with serological evidence of exposure to the virus have been identified. We are not aware of any published reports from abroad of disease in non-experimental cattle definitely induced by BIV. The three cattle in the United States from which the virus has been isolated over a period of 25 years were in poor condition but it is not known what role, if any, BIV played. A recent Canadian paper on a serological survey in Ontario dairy cattle reported that positive BIV serological herd test results were associated with slightly lower than average milk production. A published summary of work carried out by Louisiana State university school of veterinary medicine suggested findings of a range of conditions in a single dairy herd where there was also serological evidence of BIV and of the virus which causes enzootic bovine leukosis.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by her Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much her Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Jack: We have not, in the time available and without incurring disproportionate cost, been able to check comprehensively with all our agencies and outstations the actual expenditure in each financial year in the period specified.

In general, the Department has made relatively little use of freephone and freepost facilities.

A freephone service was set up in 1991 to enable members of the public to report incidents where they suspected the use of pesticides posed a serious risk to people, animals and wildlife.

A further freephone line was set up this year as part of MAFF's "food sense" campaign. It will operate from 7 February to 16 March to enable members of the public to order information booklets.

In a rather different category, two freephone numbers have been operating, since 1986 and 1993 respectively, for use by MAFF staff working in our information technology department who need to dial into the Ministry's datacommunications network whilst working away from the office.

The recent cost of these facilities, to date, is:

	1990-91 £	1991-92 £	1992-93 £	1993-94 £
Pesticides Incidents line	—	28·3	329·1	361·63
Information Technology Department staff lines	3,973·25	6,887·5	9,495·8	8,523·22

Our records indicate that MAFF has only operated one substantial freepost service. This was for a period ending in 1989 to enable members of the public to send for a MAFF booklet on food additives. Exact figures are not readily available, but the total annual cost did not exceed £5,000.

National Milk Records

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to ensure that national milk records will continue to provide accurate information to dairy farmers.

Mr. Jack: The Milk Marketing Board proposed in its reorganisation scheme that the future of national milk records should be determined after vesting day by the residuary MMB. The scheme, which has been amended by the board three times, is subject to a further consultation exercise which will end on 8 April. I must not prejudge the decision which my right hon. Friends the Minister and the Secretary of State for Wales have to take on whether to approve the scheme. I am sure, however, that if the residuary MMB is established and given the task as proposed it will reach its decision with full regard to the interests of milk producers.

Less-favoured Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, columns *744-46*, if the information published for the farm type cattle and sheep is the same as for the farm type mixed cattle and sheep in the revised series.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No. There are four farm types which are included in the robust type cattle and sheep LFA. One of these is SDA mixed cattle and sheep, the other three are SDA specialist sheep, SDA specialist beef and DA cattle and sheep. A full description of the system of farm classification is contained in appendix 3 of farm incomes in the United Kingdom 1991-92.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 9 February, *Official Report*, column 277, how livestock units translate in terms of numbers of hill cows and hill ewes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: For the purposes of assessing stocking density on farms in the farm business survey, animal numbers are converted into livestock units—LU. One hill cow is equivalent to 0·75 LU and one hill ewe —eligible to SDA higher rate hill livestock compensatory allowance—is equivalent to 0·06 LU. Full details of the livestock units used in the farm business survey are contained in appendix 2 of Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom 1991-92.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the figures for net farm income

published for *(a)* the farm business survey and *(b)* the farm business survey weighted in accordance with the annual farm census (i) reflect the net farm income of whole farm enterprises or (ii) are adjusted to reflect the individual income of each (1) partner, (2) director and (3) shareholder; and what would be the effect of disaggregating the figures along these lines on the averages for *(x)* total LFA income and *(y)* income of each person deriving a taxable personal income from livestock farming in the less-favoured areas.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The national results of net farm income from the farm business survey are weighted averages which reflect the income of the whole farm business. Net farm income represents the return to the farmer and spouse for their manual and managerial labour and on the tenant-type capital of the business. The cost of all hired labour and the inputted cost of all unpaid labour is included as an input and is deducted from the value of output in the calculation of net farm income. It is not, therefore, appropriate to divide net farm income between partners, directors and shareholders.

Illegal Poisoning

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people have been prosecuted as a result of the Ministry's campaign against illegal poisoning in each year since it started; what percentage increase this has been on each of the previous four years; and what has been the cost of the campaign in each year.

Mr. Soames: The campaign was launched in March 1991. It is not possible to identify the reason for a report of a prosecutable offence in every case but the number of people successfully prosecuted each year in England and Wales is as follows:

Calendar years	*Number*
1987	4
1988	5
1989	4
1990	8

Start of campaign	*Number*
1991	3
1992	10
1993	8
1994	2

The estimated Exchequer costs of the campaign's publicity and administration are:

Financial year	*£*
1991-92	152,000
1992-93	148,000
1993-94	121,000

DEFENCE

Information Exchange Agreements

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the titles of the master information exchange arrangements agreements between the United States of America and Britain, outlining the subject matter of each title, the date each agreement was signed, and any other countries involved in each agreement.

Mr. Aitken: The Master Information Exchange Agreement between the United States of America and the United Kingdom was signed in September 1988. It provides for the exchange, for defence purposes, of information concerning military, technical or scientific topics. Individual information projects are set out in annexes to the arrangement. There is a number of these involving many areas of my Department. Information on them is being collected and I shall write to the hon. Member.

Porton Down

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when the new defence microbiology laboratory at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down, will be in use; what it will be used for; why it is necessary; and how much its construction cost;

(2) what is the subject matter of the substantial contract which is currently being carried out by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment for another Government Department mentioned in the published 1992-93 accounts for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down; what is the value of this contract; what is its duration; and when it started;

(3) what is the purpose of the two new facilities under construction mentioned on page 25 of the 1992-93 annual report of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment; why they are necessary; what is their cost; and which buildings they are replacing;

(4) if, following the publication of the account of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down, in its latest two annual reports, he will now publish the annual budgets of this establishment for each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Hanley: These matters are for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment—CBDE—under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive of CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letters from Graham S. Pearson to Mr. Ken Livingstone, dated 10 March 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking if, following the publication of the account of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down in its two latest annual reports, the annual budgets of this Establishment for each financial year since 1979 can now be published has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The budgetary figures for the years 1979-80 to 1984-85 are not readily available. The cash outturn for these years from available records are as follows:

Year	Outturn £ million
1979-80	15·1
1980-81	14·4
1981-82	14·6
1982-83	16·3
1983-84	16·7
1984-85	16·7

These figures are at 1992-93 price levels.

3. In the years 1985-86 to 1990-91 the annual gross cash budgets for CBDE were as follows:

Year	Gross cash budget £ million
1985-86	17·9
1986-87	21·1
1987-88	21·7
1988-89	22·0
1989-90	22·3
1990-91	25·4

The figures for 1990-91 include works and property management costs as MOD untied from PSA on 1 April 1990. These figures are also at 1992-93 price levels.

4. CBDE became a Defence Agency on 1 April 1991 under the Next Steps programme and our annual published accounts are in accruals format to a Treasury Accounts Direction. From 1 April 1991, some expenditure previously controlled centrally was disaggregated to CBDE. The figures provided above are not directly comparable with those in the published Annual Reports because of the changes in the accounting and financial procedures.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking when the new Defence Microbiology laboratory at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down will be in use; what it will be used for; why it is necessary and how much its construction will cost has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The new Defence Microbiology laboratory is intended to be available for use in 1998. It will be used to handle dangerous pathogens under safe conditions in high containment facilities. The building will be used to carry out work into protective measures against biological warfare agents including detection and medical countermeasures. The new building is necessary to replace existing buildings which will have reached the end of their life within the next ten years.

3. Currently, the building is at the design stage. As the construction will be subject to competitive tender, it is not possible to provide details of the estimated cost at this time.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what is the purpose of the two new facilities under construction mentioned on page 25 of the 1992-93 annual report of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, why are they necessary, what is their cost and which buildings they are replacing has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. One facility will provide a laboratory in which equipment and volunteers can be exposed to steady low level concentrations of test materials; these may be simulants or actual agents. This laboratory which cost approximately £3M replaces four existing buildings which have reached the end of their life.

3. The second facility is a laboratory in which toxic materials can be prepared as required for the programme to access the potential hazard to the UK Armed Forces and to investigate improved protective measures. This facility will be the UK's Single Small Scale Facility allowed under the Chemical Weapons Convention. It cost approximately £4·3M and replaces three existing buildings which have reached the end of their life. In both cases, a new facility is a more cost effective solution than refurbishment of the old buildings which are over 40 years old.

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what is the subject matter of the substantial contract which is currently being carried out by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment for another Government Department mentioned in the published 1992-93 accounts, what is the value of this contract, what is its duration and when it started has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. This contract is being carried out on behalf of the Home Office and is concerned with the protection of the public against the possible effects of chemical and biological materials. It would not be in the interests of security to disclose further details of the work involved under this contract.

RAF Personnel Management Centre

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many tenders were received for the refurbishment of offices for the Air Officer Commanding the RAF personnel management centre, Innsworth; and whether the lowest tender received was accepted;

(2) what is the estimated total cost of the refurbishment of offices for the Air Officer Commanding the RAF personnel management centre, Innsworth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The construction and refurbishment work in hand at RAF Innsworth is related to the reorganisation of the RAF command structure and the establishment of the new RAF personnel and training command which will operate from the site from 1 April 1994. The estimated cost of the new office accommodation for the personnel and training command headquarters as a whole, including furniture and fittings, is about £12,000,000.

This major new build project was fully completed and the winning contractor, Mowlems, was selected from four competitive tenders, of which it was the lowest. In addition to the new build, some refurbishment of the RAF personnel management centre office block, which will form part of the new personnel and training command, is currently taking place at an estimated cost of some £90,000. This work is being carried out by Taylor Woodrow as part of a wider contract to undertake ad hoc works and maintenance for a fixed three-year period—this contract was also selected by competitive tender. No specific expenditure has been made on the personal offices of the air officer commanding the personnel management centre.

Fox Armoured Cars

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the Army's current holding of Fox armoured cars and of each category of the CVR (T); and what changes are planned in the fleets of these vehicles.

Mr. Hanley: Current holdings and planned changes in the fleets of Fox armoured cars and the combat vehicle reconnaissance (tracked)—CVR (T)—are listed in the table:

Type	Quantity	Planned changes
CVR (Wheeled) Fox	356	It is planned that all vehicles will be taken out of service by early 1995
CVR(T) Scorpion	262	104 will be converted to CVR(T) Sabre using turrets from Fox vehicles. A further 31 will remain in service at the British Army Training Unit, Suffield (BATUS) in Canada. It is planned that the remainder will be taken out of service by the end of 1994
CVR(T) Sabre	2	Total will be 106 after conversion of 104 Fox and 104 Scorpion
CVR(T) Samson	90	Due to reduce to approximately 55
CVR(T) Striker	89	Due to reduce to approximately 58
CVR(T) Sultan	283	Due to reduce to approximately 141
CVR(T) Spartan	658	Due to reduce to approximately 627
CVR(T) Samaritan	50	No changes planned
CVR(T) Scimitar	314	No changes planned

Dinner (Tower of London)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of the Army Board dinner for 35 hosted by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), in the Tower of London in February; who was invited; what was the cost; and to what vote the cost was charged.

Mr. Hanley: The purpose of the Army board dinner held in the Tower of London was to honour those guests present for their outstanding support to the Army.

In addition to myself, the following attended:

The Duke of Wellington, KG
Major General Lord Michael Fitzalan-Howard
Lord Westbury
Lord Chalfont
Lieutenant General The Honourable Sir William Rous
General Sir Peter Inge
General Sir Michael Wilkes
General Sir John Learmont
General Sir John Wilsey
General Sir Charles Guthrie
Vice Admiral Sir Barry Wilson
Lieutenant General Sir Jeremy Blacker
Colonel Sir Ralph Carr-Ellison
Sir John Chilcot
Sir Donald Spiers
Sir David Gillmore
Sir Colin McColl
Sir Neil Thorne
Sir Piers Bengough
Sir Michael Burton
Sir Michael Alexander
Judge Rant
Major General Michael Walker
Colonel Philip Creasey
Mr. Moray Stewart
Dr. Alan Borg
Dr. Brian Holden-Reed
Dr. David Chandler
The Very Reverend Eric Evans
Mr. Tony Hall
Mr. John Chisholm
Mrs. Stella Rimington
Mr. Gordon Hourston
Mr. Kenneth Rose
Mr. Murdo Maclean

The cost was £1,573·91 including VAT and was charged to the chief of the Defence Staff's entertainment allowance, which is included in class 1, vote 1, subhead item I11.

Wild Boars (Catterick)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost to date of his Department's attempts to trap two wild boars at Catterick barracks, Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: In April 1993, some 30 boars escaped from a farm at Easby near Richmond in north Yorkshire. With a view to preventing damage to MOD property, my Department has been liaising with the local authority in an attempt to capture the boars. All but two have now been recaptured.

The cost so far to my Department has been around £3,500; covering the cost of repairs to sports fields, use of equipment and the land warden's time. It is our intention to claim this from the farmer's insurance company in due course.

RAF

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of each type of aircraft were in service with the RAF at *(a)* 1 January 1984 and *(b)* 1 January 1994.

Mr. Hanley: We do not hold records of the information requested as at 1 January 1984. Details of the types of numbers of RAF aircraft—those in squadron service, operational conversion units, and support and training units, excluding in-use-reserves—as at March 1984 and March 1994 are:

	1984	1994
Andover	13	8
BAe146	2	3
Buccaneer	32	[1]12
Bulldog	107	96
Canberra	41	13
Chinook	30	[2]16
Chipmunk	61	51
Devon	5	—
Dominie	18	10

	1984	1994
Gazelle	23	25
Harrier GR3/T4	80	9
Harrier GR5/7	—	49
Hawk	130	105
Hercules	57	55
Hunter	17	1
HS125	12	7
Jaguar GR1A/T2A	129	47
Jet Provost	158	—
Jetstream	9	9
Lightning	42	—
Nimrod MR2	32	24
Nimrod R	3	3
Pembroke	5	—
Phantom	112	—
Puma	35	35
Sea King	13	16
Sentry	—	6
Shackleton	5	—
Tornado F3	—	[3]102
Tornado GR1	102	126
Tristar	2	8
Tucano	—	105
VC10	15	16
Victor	19	—
Vulcan B2	6	—
Wessex	62	54

[1] All Bucaneers are due to be brought out of service on 31 March 1994.
[2] Chinook numbers are currelty reduced as a result of the mid-life update programme.
[3] Restructuring of the Tornado F3 is due to complete by 1 April this year.

Territorial Army

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the purpose of the current advertising campaign on television for the Territorial Army; and what account the campaign has taken of the numbers of regular soldiers being made redundant.

Mr. Hanley: The Territorial Army requires about 20,000 new recruits annually. The recent television advertisements were part of the annual recruiting campaign.

Regular soldiers who are leaving the Army on redundancy terms are given information about the TA and receive an invitation to join. Many soldiers prefer, however, to settle into civilian life before considering such an option.

Service Children

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the number of children of service personnel in *(a)* Humberside, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* South Yorkshire and *(d)* West Yorkshire whose places at an independent or private school were paid for by his Department in each of the last four years.

Mr. Hanley: Information on the locations of children of service parents claiming boarding school allowance is not collected annually. The most recent figures are for 1992, and are as follows:

	Number
(a) Humberside	47
(b) North Yorkshire	697
(c) South Yorkshire	Nil
(d) West Yorkshire	185

Air Misses

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will send a copy of the joint air miss working group's report on the air miss between any Army Lynx helicopter and a Royal Air Force Tornado over the north Yorkshire moors on 17 January 1993 to the hon. Member for Don Valley.

Mr. Hanley: A copy of the air miss report into the incident, which occured on 12 January 1993, is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will send the hon. Member for Don Valley a copy of the report of the joint air miss working group's report on the air miss between a Royal Air Force Tornado and a Jet Ranger helicopter over Caithness on 8 April 1992.

Mr. Hanley: A copy of the air miss report is available in the Library of the House.

MK95 Lynx Helicopters

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by what means the five MK95 Lynx helicopters were delivered last year to the Portuguese Navy, and at what cost; what consideration was given to the use of RAF aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Delivery of the five MK95 Lynx helicopters was a matter for the Portuguese Government and Westland Helicopters. RAF aircraft were not involved.

Equipment Damage

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all instances of damage to armed services equipment by private contractors reported for each year since 1990, together with the cost in each instance and the total cost.

Mr. Aitken: The information could not be provided without incurring disproportionate cost and effort. My Department does not maintain central records of such instances, however MOD contract conditions address such possibilities, and are invoked as necessary.

RAF Maintenance Work

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what requests he or his Department have received from the Treasury or other parts of the Government that maintenance work for the RAF should be moved into the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It would not be appropriate to give details of interdepartmental discussions, and I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on 15 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *739*.

Submarines

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what recent representations he has received concerning the complaints of infringement by Royal Navy submarines and United States submarines of the code of safety in fishing areas; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the average amount of time spent investigating allegations concerning near-collisions between Royal Navy submarines and fishing vessels; to whom the reports of such investigations are submitted; who makes the decisions concerning the holding of courts martial where negligence of watch officers and others is concerned; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many incidents involving allegations concerning near-collisions between *(a)* Royal Navy submarines or *(b)* United States Navy submarines and United Kingdom fishing vessels over the past seven years have been the subject of formal investigations; of these, how many led to courts martial; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I have received no recent formal representations concerning complaints of infringement of Royal Navy submarines and United States Navy submarines of the code of practice in fishing areas.

Since the formal adoption of the code of practice in October 1993, the only incident to have taken place between a Royal Navy submarine and a United Kingdom fishing vessel is that between HMS Valiant and the fishing vessel Audacious on 8 November 1993. A full investigation was immediately put in hand, which has recently been concluded. The findings, which are currently being examined, will be made available shortly to the members of the Department of Transport's fishing industry safety committee sub-group dealing with submarine and fishing vessels matters, which includes representatives of the fishermen's federations.

Reports of investigations are submitted via flag officer submarines to the commander-in-chief fleet. It is for the commander-in-chief fleet to make any decisions regarding courts martial. It is difficult to give an average for the amount of time spent investigating incidents; this depends on the complexity of each individual case.

Investigations into near collisions between United States Navy submarines and United Kingdom fishing vessels during the past seven years are a matter for the appropriate United States authorities. The code of practice governing the conduct of submarines when operating in the vicinity of fishing vessels does, of course, apply to all foreign submarines operating dived within United Kingdom territorial waters.

Malaysia

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who drew up the list of defence firms which Lady Thatcher promised to supply to Malaysia under the arms deal negotiated between 1985 and 1988; what were the criteria for choice; and which were the companies selected.

Mr. Aitken: There is no such list.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report,* column *1055,* if he will provide whatever information is available of those occasions on which he, or other Ministers in his Department, have signed public interest immunity certificates, and for what reasons.

Mr. Hanley: Since my right hon. and learned Friend became Secretary of State for Defence, he or other Ministers in his Department have signed public interest immunity certificates on seven occasions.

In June 1992, my right hon. and learned Friend signed a certificate which set out the national security and personal safety grounds for screening certain members of the armed forces from the public, and for the protection of certain information from disclosure. This certificate was prepared for the hearing of a civil claim. In the event, the hearing was delayed, and he signed a fresh certificate in similar terms in March 1993. He signed certificates for the same purpose in January 1993 in relation to another civil claim, and in April 1993 in relation to the proceedings of an inquest.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton) signed PII certificates in relation to two cases. In January 1993 he signed a certificate for the same purposes as those in the first instance above in relation to the proceedings of an inquest. In February 1993, in relation to criminal proceedings, he signed a certificate setting out the grounds for protecting information, the disclosure of which would be harmful to national security.

In October 1992 my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State signed a certificate relating to a case heard in camera by agreement of the court and the parties. In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement signed in September 1992 certificates in the same terms in connection with the Matrix Churchill case. The certificate signed by the Minister of State was not used.

Belize Defence Force

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), of 23 February, *Official Report,* column *23,* he will list all items of equipment, vehicles, ammunition and stores of over £1,000 value he intends to give to the Belize defence force; what plans he has to provide *(a)* helicopter support and *(b)* aircraft engineering support to the force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Of the £338,000 worth of equipment the MOD intends to gift to the Belize defence force the following items have been identified as being of more than £1,000 in value:

Vehicles:
Up to 23 3/4 tonne Land Rovers and a small number of trucks
Ammunition:
5·566mm and 7·62mm ammunition
81mm mortar rounds
66mm Heat rockets

We have discussed with the Government of Belize their future requirements for helicopters and associated engineering support. We are currently providing expert assistance to help them identify their precise needs.

Desert Storm Syndrome

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* former service men or *(b)* current service men have contacted his Department complaining of ill-health effects they believe to be desert fever arising from contamination from serving in the British forces in Operation Granby.

Mr. Hanley: A total of 15 former and six serving members of the armed forces have contacted my department expressing concern about their health following service in the Gulf. All have been offered the opportunity to be medically assessed by a military

consultant. Of the 14 who have accepted this offer, 12 have so far been examined. All have been found to be suffering from separate medically recognised conditions which are not peculiar to service in the Gulf.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent communication he has had with the Trauma After Care Trust regarding concerns over Desert Storm fever; and what plans he has to meet with TACT to discuss the problems.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has no record of receiving any communication from TACT since July 1993 and I have no plans to meet any of TACT's representatives.

Reserve Forces Reorganisation

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to report on the reorganisation of the reserve forces, following his review.

Mr. Hanley: Further to my answer of 17 February to the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside, *Official Report*, column *998-99*, Ministers have today written to hon. Members about the responses received during the consultation period. Work is continuing on our policy proposals.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Hanley: Such purchases are included within my Department's overall administration expenditure which is published every year in the supply estimates.

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override his Department's accounting officer's objections.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* From records currently available formal directions have been issued since 1979 on the following occasions:

April 1984
(D Day 40th anniversary celebrations)
February 1985
(Type 22 frigate)
December 1987
(Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment)
June 1991
(Chieftain replacement)
January 1992
(HMS Endurance replacement)
January 1992
(RNSD Copenacre)
March 1992
(image intensifiers)

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. David Davis: None of the agency chief executives in my Department is currently paid more than £82,925 excluding performance-related bonuses.

Disclosure of Information

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made in drawing up codes of practice for the disclosure of information held by local authorities and the national health service; and when he expects to publish proposals for consultation.

Mr. Waldegrave: The local authority associations have responded positively to the suggestion in the White Paper, "Open Government" (Cm 2290) that they could usefully adopt a voluntary code of practice on disclosure of information. The associations are preparing a draft.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has asked the NHS Management Executive to take forward the proposal for a code of practice for the NHS. A task force has been set up for this purpose and I understand a draft code should be ready for wider consultation by the summer, with a view to implementation by the end of the year.

Official Information (Code of Practice)

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to publicise its code of practice on official information when it comes into force in April; and what budget has been allocated for this purpose.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will be making a further announcement on the implementation of the code of practice later this month. Material explaining the operation of the code will be available from Departments and will also be offered to advice centres and similar outlets. A budget of £15,000 has been allocated centrally for these purposes.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what date a copy of the permanent secretary's handbook was made available to Lord Justice Scott.

Mr. Waldegrave: The handbook for heads of Departments has not been submitted to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry. However, copies of certain of the separate documents which are included in the handbook have been provided at the inquiry's request, including some of the documents mentioned in the answer I gave to the hon. Gentleman's question yesterday, 9 March, *Official Report*, column *256*.

Charterline

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many calls have been made to charterline since its inception; what has been the average daily call rate and the average cost per call; how many personnel work on charterline; and what has been the total cost to date of charterline, including promotion and all associated costs.

Mr. David Davis: Over 5,530 calls have been made to charterline since its inception, an average of 25 calls a day.

IBM has nine trained staff available to answer charterline calls, who also perform a wide range of other tasks and answer other calls. Up to four of these are awaiting charterline and other calls at any one time.

The operational cost per call to date is £68. If call volumes were higher, significant economies of scale could be achieved. The operational costs of a pilot study are always relatively high. One of the purposes of the charterline pilot study is to assess the demand of the service and the volume of calls and costs that would be associated with a national service. The pilot study will ensure that, if charterline is rolled out, it is done on a high-quality and extremely cost-effective basis.

To date set-up costs amount to £1,251,000. These include initial research, project planning and management, system design, contractual advice and data collection, which are all one-off costs. Running costs to date amount to £1,037,679. These include paid advertising, research during the pilot study, set up and use of ACORN data—which categorise groups of households into one of 38 types, on the basis of such factors as the ages of the people living there, the size of their home, the type of work they do, their ethnic background and so on—operational costs, and operation of the charterline language service, which is available in Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu.

Market Testing

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if market-tested contracts awarded to private contractors will be audited by the National Audit Office.

Mr. Waldegrave: The National Audit Office will be able to audit records held by Departments in the normal way, to ensure that their contracting procedures ensure that propriety and regularity are safeguarded and that best value for money is obtained.

Departments and agencies will ensure that where finance-related work is contracted out the NAO will continue to have access to documents to enable it to carry out certification audits of the Department and value-for-money examinations of the way in which the Department has used its resources. The right of access to any such documents no longer held by the Department of agencies should be provided for in the contract. Even where documents are available in the Department, the NAO will normally require access to the contractor to ensure procedures operate correctly and that propriety and regularity are safeguarded.

It is not intended that the NAO should have access to records relating to the contractor's affairs, nor that he should conduct a certification audit of the contractor.

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total value of all market-tested contracts awarded to private contractors to date.

Mr. Waldegrave: Private contractors have been awarded £855·3 million of work under the competing for quality programme. Some contracts are still subject to negotiation.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of market tests in each Government Department were won by *(a)* in-house bids, *(b)* other public bodies in competition with in-house bids and *(c)* the private sector in competition with in-house bids.

Mr. Waldegrave: I expect to publish aggregate information on the proportion of bids won by in-house bids and by other bidders very shortly in the citizens charter second report.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for what proportion by value of the market tests in each Government Department there were in-house bids; and what proportion by value of the market tests in each Government Department were won by *(a)* in-house bids, *(b)* other public sector bodies and *(c)* private sector bidders.

Mr. Waldegrave: I expect to publish aggregate information on the proportion by value of bids won by in-house bids and by other bidders very shortly in the citizens charter second report.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 11 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Social Security Appeal Tribunals

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many appeals to the social security commissioner against decisions of social security appeal tribunals have taken over 12 months to resolve; what percentage this represents of the total; and what is the average length of time taken.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As of 31 December 1993, the average waiting time between an appeal against a social security appeal tribunal's decision and its determination by a social security commissioner was 433 days. The further information requested is not collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Jury Service (Deaf People)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement regarding the banning of a deaf person from sitting on a jury at King's Lynn Crown court in January.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Section 10 of the Juries Act 1974 provides that if it appears to a member of the court staff that there is doubt as to the capacity of a person who attends for jury service to serve effectively, on the grounds of physical disability, the person may be brought before a judge. The judge shall then determine whether or not the person should serve as a juror and, if not, shall discharge the summons. That procedure was followed in the case of a juror at King's Lynn. I cannot comment on the judge's decision to discharge the summons.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make it his policy to exclude the company which the Government select to build the channel tunnel rail link from claiming tax relief on trading losses without taking account of the value of the written off debt of European Passenger Services Ltd. when it is incorporated within the new company.

Mr. Freeman: The company which builds the channel tunnel rail link will be subject to the same taxation rules that apply to any other company in the private sector. The Government have no wish to interfere with those rules.

Disabled People (Parking)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review arrangements for disabled people's parking bays; and if he will consider extending the powers of local authorities to prevent parking across ramps to homes where access is required for disabled people's vehicles, other than cars.

Mr. Key: Local authorities already have wide powers to create disabled people's parking bays and I am not aware of any suggestion that these powers are inadequate and need to be reviewed.

The Road Traffic Act 1991 contains provision which enable most non-endorsable parking offences, including the unauthorised use of disabled people's parking bays, to be decriminalised and enforced by local authorities. The expectation is that such arrangements will lead to higher levels of enforcement. They are already being introduced in London and they will be made available shortly to local authorities elsewhere.

Parking across ramps provided for disabled people can amount to obstructing the highway—which is an offence, even in streets where parking is not otherwise prohibited. Enforcement is a matter for the police.

Transport Research Laboratory

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much he paid the corporate finance section of KPMG for advice on the future of the Transport Research Laboratory.

Mr. Key: A total of £91,826·26 inclusive of VAT.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which tenderers for the work of advising him on the future of the Transport Research Laboratory were individuals or groups with expertise in commissioning or completing casualty reduction, environmental, structural or mechanical research.

Mr. Key: All tenderers were free to structure teams as they judged best able to undertake the contract, KPMG Peat Marwick assembled a team which embraced a range of skills, including transport and research specialisms.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the terms of reference and correspondence with the corporate finance section of KPMG on the future of the Transport Research Laboratory.

Mr. Key: I am placing copies of the terms of reference for the study in the Library. These terms of reference were the subject of consultation with the trade unions.

Exchanges between the Department and the contracted consultants during the course of such studies necessarily take place in confidence because they involve a range of sensitive issues which may be commercially confidential. It would not be appropriate to make such exchanges public.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he gave instructions that the corporate finance section of KPMG should advise on *(a)* whether it would be possible or *(b)* whether it would be sensible to have a clean break between the Transport Research Laboratory and his Department;

(2) for what reasons he advocates a clean break between the Transport Research Laboratory and his Department.

Mr. Key: KPMG Peat Marwick's work was guided by the terms of reference for the study. The desirability of a clean break was identified by the consultants in light of the

Government's wider policy for securing the complete transfer to the private sector of functions that need not be undertaken in the public sector, along with associated assets.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the competitive advantage of the corporate finance section over other sections, and the competitive advantage of KPMG over other consultancies, in respect of the future of the Transport Research Laboratory.

Mr. Key: KPMG Peat Marwick was appointed following a competitive process involving a written submission and a subsequent interview. They were judged best able to achieve the requirements of the study set out in the terms of reference. It was their decision to manage the work from their corporate finance section.

M62 Relief Road

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total number of *(a)* valid objections to and *(b)* indications of support received by his Department for the proposed M62 relief road.

Mr. Key: So far, over 17,500 representations have been received. Most are opposed to the proposals. The figure includes an element of duplication.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effects his recently announced intention of accelerating the approvals procedure for new roads will have on the M62 relief road.

Mr. Key: Last August my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport announced a package of measures aimed at cutting the time it takes to prepare and build new roads and bypasses. A major element is the setting up of the Highways Agency which is to take on responsibility for the management and delivery of the roads programme on the 1 April. This does not mean that the rights of those opposed to the M62 relief road will be changed. Progress on this scheme will depend on its meeting objectives, the proper clearance of the approval procedures, and the availability of funds.

British Rail

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guarantees have been provided for the operational telecommunications requirements of British Rail and successor companies following the transfer of British Rail Telecommunications to the private sector.

Mr. Freeman: Discussions are taking place between BRT and Railtrack with a view to agreeing contractual arrangements to protect requirements for operational telecommunications for the railway.

Lollipop Ladies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to amend the law to permit lollipop ladies to assist pre-school children across roads.

Mr. Key: None. Sections 26 and 28 of the Road Traffic Act 1984 empower school crossing patrols to stop traffic at places where "children cross roads on their way to or from school, or from one part of a school to another".

The words "children" and "school" are not defined. The interpretation of the law is a matter for the courts, but it would seem that the legislation would not prevent school crossing patrols from escorting children to or from an educational institution that provides education or instruction to children of no pre-determined minimum age. This would include a nursery school or play group. It is, however, for appropriate authorities to decide their own policy in this matter, consulting their own legal advisers as necessary.

Coaches

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of coaches registered in other European countries checked by the Vehicle Inspectorate at the weighbridge on the A2 at Broughton in the latest convenient period exceeded 17 tonnes.

Mr. Key: Of those coaches registered in other European countries and check-weighed at Broughton, 18 per cent. were found to be overloaded by more than 5 per cent., or 1 tonne, whichever was the lesser. The figures, which are for the period 1 January to 31 December 1993, include those vehicles with a maximum permitted weight of more than 17 tonnes. Information on European vehicles weighed and found to be less than 5 per cent. overweight cannot be disaggregated from the data.

UK-US Air Services

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is proposing to continue negotiations with the United States Government on the liberalisation of air services between the two countries, following the announcement by British Airways in respect of its plans for further investment in USAir.

Mr. MacGregor: I have this week made proposals to the United States Government on how we should take forward our discussions on air services following British Airways' announcement. Although the outcome of USAir's restructuring may well influence the shape of the new agreement, I have said that in my view talks should certainly continue on the framework of a new agreement —on which excellent progress has already been made. I have also said that I remain open to an interim limited exchange of new rights to maintain the momentum of the talks; and have suggested that there should be an exchange of views on the economic significance of the code sharing rights granted to United Kingdom carriers under the 1991 agreement, whose renewal is due to be confirmed by the United States Government on 17 March.

Railway Drink and Drugs Law

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a full list of all organisations to which his Department sent and from which it has received responses regarding the consultation paper on proposed railway drink and drugs legislation, together with the addresses of each such organisation.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* My Department issued 42 copies of the consultation paper to transport operators, passenger transport executives, trade

unions, the police, magistrates and the medical profession, and we received 27 responses. It is not our practice to identify those organisations or individuals who respond to consultation exercises.

SOCIAL SECURITY

State Earnings-related Pension Scheme

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what estimate he has made of the cost of continuing family credit and disability working allowance towards an individual's SERPS entitlement in the years *(a)* 2000, *(b)* 2010, *(c)* 2025 and *(d)* 2035;

(2) what estimate he has made of the *(a)* number and *(b)* proportion of (i) men and (ii) women who will see an increase in their SERPS entitlement as a result of counting family credit and disability working allowance awards towards SERPS in (1) 2000, (2) 2010, (3) 2025 and (4) 2035.

Mr. Hague: The Government Actuary's Department project that expenditure will graually build up to about £0·1 billion in 2035. This figure must be treated with caution as it is based on current family credit and disability working allowance caseloads and does not allow for any future growth in the take-up of these benefits.

Modelling of the costs of this measure does not track the cumulative effect on individuals over time and so it is not possible to provide an estimate of numbers of beneficiaries. Most families and disabled people who receive family credit/disability working allowance—approximately 0·5 million at present—should be helped by this measure.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the cost of extending home responsibilities protection to SERPS entitlements in the years *(a)* 2000, *(b)* 2010, *(c)* 2025 and *(d)* 2035.

Mr. Hague: The Government Actuary's Department estimates the cost of extending home responsibilities protection to SERPS as about £0·5 billion in 2010, rising to about £1·5 billion in 2035.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since its establishment on a separate Department.

Mr. Hague: This Department offers the following services by way of freephone:

Freeline 0800 666555—The freeline social security telephone service gives general advice and information on the full range of Social Security benefits and covers all aspects of an enquiry, regardless of the circumstances. Its aim is to provide a confidential, speedy and expert advice service without access to any benefit files.

It originally started as a series of regional initiatives and became a national service in 1984 with 40 staff.

There are 10 freeline centres based at: Sutton; Ilford; Cambridge; Birmingham; Bootle; Nottingham; Leeds; Edinburgh; Cardiff and Newcastle, with an 11th Freeline centre due to be opened this year in Preston.

Ethnic freeline—Punjabi 0800 521360, Urdu 0800 289188 and Cantonese 0800 252451—services giving general advice and information on social security benefits in these languages;

Welsh freeline—0800 289011—a service giving general advice and information on social security benefits in Welsh;

Family credit freeline—0800 500222—a service is available 24 hours per day, to order information packs on family credit;

The benefit enquiry line—0800 882200—introduced in June 1991—a service giving advice and information to people with disabilities and to those caring for them. Extended in April 1993 to provide a form completion service for invalid care allowance, severe disablement allowance, disability living allowance, attendance allowance and disability working allowance.

Social security advice line for employers (SSALE)—0800 393539—introduced in August 1993—a service for employers which gives general advice and information on NI contributions, statutory sick pay and maternity pay.

Itsa service help desk—introduced in late 1988—provides advice and help to users in DSS agencies, DSS or DH headquarters staff on approximately 250 systems ranging from the mainframe based operational strategy systems to small server based systems.

This Department uses freepost to a very limited extent mainly in advertising campaigns aimed at increasing the knowledge of the general public, for example, council tax benefits, or alerting them to changes in their liabilities and rights under the law. We offer an extensive business reply service—pre-printed addressed labels—which enables our customers to reply free of charge. Business reply envelopes are issued to our customers to facilitate the return of information or where a reply is essential to our business needs.

Costings for freephone and freepost are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Rents

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the range of rents paid by those receiving housing benefit in each local authority area.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information is in the table.

Eligible rent (£/week)[1]

Region[2]	*[3]Minimum*	*[3]Maximum*
South East (excluding London)	3·50	165·53
London	2·50	431·22
North (including Cumbria)	3·00	173·87
Wales	1·00	100·00
Scotland	2·00	250·87
Yorkshire and Humberside	0·78	214·17
East Midlands	3·25	271·20
East Anglia	3·32	187·62
South West	0·75	130·52
West Midlands	1·29	168·70
North West (excluding Cumbria)	3·00	325·00
National	0·75	431·22

Data Source:

The Housing Benefit annual one per cent. sample of May 1992.

Note:

As the figures are from a sample, which has also excluded cases where the assessed amount of housing benefit is less than 50 pence per week, there could be cases with rents higher or lower than those selected in the sample.

[1]Data on rent paid is not available, therefore, the information relates to the amount of rent eligible for housing benefit.

[2]Range has been defined as the lowest and highest amount of rent eligible for housing benefit.

[3]The data relates to regions because reliable information cannot be given for individual local authorities from a 1 per cent. sample.

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Hague: None.

Child Maintenance

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many child maintenance assessments have been completed to date.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive of the Child Support Agency to my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Mr. Renton) on 8 March.

Service Delivery Directorate

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to outsource the service delivery directorate of his Department; what consultations have taken place with the employees who will be affected; and what analysis has been made of the benefits in terms of service and savings to be achieved from any such change.

Mr. Hague: On 31 January 1994, the chief executive of the Information Technology Services Agency announced proposals to transfer the bulk of day-to-day computer and output handling operations to the private sector with effect from April 1995.

A programme of meetings was held immediately at which the chief executive, Ian Magee, explained to all ITSA staff the proposals. There have been further meetings to enable employees to discuss the outsourcing with senior management.

Information suggests that significant improvements in value for money and services to ITSA's customers can be achieved by transferring this work to the well-developed market that now exists for this type of work.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoner Transfers

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when the last transfer to Northern Ireland of a prisoner was carried out; how many prisoners who have applied for transfer are still waiting for a reply to their request; and for what reasons these prisoners are still waiting for a reply;

(2) how many prisoners have applied for transfer to prisons in Northern Ireland since 23 November 1992;

(3) how many prisoners have applied for transfer since 23 November 1992 following the findings of the inter-departmental review; how many prisoners were transferred to Northern Ireland while the review was being undertaken; and how many prisoners have been transferred to Northern Ireland since the release of the inter-departmental review.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: An interdepartmental review of the transfer of prisoners between United Kingdom jurisdictions was announced to Parliament on 4 June 1991. The recommendations of the review were accepted and reported to Parliament on 23 November 1992.

During this period 35 prisoners were transferred to Northern Ireland. Since the announcement of the outcome of the review 65 prisoners have applied for transfer to Northern Ireland; 11 prisoners, including some who applied for transfer before the conclusion of the review, have been transferred to Northern Ireland. The last such transfer took place on 20 January. Fifty-eight requests by prisoners to transfer to Northern Ireland remain to be determined.

Two prisoners temporarily transferred to Northern Ireland challenged the basis of their transfer by application for judicial review. These applications were dismissed by the High Court in Belfast at the end of last year. It has been necessary to give further consideration to the legal implications of these challenges before determining the outstanding requests. We expect to make decisions on these cases shortly.

Firearms

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were killed in crimes involving *(a)* shotguns, *(b)* licensed firearms and *(c)* unlicensed firearms in (i) the north-east of England and (ii) the United Kingdom for each year since 1985.

Mr. Maclean: The available information is contained in the following table:

Number of offences of homicide in which firearms were reported to have been used 1985—1992

Year	Cleveland		Durham		Northumbria		England and Wales	
	Shotgun	Other firearm	Shotgun	Other firearm	Shotgun	Other firearm	Shotgun	Other firearm
1985	—	—	1	—	2	—	29	16
1986	—	—	1	—	—	—	37	14
1987	—	—	1	—	1	1	43	34
1988	—	—	—	—	—	—	27	9
1989	—	—	—	—	1	—	26	19
1990	—	—	—	1	1	1	33	27
1991	—	1	—	1	—	1	32	23
1992	2	—	—	1	2	1	25	31

No information is available centrally on whether firearms used in offences are licensed or not. Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

Figures for Scotland are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and figures for Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Video Pornography

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will answer the letters of 2 December 1993, February 1994 and telephone calls from the hon. Member for Lewisham, East on the subject of unsolicited advertising of pornographic video material.

Mr. Maclean: I wrote to the hon. Member on 9 March 1994.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he intends to publish the rules under which the proposed new regime for criminal injury compensation is to operate;

(2) if he will now place in the Library a copy of the draft regulations for the operation of the amended criminal injury compensation scheme.

Mr. Maclean: The publication of the detailed rules of the tariff scheme which comes into force on 1 April 1994, was anounced on 9 March, column *224*. Copies of the text of the rules and the accompanying guide, which explains to claimants how the new scheme works and the criteria adopted for deciding applications, have been placed in the Vote Office and the Library of the House.

Grand National

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the costs of policing the Grand National in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

Racial Attacks

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to commission a survey comparable to the British crime survey, to examine the occurrence of racial attacks and racial harassment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have no plans to commission a separate survey. The 1992 British crime survey involved some 10,000 households, and had a boosted sample of about 1,700 ethnic minority respondents. This produced a sufficiently large sample to compare rates and patterns of criminal victimisation between these groups and the white majority.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce new legal measures aimed at combating racial violence, racial discrimination or racial harassment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are considering recommendations for legislative change made by the Commission for Racial Equality in its second review of the Race Relations Act 1976; we will be looking carefully at the recommendations of the Home Affairs Committee inquiry into racial attacks and harassment.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to require chief constables to publish annual clear-up rates for racial incidents as compared with other offences in each division.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As part of the package of core performance indicators for the police, introduced in April 1993, each force will publish annual data on the total number of reported racial incidents in the force area, and the percentage of these in which further investigative action was undertaken. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to require the police to publish clear-up rates for racial incidents since in many instances the matters reported may not be ones for the police, but for other agencies, and may not involve criminal offences.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to provide additional resources to enable the establishment of local multi-agency panels aimed at combating racism.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Many local multi-agency groups are already in existence to combat racial attacks and harassment. The racial attacks group, as part of its work programme, will be seeking to inform itself of the number of multi-agency groups that have been established locally, and to learn from their experience. The allocation of resources to support these groups must be a matter for local agencies in the light of local priorities.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to investigate possible links between the activities of extremist organisations and incidences of racially motivated attacks.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The investigation of racially motivated attacks, and of organisations which might pose a threat to public order, is the responsibility of the police. There is no evidence to suggest that the role of extremist groups in racial attacks is anything but a very minor one.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to recommend that in cases where race is an issue, the defence or prosecution be able to propose and the judge be empowered to direct, that the composition of the jury includes some ethnic minority representation.

Mr. Maclean: The Royal Commission on Criminal Justice recommended that, where compelling reasons are advanced, it should be possible for the defence or the prosecution to apply to the judge for the selection of a jury containing up to three people from ethnic minorities. This recommendation raises serious questions of both principle and practicality and the Government have yet to reach a conclusion on it.

Horserace Betting Levy

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce his determination under section 1 of the Horserace Betting Levy Act 1969 of the horserace betting levy scheme beginning on 1 April.

Mr. Howard: I have today sent the following letter to the chairman of the Horserace Betting Levy Board and written similarly to the chairman of the Bookmakers Committee. A copy of the scheme has been placed in the Library of the House. The letter reads:

Following the Levy Board's and the Bookmakers' Committee's failure to agree the scheme for the 33rd Levy period last October, the scheme fell to be determined by me.

I have now reached my decision and I enclose a copy of the Scheme which I have determined.

The main feature is that the cash and credit rates remain unchanged. In other words, the scheme rolls over from 1993-94 with indexation of the other elements in the Scheme.

In reaching my decision I have taken into account the submissions made to me by the Government-appointed members of the Levy Board and by the Bookmakers' Committee, together with other submissions, including those from the British Horseracing Board, on which the Board members and the Committee were afforded the opportunity to comment.

The cash yield from the Scheme will depend on the leviable betting turnover. I have taken as my starting point an estimated £4,358 million in 1993-94. It seems unlikely that there will be no growth in turnover in 1994-95. Representations have been made in regard to the possible adverse effect of the National Lottery on betting turnover, but I doubt whether the National Lottery will have a significant effect in 1994-95.

In all the circumstances, my view is that the needs of racing justify a yield in the range of £50 million-£53 million and that such a yield is within the capacity of bookmakers to pay.

It is a long accepted principle that I should take into consideration bookmakers' capacity to pay I have given careful consideration to the arguments put to me in this regard. The scheme which I have determined does not increase the cash or credit rates payable by the bookmakers. This reflects my view that an increase in rates is not necessary to meet racing's current needs nor could it be justified. Furthermore, the first slice of turnover on which a fixed fee is charged has been increased in line with inflation.

The bookmakers have put forward arguments for a reduction in the cash rate. I am not convinced that in the present circumstances any such reduction is justified.

In reaching this view on the cash rate, I have had regard to the bookmakers' contention that falling profitability is a factor which should be taken into account in determining their capacity to pay the Levy. I am not convinced that the position has been reached where any erosion of profit margins is such that it impacts significantly on the bookmakers' capacity to pay the Levy. My attention has been drawn to the structure of the scheme whereby the larger bookmakers are, in affect, subsidising the smaller concerns with detrimental effects on the profits to be made from additional turnover. However, the way the scheme is structured in order to benefit the smaller bookmakers is a matter of choice by the Bookmakers' Committee. Nor am I convinced that the overall effect of the Scheme is such that there would be a real effect on capacity to pay the Levy at unchanged rates in the coming year.

I have been asked whether falling profit margins are a matter which should be taken into consideration in setting the Levy. I could not accept the argument that it is completely irrelevant to the question of "capacity to pay". On the other hand, the fact that some bookmakers may not recover the costs of the Levy in full from punters is not an argument in itself for reducing cash rates. The levy is a liability on the bookmaker, and it is up to him how he chooses to meet that obligation. In my view, however, it is reasonable to expect the Horserace Betting Levy Board, in discussing future schemes, to have regard to the likely effect of the Levy, amongst other factors, on the ability of bookmakers to manage their businesses effectively.

As a matter of general principal, it seems to me very much more preferable that disputes over the Levy should be settled without reference to me. There are matters which most intimately concern the horseracing industry and bookmakers and should, given goodwill, be capable of resolution between them. I should be greatly concerned about any tendency for requests for my determination of the levy to become the norm rather than the exception. Were this to happen, I should want seriously to consider alternative proposals for settling Levy disputes.

Octopus

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that no species of octopus other than octopus vulgaris should be used for scientific procedures in Great Britain which might cause pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* No. The Animal Procedures Committee considered in 1993 whether cephalopods were sufficiently sentient to justify extension to them of the protection for laboratory animals provided by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. My right hon. and learned Friend accepted the majority view of the committee that octopus vulgaris alone might meet this test.

ENVIRONMENT

Management Systems

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department's computer-aided facilities management systems cost; from whom they were purchased; how many person hours were required to commission them; what the estimated and actual saving has been from their operation; and to what extent the use of such systems accounts for the apparent rise in theft noted in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 17 February, *Official Report,* column *973.*

Mr. Baldry: My Department does not operate computer-aided facilities management systems as such, although, as in other parts of the Department, computers are used by those employed in facilties management as part of their day-to-day work. There is no reason to suppose any link between this and the number of thefts from the Department.

Fuel Economy

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken to encourage other Government Departments to economise in the use of fuel; and with what results.

Mr. Atkins: Energy management in individual Government Departments is a matter for the Ministers responsible for those Departments. My Department provides information on good practice and monitors the progress of Departments towards the target of improving energy efficiency by 15 per cent. over the five years to 1995-96. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State also reviews progress at meetings of Green Ministers, which he chairs. Results for 1992-93 were given in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) on 20 October 1993, *Official Report,* columns *256-59,* and updated energy expenditure information was provided in answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 20 January 1994, *Official Report,* columns *829-30.*

Advice and guidance is made available to all Departments through regular meetings and correspondence and through technical literature, videos and seminars. Current initiatives include encouraging Departments to take advantage of opportunities for using contract energy management and to examine the scope for combined heat and power.

Marsham Street

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has of *(a)* previous land use, *(b)* contaminants present, *(c)* clean-up work completed and *(d)* health risks present regarding the site of his Department's offices at Marsham street; and how he came by this information.

Mr. Baldry: Before the existing buildings were constructed in the 1960s, the site was occupied by a

mixture of domestic and commercial users, the largest of which was a coal gas works. Consultants have advised that the site's previous use as a gas works may have led to some soil contamination. However, much of the contamination in the soil is likely to have been removed when the deep basements of the current building were evacuated. The building fabric itself protects the current occupants from any risks of contamination. This information is based on advice from consultants looking at the planning and development potential of the 2 Marsham street site.

Local Authority Tenants

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to lay regulations to give force to the new right to manage for local authority tenants.

Sir George Young: I have today laid before Parliament the Housing (Right to Manage) Regulations 1994 which will come into force on 1 April. The regulations implement our citizens charter commitment to give local authority tenants' organisations a statutory right to manage their own homes.

Seventy-four tenant management organisations are already managing their own housing under the present voluntary arrangements, and reaping the benefits of greater cost control, local accountability and responsive services. The right to manage will put those benefits within the grasp of any properly constituted and representative tenants' organisation. I expect to see many more TMOs managing their housing over the next few years.

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans the Government have to require local authorities to provide better information on their housing management performance to tenants.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce that today the Department has issued to all local housing authorities a revised "Reports to Tenants Determination" together with an explanatory circular. This determination sets out the information that local authorities must provide to their tenants each year on their housing management performance. I am placing copies in the Library.

The publication of the new determination follows a review of the existing reports to tenants regime, in consultation with the local authority associations and others, in the light of recent research on the operation of the regime since the first reports were published in 1991. I hope that the new reports will be more relevant to tenants' needs. This citizens charter initiative will help tenants to judge how well their council is managing its housing stock on the basis of reports written in clear and simple language.

From 1994-95 authorities will be required to report on housing stock, allocations, management costs, rents and repairs. Authorities will be encouraged to set targets for their performance to set the required information on the broader context of their housing strategies, current and future, and to provide information broken down to estate level as far as possible.

Land Searches

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to bring forward proposals for statutory time limits within which local authorities must answer standard inquiries by home buyers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My Department has today published proposals for new statutory arrangements for local authorities' handling of search inquiries made by people buying and selling property. These proposals are set out in a consultation paper entitled "A Statutory Scheme for Local Authority Land Searches", copies of which have been placed in the Library. The proposed new arrangements include new powers for local autorities to provide a one-stop service on standard search inquiries, a duty on local authorities to respond to these inquiries within 10 working days, and refunds of some or all of the fee if the local authority fails to respond within the time limit.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress there has been on the review of the arrangements for dealing with contaminated land which was announced on 24 March 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have been asked to reply.

I have today issued on wide circulation our proposals for the clean up and control of contaminated land. The consultation paper recognises that liability for past pollution is complicated and there are no easy solutions.

Interested organisations and individuals have provided helpful views which have been useful in identifying the key issues and options. The consultation paper gives all interested parties an opportunity to comment on the preliminary conclusions.

The consultation paper makes clear our support for a "suitable for use" approach to dealing with contaminated land. This means that contaminated land should be treated to deal with unacceptable actual or perceived threats to health, safety or the environment, taking into account the actual or intended use of the site. Where practicable, it should be kept in, or brought back into, beneficial use. This will help us to minimise pressures on greenfield sites.

The consultation paper invites comments by 26 May, and any views expressed will be taken into account before final conclusions are reached. I have placed a copy in the Libraries of the House. A parallel, but separate, consultation exercise is already under way in England and Wales.

SCOTLAND

Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, in 1993-94 prices and cash terms, the total amount spent from public funds on training for Scotland in each year since 1989-90, the expected outturn in 1993-94 and the plans for 1994-95.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* Training expenditure in Scotland was not recorded separately in the years prior to 1991-92. Since then, resources have been made available as part of the grant-in-aid of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to support the training programmes administered by these bodies. The following table provides details:

£ million

	Cash	1993-94 prices
1991-92	227·985	244·431
1992-93	218·122	225·211
[1]1993-94	204·420	204·420
[2]1994-95	207·486	199·506

[1] Estimated.
[2] Plans.

Cornton Vale Prison

Dr. Godman To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to close Cornton Vale prison and disperse its prisoners to local, mixed prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 March 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 11 March 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about what plans there are to close Cornton Vale Prison and disperse its prisoners to local, mixed prisons.

There are no plans to close Cornton Vale Prison nor to disperse its prisoners to local, mixed prisons. Some consideration has been given to the possibility of providing open prison opportunities for women prisoners elsewhere but the practical difficulties are such that it is not in prospect at present.

DEFENCE

Desert Storm Syndrome

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information in the form of oral testimony or written submission his Department has provided to the scientific panel established by the United States Defence Department to investigate the Desert Storm syndrome effects on allied service men who served in the Gulf war.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has been invited to provide information to two of the scientific panels established by the United States authorities to investigate the alleged Desert Storm syndrome. One is the defence science board task force on Gulf war health effects and the other the committee to review the health consequences of service during the Persian Gulf war.

My Department has provided both oral and written information confirming that there were no detections of chemical agents during the Gulf conflict and no evidence that British troops were exposed to such agents.

A written note on United Kingdom experience of the alleged Desert Storm syndrome was also provided to the committee which confirms our previously announced findings that there is no clinical evidence that members of the British armed forces are suffering from any unexplained medical condition peculiar to their service in the Gulf.

F15E Noise Trial

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will send the hon. Member for Don Valley a copy of the report on the results of the F15E noise trial when it becomes available.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *357*.

Homosexuality

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provisions exist at present for the welfare advice and counselling of members of the armed services dismissed as a result of their homosexuality; what plans he has to improve such provision; and what discussions he has held with the organisation Rank Outsiders about this issue.

Mr. Hanley: Service personnel awaiting administrative discharge or dismissal as a result of their homosexuality may continue to avail themselves of the welfare facilities provided for members of the armed forces. My Department has not held any discussions with the organisation Rank Outsiders but wrote early last year in response to two letters from Rank Outsiders.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to bring forward proposals for changes to the armed services regulations to enshrine the commitment no longer to prosecute members of the forces on grounds of their homosexuality.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 1 December, *Official Report*, column *610*.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 3 March, *Official Report*, column *873*, if representatives of foreign Governments have been consulted as part of the planned appointment of the head of the United Defence Export Services Organisation.

Mr. Aitken: No.

9 Squadron

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ground crew there were attached to 9 Squadron of the RAF in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1990; and what is planned for 1995.

Mr. Hanley: The information for 1980 and 1985 is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The integral ground crew establishment for 9 Squadron as at 1 April 1990 was 154 posts. The forecast for 1 April 1995 is 134.

Yugoslavia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 4 March, *Official Report*, column *943*, if he will state the reasons for the decision to increase the number of the mortar-locating troops by an additional 10 personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The increase was made to increase the troop's operational effectiveness.

EDUCATION

Pupil Exclusion

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils have been expelled from secondary schools for drug abuse in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Forth: Figures for each of the last 10 years are not available. Information on permanent exclusions from maintained schools in England was collected by the Department over a two-year period, starting with summer term 1990, under the national exclusions reporting system. Eighty-one exclusions in year one and 179 in year two were reported to relate at least partly to drug or solvent misuse. These figures were not disaggregated between primary and secondary schools.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to collate and publish on a regular basis the figures on exclusion from school.

Mr. Forth: The Department monitored permanent exclusions at maintained schools over a two-year period starting with summer term 1990 under the national exclusions reporting system to inform the review of the operation of exclusion procedures under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986. Following that review, the Education Act 1993 made significant changes to the law on exclusions which come into effect in September 1994. In the light of experience of the operation of the new procedures the Secretary of State will consider whether any further monitoring of permanent exclusions is necessary.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what his Department is doing to encourage schools to use the exclusion of pupils as a last resort rather than a routine sanction.

Mr. Forth: A draft circular on exclusions was issued for consultation recently as part of the "Pupils with Problems" package. It makes clear that exclusion should be used sparingly and always as a last resort in response to serious breaches of a school's behaviour policy or of the criminal law. The final version of the circular will be issued in May to all schools.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the advice given to parents whose children face exclusion from school.

Mr. Forth: None. This is a matter for individual LEAs and schools in the light of the requirements of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986. Many schools and LEAs issue leaflets to parents explaining the exclusion process and their rights.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to give excluded pupils the right to appeal against their exclusion.

Mr. Forth: Pupils—or parents, if the pupil is under 18—already have a right of appeal under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 against permanent exclusion.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table giving the percentage of current expenditure being devoted to education for each shire county in England, both before and after mandatory student awards; what percentage of the education expenditure is spent on education administration and other non-school expenditure; and what percentage is allocated to the schools, for each shire county.

Mr. Robin Squire: The provisional figures for 1992-93 for the shire counties are as shown in the table.

1992-93	*1 Percentage of total local authority expenditure on education*	*2 Percentage of total local authority expenditure on education less mandatory awards*	*3 Percentage of education expenditure on administration and other non-school expenditure*	*4 Percentage of education expenditure allocated to schools*
Avon	59·9	52·9	26·2	73·8
Bedfordshire	62·2	55·9	23·3	76·7
Berkshire	57·4	51·2	25·9	74·1
Buckinghamshire	62·7	54·5	29·5	70·5
Cambridgeshire	62·2	54·8	25·1	74·9
Cheshire	62·9	54·7	28·4	71·6
Cleveland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cornwall	58·8	51·4	28·2	71·8
Cumbria	57·3	53·0	26·5	73·5
Derbyshire	62·6	56·6	25·3	74·7
Devon	57·5	49·8	28·6	71·4
Dorset	57·5	50·0	31·6	68·4
Durham	61·7	56·4	24·4	75·6
East Sussex	56·4	49·0	26·5	73·5
Essex	59·3	53·1	24·3	75·7
Gloucestershire	59·0	51·0	30·9	69·1
Hampshire	62·7	55·5	26·8	73·2
Hereford and Worcester	61·5	53·6	26·5	73·5
Hertfordshire	65·3	56·9	28·0	72·0
Humberside	58·7	53·7	22·8	77·2
Isle of Wight	59·7	53·1	29·3	70·7
Kent	54·9	48·3	24·8	75·2

1992-93	1 Percentage of total local authority expenditure on education	2 Percentage of total local authority expenditure on education less mandatory awards	3 Percentage of education expenditure on administration and other non-school expenditure	4 Percentage of education expenditure allocated to schools
Lancashire	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Leicestershire	60·8	53·7	26·9	73·1
Lincolnshire	58·9	51·8	27·9	72·1
Norfolk	59·2	53·2	25·3	74·7
North Yorkshire	62·2	53·6	28·2	71·8
Northamptonshire	56·3	49·9	27·4	72·6
Northumberland	64·9	58·1	21·8	78·2
Nottinghamshire	59·2	53·6	22·8	77·2
Oxfordshire	59·9	51·8	29·9	70·1
Shropshire	62·9	56·1	24·8	75·2
Somerset	61·4	53·9	30·8	69·2
Staffordshire	61·7	55·3	18·0	82·0
Suffolk	62·4	56·3	24·2	75·8
Surrey	59·5	49·8	31·8	68·2
Warwickshire	62·2	53·0	30·7	69·3
West Sussex	59·8	52·0	25·9	74·1
Wiltshire	60·9	54·5	30·0	70·0

Notes to table:

1. Column 1 presents net current expenditure on education as a percentage of the total local authority current expenditure.
2. Column 2 presents column 1 minus Mandatory Awards expenditure.
3. Column 3 presents the percentage of net current education expenditure on service strategy, management and administration, inspectors and advisory services, other support costs and direct expenditure on colleges, adult and other continuing education, youth and other community services.
4. Column 4 presents the percentage of net current education expenditure spent directly on nursery/primary, secondary and special schools.
5. n/a indicates that returns of expenditure are not yet available. All figures are provisional and subject to further checking.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the unit cost per pupil in each London local education authority for 1992-93 for *(a)* nursery/primary and *(b)* secondary pupils.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker) on Wednesday 9 March, *Official Report*, columns *238-40*.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what the numbers and percentages of *(a)* schools and *(b)* children at (i) primary and (ii) secondary levels who are in grant-maintained establishments for each shire county in England, both inclusive and exclusive of those in the private sector.

Mr. Robin Squire: The tables show numbers and percentages of grant-maintained schools and pupils in such schools in the 40 shire local education authorities.

Table A: Schools and pupils in the shire counties in England
Maintained primary schools

LEA	1 Total number schools	2 Total number GM schools	3 Per cent. GMS in LEA	4 Total number pupils	5 Total number GM pupils	6 Per cent. GM pupils
Isles of Scilly	4	0	0·0	174	0	0·0
Avon	369	0	0·0	79,059	0	0·0
Bedfordshire	218	3	1·4	42,138	708	1·7
Berkshire	273	7	2·6	60,613	2,371	3·9
Buckinghamshire	287	6	2·1	61,601	2,262	3·7
Cambridgeshire	264	6	2·3	58,427	1,912	3·3
Cheshire	446	3	0·7	88,694	418	0·5
Cleveland	203	0	0·0	65,058	0	0·0
Cornwall	248	0	0·0	40,128	0	0·0
Cumbria	309	10	3·2	42,663	1,628	3·8
Derbyshire	450	7	1·6	84,037	1,775	2·1
Devon	440	1	0·2	79,424	285	0·4
Dorset	201	1	0·5	44,782	415	0·9
Durham	297	0	0·0	55,779	0	0·0
East Sussex	218	0	0·0	50,300	0	0·0
Essex	580	55	9·5	122,010	14,287	11·7
Gloucestershire	262	5	1·9	42,887	1,366	3·2
Hampshire	579	13	2·2	129,822	3,927	3·0
Hereford and Worcester	288	0	0·0	47,895	0	0·0
Hertfordshire	433	5	1·2	82,844	908	1·1
Humberside	353	2	0·6	84,426	335	0·4
Isle of Wight	46	0	0·0	7,232	0	0·0
Kent	572	15	2·6	126,005	4,227	3·4

LEA	1 Total number schools	2 Total number GM schools	3 Per cent. GMS in LEA	4 Total number pupils	5 Total number GM pupils	6 Per cent. GM pupils
Lancashire	600	1	0·2	128,579	283	0·2
Leicestershire	333	0	0·0	79,549	0	0·0
Lincolnshire	293	20	6·8	48,946	5,663	11·6
Norfolk	396	11	2·8	62,086	2,520	4·1
North Yorkshire	395	0	0·0	58,165	0	0·0
Northamptonshire	269	9	3·3	50,185	3,072	6·1
Northumberland	144	0	0·0	21,566	0	0·0
Nottinghamshire	424	0	0·0	91,370	0	0·0
Oxfordshire	238	1	0·4	39,886	81	0·2
Shropshire	215	1	0·5	35,410	307	0·9
Somerset	229	1	0·4	35,343	232	0·7
Staffordshire	409	1	0·2	92,355	32	0·0
Suffolk	255	0	0·0	43,420	0	0·0
Surrey	372	9	2·4	76,491	1,863	2·4
Warwickshire	244	0	0·0	45,715	0	0·0
West Sussex	246	0	0·0	51,813	0	0·0
Wiltshire	293	6	2·0	47,063	1,544	3·3
Totals	12,695	199	1·6	2,503,940	52,421	2·1

Table B: Maintained secondary schools

LEA	1 Total number schools	2 Total number GM schools	3 Per cent. GMS in LEA	4 Total number pupils	5 Total number GM pupils	6 Per cent. GM pupils
Isles of Scilly	1	0	0·0	108	0	0·0
Avon	60	2	3·3	53,946	1,569	2·9
Bedfordshire	71	10	14·1	43,813	8,568	19·6
Berkshire	59	10	16·9	46,298	7,389	16·0
Buckinghamshire	45	9	20·0	36,011	9,123	25·3
Cambridgeshire	44	16	36·4	40,247	15,109	37·5
Cheshire	69	3	4·3	62,810	2,395	3·8
Cleveland	44	0	0·0	35,560	0	0·0
Cornwall	31	0	0·0	28,965	0	0·0
Cumbria	43	11	25·6	30,702	7,988	26·0
Derbyshire	61	14	23·0	57,061	15,275	26·8
Devon	64	6	9·4	57,479	4,571	8·0
Dorset	56	9	16·1	40,345	8,813	21·8
Durham	43	0	0·0	37,068	0	0·0
East Sussex	34	0	0·0	33,201	0	0·0
Essex	105	63	60·0	94,951	60,897	64·4
Gloucestershire	42	24	57·1	32,592	19,806	60·8
Hampshire	94	17	18·1	76,216	14,614	19·2
Hereford and Worcester	76	5	6·6	46,846	3,558	7·6
Hertfordshire	88	20	22·7	67,063	17,833	26·6
Humberside	60	0	0·0	55,202	0	0·0
Isle of Wight	21	0	0·0	10,294	0	0·0
Kent	135	57	42·2	100,813	45,695	45·6
Lancashire	107	8	7·5	82,152	6,593	8·0
Leicestershire	79	5	6·3	58,809	3,222	5·5
Lincolnshire	63	24	38·1	36,951	16,323	44·2
Norfolk	52	12	23·1	40,181	8,608	21·4
North Yorkshire	59	0	0·0	43,107	0	0·0
Northamptonshire	64	12	18·8	44,356	9,197	20·7
Northumberland	61	1	1·6	29,102	632	2·2
Nottinghamshire	83	3	3·6	62,607	1,831	2·9
Oxfordshire	44	0	0·0	34,189	0	0·0
Shropshire	36	5	13·9	24,707	3,540	14·3
Somerset	39	1	2·6	27,598	398	1·4
Staffordshire	85	5	5·9	68,344	4,298	6·3
Suffolk	77	0	0·0	47,215	0	0·0
Surrey	51	13	25·5	38,877	9,915	25·5
Warwickshire	38	8	21·1	24,657	4,669	18·9
West Sussex	41	0	0·0	39,154	0	0·0
Wiltshire	44	13	29·5	33,696	10,905	32·4
Totals	2,369	386	16·3	1,823,023	323,604	17·8

Table C: All schools

LEA	1 Total number schools	2 Total number GM schools	3 Per cent. GMS in LEA	4 Total number pupils	5 Total number GM pupils	6 Per cent. GM pupils
Isle of Scilly	5	0	0·0	282	0	0·0
Avon	524	2	0·4	151,664	1,569	1·0
Bedfordshire	334	13	3·9	95,048	9,276	9·8
Berkshire	433	17	3·9	128,493	9,760	7·6
Buckinghamshire	395	15	3·8	108,659	11,385	10·5
Cambridgeshire	356	22	6·2	107,607	17,021	15·8
Cheshire	577	6	1·0	162,217	2,813	1·7
Cleveland	271	0	0·0	104,718	0	0·0
Cornwall	302	0	0·0	72,407	0	0·0
Cumbria	387	21	5·4	77,872	9,616	12·3
Derbyshire	577	21	3·6	149,862	17,050	11·4
Devon	607	7	1·2	151,459	4,856	3·2
Dorset	315	10	3·2	95,282	9,228	9·7
Durham	388	0	0·0	99,214	0	0·0
East Sussex	343	0	0·0	98,284	0	0·0
Essex	785	118	15·0	231,780	75,184	32·4
Gloucestershire	355	29	8·2	85,011	21,172	24·9
Hampshire	816	30	3·7	230,973	18,541	8·0
Hereford and Worcester	432	5	1·2	107,726	3,558	3·3
Hertfordshire	630	25	4·0	172,273	18,741	10·9
Humberside	451	2	0·4	145,645	335	0·2
Isle of Wight	74	0	0·0	19,005	0	0·0
Kent	836	72	8·6	251,211	50,192	20·0
Lancashire	823	9	1·1	227,866	6,876	3·0
Leicestershire	460	5	1·1	148,013	3,222	2·2
Lincolnshire	401	44	11·0	91,813	21,986	23·9
Norfolk	501	23	4·6	110,573	11,128	10·1
North Yorkshire	524	0	0·0	112,214	0	0·0
Northamptonshire	386	21	5·4	103,060	12,269	11·9
Northumberland	224	1	0·4	52,155	632	1·2
Nottinghamshire	580	3	0·5	163,363	1,831	1·1
Oxordshire	375	1	0·3	89,774	81	0·1
Shropshire	294	6	2·0	67,169	3,847	5·7
Somerset	313	2	0·6	73,260	630	0·9
Staffordshire	574	6	1·0	170,542	4,330	2·5
Suffolk	380	0	0·0	100,542	0	0·0
Surrey	591	22	3·7	153,063	11,778	7·7
Warwickshire	328	8	2·4	79,107	4,669	5·9
West Sussex	363	0	0·0	104,485	0	0·0
Wiltshire	378	19	5·0	87,914	12,449	14·2
Totals	17,683	585	3·3	4,781,323	376,025	7·9

Footnotes to the tables.

1. The figures for total schools and pupils are estimates derived from the Department for Education's January 1993 Schools' Census.
2. The figures for numbers of pupils are based on a head count of full-time and part-time pupils.
3. The numbers of grant-maintained schools are the totals operating in January 1994.
4. Table A (maintained primary sector) and table B (maintained secondary sector) exclude figures for special and indpendent schools. The data on these schools held by the Department cannot be divided into 'primary' and 'seconedary'.
5. Table A and table B include middle deemed primary and middle deemed secondary schools respectively.
6. Table B excludes sixth form colleges as these institutions are now part of the further education sector.
7. Table C includes maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, and non-maintained special and independent schools.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many appeals by parents against admission decisions by grant-maintained schools were considered by his Department for each school since the establishment of the grant-maintained sector;

(2) how many members of his Department are involved in considering appeals against admission decisions by grant-maintained schools and what is the total annual cost; and what plans he has to increase the number of staff involved.

Mr. Robin Squire: All admissions authorities, including the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools, are required to give parents the right to appeal to an independent committee. Where such an appeal is unsuccessful, parents may appeal to my right hon. Friend. That right of appeal applies to parents for all schools, both LEA and grant-maintained. No record is kept of the number of appeals that are made to him; in many cases an approach takes the form of an inquiry to the Department or of a request for advice. Most are handled by staff in the Department's territorial teams as part of their normal duties. There are no plans on that account to increase the number of staff in post.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the links between Sun Alliance and the Grant-maintained Schools Mutual Insurance Co.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: This is largely a matter for the Grant Maintained Schools Mutual although we understand that Sun Alliance acts in a reinsurance capacity.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what grant aid is estimated will be received by *(a)* the

Grant Maintained Schools Centre, *(b)* the Grant-maintained Schools Foundation and *(c)* the Grant-maintained Schools Trust in 1993-94; and what amounts are projected for 1994-95.

Mr. Robin Squire: In 1993-94, grant of up to £794,000 has been made available for the Grant Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. Neither the Grant Maintained Schools Foundation nor the Grant Maintained Schools Trust is in reciept of government grant.

The directors of the Grant Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. intend to restructure the organisation with effect from April 1994. Their intention is that the provision of information to schools considering grant maintained status should be handled by a new company, the Grant Maintained Schools Foundation Ltd. We understand that the present Grant Maintained Schools Foundation will change its name to the Grant Maintained Schools Charitable Trust.

The Department is currently considering an application for grant-aid for the new Grant Maintained Schools Foundation Ltd. for 1994-95. We have not received, and do not expect, grant applications for 1994-95 from the Grant Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. or the Grant Maintained Schools Charitable Trust.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many grant-maintained schools have insurance policies with Sun Alliance or its subsidiaries.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not held centrally.

Special Needs

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the numbers and percentages of *(a)* all, *(b)* primary and *(c)* secondary school children who have been statemented for each shire county in England; and what is the national average.

Mr. Forth: Information on children for whom statements of special educational needs were being maintained in January 1993 in the shire counties and in England is shown in the table. Also included is information on the numbers of pupils with statements attending maintained primary and secondary schools.

Children with statements of special educational needs in the shire counties in England
January 1993

	Children for whom a statement is maintained		*[1]Pupils with statements in maintained primary and secondary schools*			
			Primary		*Secondary*	
LEA	*[2]number*	*[3]as a percentage of all pupils in schools*	*number*	*as a percentage of pupils on the register*	*number*	*as a percentage of pupils on the register*
Avon	4,054	2·7	797	1·0	642	1·2
Bedfordshire	2,448	2·5	505	1·2	602	1·3
Berkshire	3,009	2·3	896	1·5	372	0·8
Buckinghamshire	3,793	3·5	927	1·5	761	2·1
Cambridgeshire	1,842	1·7	502	0·9	522	1·2
Cheshire	4,154	2·5	1,278	1·4	1,329	2·0
Cleveland	2,353	2·2	464	0·7	471	1·2
Cornwall	2,571	3·5	1,119	2·8	1,010	3·4
Cumbria	2,076	2·6	1,085	2·5	858	2·7
Derbyshire	4,066	2·7	1,274	1·5	1,664	2·9
Devon	4,740	3·1	1,236	1·6	1,465	2·5
Dorset	2,320	2·4	321	0·7	542	1·3
Durham	2,133	2·1	624	1·1	349	0·9
East Sussex	2,200	2·2	350	0·7	320	0·9
Essex	5,067	2·1	895	0·7	1,035	1·0
Gloucestershire	2,070	2·4	393	0·9	446	1·4
Hampshire	6,802	2·8	1,669	1·3	1,404	1·6
Hereford and Worcester	1,676	1·5	285	0·6	342	0·7
Hertfordshire	4,145	2·4	988	1·2	914	1·4
Humberside	2,373	1·6	697	0·8	601	1·0
Isles of Scilly	1	0·4	0	0·0	1	0·9
Isle of Wight	391	2·1	50	0·7	85	0·8
Kent	6,008	2·4	1,177	0·9	1,221	1·2
Lancashire	6,556	2·8	1,316	1·0	2,057	2·4
Leicestershire	N/a	N/a	1,023	1·3	761	1·2
Lincolnshire	2,810	3·1	618	1·3	814	2·2
Norfolk	3,060	2·7	1,104	1·8	1,055	2·6
North Yorkshire	2,193	1·9	617	1·1	616	1·4
Northamptonshire	1,983	1·9	391	0·8	346	0·8
Northumberland	1,200	2·3	231	1·1	328	1·1
Nottinghamshire	1,934	1·2	150	0·2	172	0·3
Oxfordshire	1,521	1·7	276	0·7	250	0·7
Shropshire	2,112	3·0	626	1·8	906	3·4
Somerset	1,594	2·2	359	1·0	477	1·7
Staffordshire	3,699	2·2	760	0·8	542	0·8
Suffolk	2,704	2·7	703	1·6	1,502	3·2
Surrey	4,449	2·8	1,613	2·1	569	1·3
Warwickshire	1,458	1·8	319	0·7	223	0·9
West Sussex	1,930	1·8	384	0·7	332	0·8

LEA	Children for whom a statement is maintained		Pupils with statements in maintained primary and secondary schools			
			Primary		Secondary	
	[2]number	[3]as a percentage of all pupils in schools	number	as a percentage of pupils on the register	number	as a percentage of pupils on the register
Wiltshire	3,419	3·9	1,183	2·5	1,141	3·4
England	176,698	2·3	43,464	1·0	41,558	1·4

[1] Derived from returns received from schools. Includes middle schools as deemed.
[2] Derived from returns received by LEAs. Includes children in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools; non-maintained special and independent schools and children being educated otherwise than in a school.
[3] Divisor includes pupils in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools and non-maintained special and independent schools.
N/a—Information not available for Leicestershire LEA.

EMPLOYMENT

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made appointments to the following bodies in addition to those listed in "Public Bodies 1993":

—The National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets (Appointments made jointly with my right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Education and for Wales)
—The TEC Assessors Committee (Appointments made jointly with my right hon. Friend, the President of the Board of Trade)
—The Certification Officer for Trade Unions and Employers Associations

Appointments have also been made to:

—The Commissioner for Protection Against Unlawful Industrial Action
—Investors in People UK Ltd.

These will be included in the 1994 edition of "Public Bodies".

Part-time Workers

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he intends to take to provide employment protection for part-time workers employed by their existing employer for less then five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Many important rights are enjoyed by all employees, irrespective of hours of work or length of service. The Government are studying carefully the recent House of Lords judgment on the hours thresholds which employees have hitherto had to meet to qualify for the full range of rights. The eight and 16-hour thresholds were put in place by a Labour Administration in 1975 and have not been changed since.

EC Directives

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how his Department meets its obligations under EC directive 75/129/EEC as amended by Council directive 92/56/EEC concerning the consultation period provided for in paragraph 1 to be used by the competent public authority to seek solutions to the problems raised by the projected collective redundancies; how these obligations are met locally in respect of redundancies at a particular establishment; and how these obligations are met nationally where redundancies affect more than one establishment in more than one region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Statutory advance notifications of possible redundancies provided by employers are made available in confidence to the Employment Service, training and enterprise councils—local enterprise companies in Scotland—the Careers Service and other relevant Government Departments in order that assistance can be offered where appropriate to the employers and employees concerned. Such assistance is given most effectively at local level.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what judicial and administrative procedures for the enforcement of obligations under the EC directive 75/129/EEC as amended by Council directive 92/56/EEC are available to *(a)* the representatives of workers and *(b)* workers themselves to ensure that the competent public authority has fulfilled its obligations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The directives confer on workers' representatives a right to be consulted about prospective redundancies and on employers a duty to inform the Employment Department. Consultation rights are enforceable through the industrial tribunals upon a complaint by a recognised trade union. Failure to notify the Department is an offence under section 194 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

Sex Discrimination

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will direct industrial tribunals to sit in private where cases of sexual discrimination are being heard.

Miss Widdecombe: No. The general principle is that complaints of sexual discrimination, like all other complaints to industrial tribunals, should be heard in open court. However, sections 40 and 41 of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993 give industrial tribunals and the employment appeal tribunal new discretionary powers to prevent those making or affected by allegations of sexual misconduct from being identified in media reports.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will seek to amend the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to provide for compensation in cases of unintentional, indirect discrimination.

Miss Widdecombe: This matter is under consideration.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will seek to extend the remedies available under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to include reinstatement and re-engagement.

Miss Widdecombe: The option of recommending reinstatement or re-engagement is already available to industrial tribunals under section 65(1)(c) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and a respondent's failure to comply without reasonable justification may lead to an increase in the amount of compensation awarded.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will expand the support services of the Equal Opportunities Commission in relation to its work for the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Miss Widdecombe: The Equal Opportunities Commission received grant-in-aid of £5·794 million for 1993-94, and will receive £5·949 million in 1994-95. Within the limits set by the Sex Discrimination Act, the EOC determines its own priorities and allocates resources within its overall budget.

Productivity (Rewards)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is Government policy on the rewarding of workers for increases in productivity; to what extent this has occurred; and if he will publish a table showing the percentage increase since 1979 in *(a)* real earnings and *(b)* output per man-hour of (i) male manual workers in manufacturing industry, (ii) white collar workers in the public sector and (iii) other white collar workers, together with an explanation for the difference in each case.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The extent to which workers are rewarded for an increase in productivity is a matter for employers and workers to decide in the light of their particular circumstances.

Information on average weekly earnings of male manual workers in manufacturing industry can be found in table 4 and earnings of non-manual workers in the public and private sectors in table 1 of part A of the "New Earnings Survey" for the years requested. These figures can be converted to real earnings by using the information on the retail prices index—all items—at April, published in table 6.4 of the *Employment Gazette* and in table 26 of the annual supplement to *Economic Trends* for April of earlier years. Copies of the reports can be found in the Library.

The data on output per man-hour for the workers in the sectors requested are not available.

Aerospace Industry

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the aerospace industry in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992; and how many are currently employed in it.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on employees in employment in the aerospace industry is available from the periodic censuses of employment and is given in the following table:

Number of employees in employment in the aerospace industry[1] in Great Britain in September of each year

Year	Number
1981	185,000
1984	164,700
1987	158,200
1989	163,400
1991	147,400

[1] Activity Heading 3640 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what length of cable in metres was damaged in the fire in the channel tunnel which occurred on 13 November 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand that approximately 600 m of cable was affected to some extent; only 20 m was seriously affected.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, columns *122-23*, if he will place in the Library the reports on the fire in the channel tunnel on 13 November 1993 referred to in his answer.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Disclosure of the report of the investigation into this incident by the Health and Safety Executive is restricted under section 28 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which prohibits the disclosure of information without the consent of the person providing it, except where disclosure would be for the purposes of the functions of the Health and Safety Commission, the HSE or other enforcing authorities.

Disclosure of Eurotunnel's report to the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority on the same incident is a matter for it.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service Salaries

Mr. Radice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the information on civil service salaries given in the *Official Report* of 20 January 1993, columns *254-57*, in answer to the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram).

Mr. Dorrell: New pay arrangements have been introduced for these grades. There are therefore no salaries exactly equivalent to those given in the previous reply.

The nearest equivalents for 1993 are as follows:

Grade	[1]Salary £	[2]Percentage of average earnings
AA	[3]8,878	53·9
AO	[3]10,632	64·5
EO	[3]14,307	86·8
HEO	[3]17,895	108·6
Grade 7	[4]29,338	178·0

[1] National pay scales applying to civil servants outside London.
[2] Percentage of gross national earnings calculated on the basis of New Earnings Survey figures, which include overtime and allowances.
[3] Standard pay, as at 1 April 1993.
[4] The old scale maximum (as at 1 April 1992) increased by the across-the-board increase of 3·9 per cent. payable from 1 August 1992, plus a settlement of 1·5 per cent. payable from 1 August 1993.

Staff can earn higher salaries through good, or better performance.

EC Budget

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his best estimate of member states' net contributions to the EC Budget in 1993, after the United Kingdom rebate; and what is his estimate for 1994 on the basis of the latest draft proposed EU Budget, taking account of the latest estimate of the United Kingdom's rebate for 1994.

Sir John Cope: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury gave on 13 January, *Official Report*, column *246*.

Public Works Loans Board

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes are proposed in the quotas for lending to local authorities by the Public Works Loan Board.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Public Works Loan Commissioners have issued a circular today notifying local authorities of a change in the formula for calculating the quotas for 1994-95. The change reflects the Government's continued concern about the level of investments held by some authorities and the amount of market borrowing undertaken or proposed. A lower rate of interest will be payable on the majority of the quota. Interest rates on that amount of the quota equal to an authority's provison for credit liabilities will continue to be set near to, but just below, market rates.

A copy of the circular has been placed in the House Library.

Chargeable Gains (Sheltering)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the current legislation which prevents companies in a group from sheltering chargeable gains with losses which are brought in by a company joining the group.

Mr. Dorrell: Two defects in the provisions which restrict the set-off of pre-entry capital losses have been identified. The first defect allows groups of companies to side-step the provisions by transferring within the group any assets with unrealised losses which have been brought into the group. The second defect may allow one group to avoid the provisions by buying a company with an unrealised loss, carrying out a series of transactions within the group and then selling the company to a second group before the loss is realised.

The Government have tabled a new clause to the Finance Bill to correct these two defects. The new rules will apply to disposals made on or after today.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fish Farms

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether commercial fish farms have settling out tanks for solids produced and what supervision of disposal of these solids is carried out.

Mr. Ancram: The majority of fish farms have settling tanks. These tanks are inspected biannually by Department of Agriculture fisheries inspectors. There is no supervision of the disposal of solids.

Farming

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the figures in hectares for *(a)* set-aside, *(b)* pulses and *(c)* oilseed rape and cereals for 1989, 1990 and 1991 which were used to calculate the base rate for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The hectarage figures used to calculate Northern Ireland regional base area for cereals, including proteins—that is, pulses—oilseeds and set-aside are as follows:

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*Average*
Cereals (including forage maize and proteins)	52,907	50,081	51,299	51,429
Oilseeds	922	1,223	1,151	1,099
Set-Aside	172	248	334	251
Total Northern Ireland Regional Base Area:				52,779

The total hectarage of proteins grown in Northern Ireland is insignificant. These are included within the cereals total.

Fishing (Conflicts of Interest)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he will take to ensure that no conflict of interest arises where a commercial fisherman holds a licence to fish, a dealers' licence to buy and sell and a bailiff's warrant to enforce the Fisheries Acts.

Mr. Ancram: Powers contained in the Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966 will be invoked as necessary should such a conflict of interest arise. The Act empowers the Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland to revoke licences or object to the issue of a bailiff's warrant.

Dentistry

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the amount spent per child on general dental services, including in the calculation those not registered with a general dental practitioner.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is contained in the table.

(a) Gross expenditure (£000)	*(b) Number of registered children*	*(c) Number of children in the population*	*(d) Cost per registered child (£)*	*(e) Cost per child in the population (£)*
£13,146,890	285,646	463,835	£46·02	£28·34

Notes:

1. The gross expenditure on general dental services (GDS) in column *(a)* comprises capitation payments, child item of services payments for treatments given under capitation, and child item of service payments for treatments given on an occasional basis. Data is for the financial year 1992-93.
2. Data in column *(b)* is the number of children registered with a General Dental Practitioner (GDP) at September 1992.

3. Data in column *(c)* is for June 1992.
4. Children may also be treated in the Community and Hospital Dental Service as well as in the General Dental Services.
5. There is also some non-fee expenditure on general dental services (eg reimbursement of non-domestic rates, maternity payments, and employers' superannuation payments) which cannot be apportioned between child and adult treatments. In the financial year 1992-93, this represented 4 per cent. of expenditure on the GDS.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *935*, if he will make a statement concerning the effectiveness of the Crown Prosecution Service regional public awareness campaign, as measured by the amount of editorial coverage in newspapers, radio and television.

The Attorney-General: The campaign began on 17 January in the south-west and will continue, region by region, until the end of April.

To date 50 local newspapers, with a combined circulation of 2,309,000, have reported on the campaign and the work of the service. The CPS has been notified of 27 reports about its campaign on local radio and television.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *935*, what was the estimated and actual cost of the Crown Prosecution Service regional public awareness campaign.

The Attorney-General: The estimated cost of the campaign for the current financial year is £25,500 and £2,500 for the part falling in 1994-95. Actual cost cannot be ascertained until the campaign has been concluded.

HEALTH

"The Best Sex Guide"

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the total cost of the production and distribution of the Health Education Authority magazine entitled, "The Best Sex Guide"; how many copies were produced; and what methods of distribution were used;

(2) what steps were taken to obtain parental advice on the editorial content and design of the Health Education Authority magazine "The Best Sex Guide"; and what control she expects parents to exercise over the distribution of this magazine to their children;

(3) what consultations she has had regarding the consistency of the method of distribution of the Health Education Authority magazine "The Best Sex Guide" with Government policy;

(4) what age group was targeted by the Health Education Authority with the magazine, "The Best Sex Guide"; and who was responsible for the editorial content.

Mr. Sackville: "The Best Sex Guide" magazine was produced by the Health Education Authority in collaboration with BBC Radio 1. It was aimed at young people of 16 and over. A total of 500,000 copies were distributed direct to young people on and around World AIDS Day 1993, 1 December, through a 24-hour event at Tower Records, Piccadilly, at some licensed concert and music venues and some colleges and health promotion units for use at their discretion. Production and distribution of the leaflet cost £83,000. The content and style, developed by the HEA, was based on consultation with Radio 1 about the needs of their audience and the HEA's general research into the views of young people and parents. The HEA produces a range of material targeted at specific population groups to address the requirement of the Government strategy on preventing unwanted pregnancies, the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Ministers were not consulted in advance on this publication. There is a clear public health responsibility to give advice on safer sex to those who have chosen to become sexually active in their late teens outside a stable relationship. While this publication was aimed at that group alone, the HEA will obviously need to take account of the wider public reaction in taking forward health promotion in this very sensitive field.

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the Health Education Authority has spent in producing "The Best Sex Guide".

Mr. Sackville: "The Best Sex Guide" magazine was produced by the Health Education Authority in collaboration with BBC Radio 1. Production and distribution costs were £83,000 with the BBC contributing some further funding to the production of the booklet.

Severance Payments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of irregular severance payments have been reported to her Department since 1989; and what was the amount paid in each of those years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department is aware of one payment of £78,000 in 1992-93. In addition, the Department is examining other severance payments to ensure that they are fully regular.

NHS Fraud

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will request the Audit Commission to publish a report each year on fraud within health authorities and trusts.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to do so. The Audit Commission makes independent decisions on its work and publication programme.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *623*, if she will place in the Library copies of the market research results referred to.

Mr. Sackville: Market, survey and creative research commissioned by the Department of Health is used as an aid to management decision making when planning publicity campaigns. We have no plans to make management information of this kind generally available.

Amniocentesis Tests

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines her Department issues to doctors carrying out amniocentesis tests solely to identify the sex of a baby; what requirement there is to keep confidential the findings of such tests; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health has not issued guidance to doctors carrying out amniocentesis tests. This is a matter for the clinical judgment of the professionals concerned in each individual case.

All persons involved in the collection and handling of personal health information, including the results of amniocentesis tests, have a legal duty to preserve the confidentiality of that information.

Information obtained by the national health service about patients in the course of their care and treatment is confidential to the NHS. The NHS has a duty held in common law to prevent any unnecessary disclosure of this information, which would represent a breach of confidence. Disclosure of information to the patient concerned, however, would not represent a breach of confidence. Whether or not to do so, again, is a matter for the clinical judgment of the professional concerned.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what reviews are undertaken by her Department of abortion regulations and guidance following the deaths of mothers during or due to abortion;

(2) whether her officials automatically inspect private abortion clinics or hospitals following the death of women treated in such facilities.

Mr. Sackville: All reported deaths following termination of pregnancy in places approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967, as amended, are investigated by the Department and any necessary follow-up action is taken.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reports she receives of individual mothers' deaths caused by abortion.

Mr. Sackville: Details of maternal deaths, including those from legal termination, are reported and published triennially in the "Report on Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths in the United Kingdom", copies of which are available in the Library. Also, private sector places approved by the Secretary of State under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967, as amended, are required to notify the Department immediately if any death occurs during or after an abortion operation.

Maternity Units

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether her Department provides national guidelines for minimum standards of comfort and hygiene in maternity units.

Mr. Sackville: No specific guidelines are issued, but a key objective for the national health service management is to create a clean, safe and healthy environment in our hospitals in which the community can be confident that it is receiving a quality service and the best health care possible.

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many agency chief executives in her Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Hospital Beds, London

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in the accident and emergency departments in *(a)* King's College hospital, *(b)* Bart's, *(c)* Guy's, *(d)* St. Thomas's, *(e)* the Royal Free, *(f)* Whittington and *(g)* University College hospital were unable to be accommodated in beds in wards suitable for their conditions on the day on which they were admitted for the week beginning 28 February.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is the responsibility of national health service trusts and authority boards to make appropriate provision for accident and emergency cases including short term fluctuations in the emergency workload. Sir Duncan Nichol wrote to NHS managers in January making this a priority issue. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairmen of the trusts and authroities for detailed information on the arrangements they have made and the weekly performance of the hospitals concerned.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is provided in the letter of appointment of non-executive directors of health authorities and trusts as to the approxmiate time commitment expected.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the salary of non-executive directors of health authorities and trusts is abated for absence due to *(a)* sickness and *(b)* other reasons.

Dr. Mawhinney: Non-executive members of health authorities and trusts receive annual remuneration of £5,000. This is not abated for non-attendance at board meetings, but continued membership of the board may be terminated if satisfactory reasons are not given for non-attendance for six months.

Blood Transfusion

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in arranging the transfer of regional transfusion centres from regional health authorities to the National Blood Authority.

Mr. Sackville: I have laid before the House an order to give the National Blood Authority functions relating to the collection, screening and processing of blood for supply to the national health service, and regulations making consequential changes to the functions of the regional health authorities when regional transfusion centres transfer to the National Blood Authority from 1 April 1994.

From that date we shall have an integrated blood service under the National Blood Authority. It will be responsible for planning and managing the service as a whole, for maintaining the very high standards of safety and quality of our blood service, and enhancing its efficiency.

Nursing and Midwifery

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been given to the English National Board for Nursing and Midwifery regarding the terms and conditions of redundancy and severance in respect of senior management of the board and those staff working at regional level subject to redundancy arising out of the transfer of functions to London; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Departmental officials wrote on 10 December 1993 indicating that ex gratia payments above £5,000 would require the Department's approval.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what powers the English National Board for Nursing and Midwifery has to change previously applicable terms and conditions in relation to redundancy of staff; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what direction she has given to the English National Board for Nursing and Midwifery in relation to the severance payments to be made in the light of the transfer of staff from Sheffield to London;

(3) what proposals have been made to change the terms and conditions of severance payments previously applicable in the case of the closure and redundancies of staff at the Sheffield office of the English National Board for Nursing and Midwifery and the transfer of functions to London.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Research and Development

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress she has made in developing a comprehensive research and development strategy for the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: The national health service research and development strategy was launched in April 1991. "Research for Health", published in June 1993 under press release H93/824, sets out the evolution of the programme and progress to that date. Copies of the press release are available in the Library.

Since then the Central Research and Development Committee has identified NHS R and D priorities in three further areas which cover physical and complex disabilities, the interface between primary and secondary care, and health technology assessment. R and D priorities in the areas of cancer services, diabetes, dentistry and mother and child health are currently being identified. Work has been commissioned in mental health and cardiovascular disease and stroke, and programmes of work in HTA, physical and complex disabilities and the primary/secondary care interface are now being developed. The first project in the mental health R and D programme was recently completed.

For the first time, NHS research projects are being registered on a national basis, and two complementary centres have been established to provide research evidence systematically to the service. These will support the R and D strategy in the new NHS as it continues to provide the basis for improvements in the approach to health care adopted by NHS managers, health professionals and those using the service.

Nurse Prescribing

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress she has made in introducing powers for nurses to prescribe.

Mr. Sackville: Primary legislation was enacted in 1992 —the Medicinal Products: Prescription by Nurses etc. Act 1992. Work is currently in hand to introduce the necessary subordinate legislation which should enable nurse prescribing to commence in demonstration sites from October 1994.

NHS Management

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what goals she has set for the employment of women in professional and managerial posts in the national health service; and what progress is being made towards them;

(2) what mechanisms she has established to monitor how effectively the goals for the employment of women in professional and managerial posts in the national health service are being reached.

Mr. Sackville: The NHS women's unit was established by the national health service management executive in October 1991 to take forward the implementation of Opportunity 2000 in the NHS. The management executive has set a series of eight goals for the NHS for achievement by 1994 which specify targets in management, accountancy, appointment of medical staff, appointment of non-executive board members, access to training and development and the encouragement of flexible working.

The role of the NHS women's unit is to establish national strategies and give guidance on priorities, agree and monitor performance targets for Opportunity 2000 in the NHS, recognise good performance and intervene to correct poor performance and encourage innovation and the dissemination of good practice.

Goal 1. Increase the number of women in general management posts from 18 per cent. in 1991 to 30 per cent. in 1994.

38 per cent. (58 out of 154) of vacant Chief Executive/General Manager posts in the 22 months between April 1992 and January 1994 went to women.

Goal 2. Increase the number of qualified women accountants in the NHS to 35 per cent. by 1994.

Almost 50 per cent. of trainee accountants are women. If all female trainees currently studying achieve success in their examinations this number will rise to 33 per cent.

Goal 3. Increase the percentage of women consultants from 15·5 per cent. in 1991 to 20 per cent. by 1994 necessitating an annual increase of 10 per cent. Accelerate the rate of increase in the number of women consultants in surgical specialities from the current 9·7 per cent. per annum to 15 per cent. per annum

Four regions have already exceeded the 1994 target.

Goal 4. Increase the representation of women as members of authorities and trusts from 29 per cent. in 1991 to 35 per cent. in 1994.

The 1994 target has already been exceeded. Ministers expect to maintain this progress with fourth wave trust appointments.

Goal 5. Introduce a programme allowing women aspiring to management positions to go through a development centre with a view to establishing their own personal development needs.

Goal 6. Introduce initiatives on recruitment and retention to ensure that the number of qualified nurses and midwives leaving the profession does not rise.

Goal 7. Ensure that following maternity leave or a career break all women, including those returning to nursing part-time or as a job share, are able to return at a grade commensurate with their leaving grade and to work of a similar status.

Goal 8. Monitor the time taken for nurses to reach management positions to ensure that men and women have equal access to these positions.

Progress on goals 5 to 8. These goals are about good employment practice. Authorities and trusts are addressing local needs in individual action plans. Over 50 per cent. of health authorities and trusts provide some form of help with child care provision and flexible working.

NHS Information Service

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in establishing a national health service information service for patients.

Mr. Sackville: In April 1992 all regional health authorities established a regional health information service under the patients charter.

On 26 January 1993 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State launched the new health information service when the regional services were linked together into a national network on a freephone number, 0800 665544.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in ensuring that comparative information about the health standards achieved by health authorities is available to the public.

Dr. Mawhinney: As part of the citizens charter initiative, we will be publishing the first set of national health service comparative performance tables later in the year. The tables will give information to the public about the quality of service offered by individual hospitals and trusts. Achieving consistently high success rates on patients charter standards, for instance, is an indication of a well-managed, patient-focused hospital. The first set of performance tables will include information about performance on five patients charter activities and on selected day surgery procedures.

District health authorities already publish annual reports for the public giving comparative information on the patients charter performance of hospitals and trusts with which they hold contracts.

Comparative information about health authorities has been published since 1983 in the health service indicators. It includes indicators of morbidity, mortality and outcome measures and is available to the NHS and, on request, to members of the public. Copies of the health service indicators are placed annually in the Library.

Amenity Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the facilities to which amenity bed patients are entitled.

Mr. Sackville: Amenity beds are defined in section 63 of the National Health Service Act 1977 as accommodation made available for patients who give an undertaking to pay charges, for accommodation in single rooms or small wards which are not for the time being needed by any patient on medical grounds. The charges represent the notional cost of the additional privacy of a small room or a small ward.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much income was generated by amenity beds in each year since 1979 in the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Year	*Amenity bed income £ thousands*
1979-80	224
1980-81	239
1981-82	241
1982-83	369
1983-84	389
1984-85	345
1985-86	409
1986-87	454
1987-88	621
1988-89	764
1989-90	1,013
1990-91	1,260
1991-92	2,022
1992-93	1,776

Source: Annual accounts and receipts and payments returns for regional health authorities, district health authorities and London postgraduate special health authorities.

Notes:

1. Amenity bed income received by national health service trusts is omitted as it is not possible to separately identify it.
2. The 1991-92 and 1992-93 figures are taken from the receipts and payments returns and are not therefore comparable with those of earlier years.
3. The figures for 1992-93 are provisional.

Health Visitors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many students enrolled on health visitor qualification courses in each year since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Year ending 31 March	*Entries to training*
1991	753
1992	694
1993	684

Source: English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting Annual Report 1992-93 Table 5-3.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health visitors were employed by the NHS in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is shown in the table. In addition, during the period 30 September 1988 to 30 September 1992 the number of practice nurses increased by 162 per cent. from 3,480 to 9,120.

Year	*Health visitors*
1981	9,530
1982	9,810
1983	10,040
1984	9,700
1985	10,680
1986	10,800
1987	10,730
1988	10,680
1989	10,050
1990	10,480
1991	10,380
1992	10,250

Source: Non-Medical Workforce Census.

Notes:

1. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 whole time equivalents.
2. Figures for 1989 have to be treated with caution due to under recording of areas of work by South East Thames regional health authority.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's policy on the number of health visitors.

Mr. Sackville: Staffing levels are the responsibility of local managers who, with advice from professional representatives, are in the best position to consider the amount and type of work to be done. It is for them to use the best skills on offer to deliver a high quality service whatever the background discipline.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the areas where the numbers of health visitors is proposed to be cut by FHSAs.

Mr. Sackville: Family health service authorities do not normally employ health visitors. Health visitors are usually employed by trusts or directly managed units. District health authorities and general practitioner fund holders usually commission health visitor services.

Health Education Authority

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to publish the report of the Lee review of the Health Education Authority.

Mr. Sackville: The report of the review of the Health Education Authority undertaken by Mr. John Lee and his team is still being considered. A decision about publication of the report has yet to be taken.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what present regulations or guidance govern the freedom of the Health Education Authority to criticise Government policy.

Mr. Sackville: Jointly agreed guidelines covering the relationship between the Department of Health and the Health Education Authority, including the balance between the authority's autonomy and freedom of action, and the need to exercise that autonomy within parameters acceptable to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State were last revised in June 1990. Copies will be placed in the Library.

Oral Health

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures are being taken, or are planned, to address geographical and social imbalances in the state of oral health.

Dr. Mawhinney: Planning dental services and monitoring the dental health of the population are matters for district health authorities to undertake jointly with family health services authorities.

Mentally Ill People (Assaults)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many severely mentally ill people were responsible for violent assaults on the person in each year since 1990.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Private Health Insurance

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *860*, about meeting with representatives of private health insurance companies, if she will name the people attending the meetings or list the topics for discussion at each of the five meetings.

Mr. Sackville: All five meetings were held at the request of private health insurance companies, to allow them to express views on a number of issues. One of the meetings was attended by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health, one by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (John Bowis) and I attended three. Officials were also present.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *857*, what recommendations she has made regarding the inclusion of questions on private medical insurance in the 1995 general household survey.

Mr. Sackville: None.

"Help Us to Help You"

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what mechanisms she has set up to monitor progress of the "Help Us to Help You" campaign;

(2) what plans she has to invest further money in publicity for the "Help Us to Help You" campaign through the popular media and advertising.

Dr. Mawhinney: The "Help Us to Help You" initiative takes the form of an information pack primarily designed to encourage the development of local campaigns. It is for the national health service locally to decide how to implement and monitor the progress of local campaigns. No central record is kept of resources used for publicity on local campaigns.

Dental Services

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the amount spent per child on general dental services including in the calculation those not registered with a general dental practitioner.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table.

Child dental services

	Numbers Totals
(a) Gross expenditure (£000)	259,302
(b) Number of registered children	7,103,355
(c) Number of children in the population	10,951,170
(d) Cost per registered child (£)	36·50
(e) Cost per child in the population (£)	23·68

Notes:

1. The gross expenditure on general dental services (GDS) in column (a) comprises capitation payments, weighted entry payments, child item of service payments for treatments given under capitation, and child item of service payments for treatments given on an occasional basis in the financial year 1992-93.
2. Column (b) is the number of children registered with a general dental practioner (GDP) at 30 September 1992.
3. Column (c) is for 30 June 1992, estimated home population under 18.

4. Column (d) is calculated by dividing the figure in column (a) by that in (b).

5. Column (e) is calculated by dividing the figure in column (a) by that in (c).

6. Children may also be treated in the Community and Hospital Dental Service as well as in the GDS. Children who are not registered with a GDP can still receive GDS treatment on an occasional basis.

7. There is also some non-fee expenditure on general dental services (eg reimbursement of non-domestic rates, maternity payments, and employer's superannuation payments) which cannot be apportioned between child and adult treatments. In the financial year 1992-93, this represented approximately four per cent. of expenditure on the GDS.

Hospital Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many additional medium secure beds, respite care or haven type beds and general psychiatric beds will now be made available.

Mr. Bowis: On 31 January 1993 there were 635 places available in medium secure units and a further 250 interim medium secure places. The Government have invested over £45 million from centrally held funds for capital development in this area since 1991-92. Together with additional funds made available by health authorities, this will provide approximately 500 further places over the next two or three years. Future levels of provision will be considered in the light of assessments of need undertaken within regions. In 1980 there were 30 such places.

It is for health authorities to decide how best to meet the needs of their residents, including those who suffer from mental health problems. This would include sufficient in-patient facilities for those who need admission to hospital on either a short or long-term basis.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *165*, if she will list by region name and each proposed hospital whose closure was contested by the community health councils since 1988; whether the hospital closed, merged, changed its function or was downsized; and what was the number of beds each hospital had at its closure date.

Mr. Sackville: The details requested are not routinely provided to the Department during the process for dealing with contested closures. The information requested by the hon. Member could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide the latest estimates of the percentage of children under five in each OECD country who have full-time or part-time child care places, including nursery school places.

Mr. Bowis: Information on child care places for under-fives in the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development countries is not available. The OECD published in 1993 *Education at a Glance*, a copy of which is available in the Library. This includes information on participation rates for children aged under five in early childhood education in general for OECD countries.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Turkey

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) which matters were raised during General Ilter's visit to the United Kingdom;

(2) what was the purpose of the visit of General Ilter, Commander of the Turkish Gendarmerie, to Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: General Ilter visited the United Kingdom for discussion of topics of common interest with Home Office, Customs and Excise and the Ministry of Defence. In Northern Ireland he was briefed on the principles underlying our security policy there.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the matter of human rights abuses in Turkey was raised with General Ilter, Commander of the Turkish Gendarmerie, during his visit to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: Yes. Every opportunity was taken to remind General Ilter that terrorism should be tackled within the rule of law and with full respect for human rights.

EU Intergovernmental Conference

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify the stages leading to the European Union intergovernmental conference in 1996.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Article N of the Maastricht treaty provides that

"a conference of representatives of the Governments of the Member States shall be convened in 1996"

to review certain provisions of the treaty. Discussion of preparations for the conference has not yet begun.

Management Systems

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department's computer-aided facilities management system cost; from whom they were purchased; how many person hours were required to commission them; what the estimated and actual saving has been from their operation; and to what extent the use of such systems accounts for the apparent rise in theft noted in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *768*.

Mr. Goodlad: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Overseas Development Administration use computer applications to provide effective management of computer assets and support costs. The FCO package, from Uni-Tech Ltd., cost approximately £30,000 and took five person weeks to implement. The ODA system, from Workgroup Systems Ltd., cost approximately £18,000 and took two person weeks to implement. It is not possible to identify savings resulting from the improved levels of support to computer users. However, the systems provide improved control of an inventory of some 23,000 items of equipment in the FCO and some 3,000 items in the ODA. None of the thefts referred to can be attributable to the use of these systems.

Mr. Veljko Dzakula

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to seek the freedom of Serbian politician, Veljko Dzakula, from detention by the Krajina police in a prison in Glina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We understand that Mr. Dzakula was released on 24 February.

China

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made as to which Chinese national organisations are independent of Communist party influence and control.

Mr. Goodlad: Our assessment is that most, if not all, public organisations in China are subject to a degree of control by the Communist party.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Malaysia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) of 25 February, *Official Report*, column 498, if he will now make it his policy to make financial and contractual arrangements of soft loans for overseas aid and development projects the subject of a formal announcement.

Mr. Goodlad: The signature of all new soft loan arrangements—umbrella agreements—and individual soft loan projects are usually announced through an ODA press release. However, the detailed financial and contractual agreements between Her Majesty's Government and the recipient Government contains commercially sensitive information and are therefore not the subject of formal announcement.

Consultants

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what access to financial records is afforded to consultants appointed by the Overseas Development Administration to evaluate the financial soundness of companies chosen to fulfil contracts, pursuant to aid and trade financial support *(a)* before the final award of the contract, *(b)* during the fulfilment of the contract and *(c)* on completion of the contract.

Mr. Goodlad: The ODA does not appoint consultants to assess the financial soundness of companies applying for aid and trade provision support. Such assessments are the responsibility of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Indonesia

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has received regarding British aid to Indonesia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We have received 196 letters about British aid to Indonesia since 1 January 1994.

Philippines

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what counter-trade agreements with the Philippines the Overseas Development Administration has been involved in since 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Goodlad: None.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will bring forward proposals to revise the operation of the national lottery to provide that it will return all profits to the community in the form of funding for the arts, charities, and sport, to exempt the profits from tax and to match distributed profits with grants from public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have no intention of revising the basis for the operation of the national lottery, which was approved by Parliament in the National Lottery etc. Act 1993. There is no question of matching the sums raised from the national lottery with further Exchequer grants. Taxation is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

WALES

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives the Welsh Office has brought forward to reduce fuel consumption in transport as part of the effort to reduce carbon dioxide emissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government's programme to reduce CO_2 emissions is set out in the recently published report "Climate Change: The UK Programme". This includes a range of measures to improve fuel efficiency which apply in Wales as elsewhere.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what guidelines he has issued to non-departmental public bodies regarding the admission of the public to meetings; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish the arrangements made by each non-departmental public body appointed by him to enable members of the public to have access to agendas, minutes and reports of such bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: All executive non-departmental public bodies publish annual reports and accounts which are laid before Parliament. The conduct of meetings is a matter for the bodies themselves, subject to the provisions of their founding statutes or charters.

Welsh Language

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to consult the Welsh Language Board in future on all developments concerning the national curriculum in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Language Board is currently being consulted on the draft regulations required to give effect to the proposal to suspend the national curriculum requirements for Welsh as a second language in non-Welsh speaking schools for pupils aged 14 to 16 until 1999. It is also being consulted on the draft order giving effect to the other proposed changes to the national curriculum for pupils of this age group.

The board will be consulted in due course on the proposed changes resulting from the slimming down of the overall subject content of the national curriculum currently being carried out by the Curriculum Council for Wales.

On 1 April this year Awdurdod Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru/the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales will come into being. ACAC will have regard to the board's views in formulating its advice to the Secretary of State on future developments and changes to the national curriculum in Wales.

It is open to the board to give advice to the Secretary of State on any matter concerning the Welsh language at any time.

Later this month the Welsh Office will be issuing a short guide describing the various statutory agencies' responsibilities for aspects of Welsh language education. A copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the statutory basis for the requirement that landowners with sites of special scientific interest on their land enter into a management agreement with the Countryside Council for Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Management agreements made under section 15 of the Countryside Act 1968 between the Countryside Council for Wales and owners or occupiers of sites of special scientific interest are voluntary, not mandatory.

Dentistry

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the amount spent per child on general dental services, including in the calcualtion those not registered with a general dental practitioner.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is shown in the following table.

(a) Gross expenditure	*(b) Number of registered children*	*(c) Number of children in the population*	*(d) Cost per registered child*	*(e) Cost per child in the population*
(£000)			*£*	*£*
15,554	421,595	666,664	36·89	23·33

Notes

1. The gross expenditure on general dental services (GDS) in column (a) comprises capitation payments, weighted entry payments, child item of service payments for treatments given under capitation, and child item of service payments for treatments given on an occasional basis, for the financial year 1992-93.
2. Column (b) is the number of children registered with a general dental practitioner at 30 September 1992.
3. Column (c) is for 30 June 1992, estimated home population under 18.
4. Column (d) is calculated by dividing the figure in column (a), by that in (b).
5. Column (e) is calculated by dividing the figure of column (a), by that in (c).
6. Children may also be treated in the Community and Hospital Dental Service as well as in the General Dental Service.

Local Authority Tenants

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to lay regulations to give force to the new right to manage for local authority tenants.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Housing (Right to Manage) Regulations 1994 which have been laid before Parliament today implement the citizens charter commitment to give local authority tenants' organisations a statutory right to manage their own homes.

The right to manage will allow properly constituted and representative tenants organisations to assume housing management functions. This is another part of the process of devolving control to the most local level and thus enabling people to have greater control over their own lives. The new right means that tenant management organisations can grasp the benefits of greater cost control, local accountability and responsive services. I hope to see an increasing number of tenant organisations in Wales managing council housing over the next few years.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes she intends to make to the compensation arrangements for bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Soames *[pursuant to the reply, 21 January, Official Report, col. 855]:* An order which will modify the BSE compensation arrangements as outlined in the announcement of 21 January was laid before both Houses today. The order will come into force on 1 April 1994.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Philippines (Counter-trade Agreements)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what counter-trade agreements with the Philippines his Department has been involved in since 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: My Department has not been involved in any counter-trade agreements with the Philippines. That would be a commercial matter for the exporter.

Life Assurance

Mr. Darling: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ask the Securities and Investments Board to publish guidelines on the investment of life assurance funds, with particular reference to investment of such funds in wholly owned subsidiaries of such institutions.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The responsibilities of the SIB in relation to life insurance under the Financial Services Act relate primarily to marketing and the provision of advice to clients.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has powers relating to the maintenance of adequate solvency in

insurance companies. The regulations do not generally seek to limit the investments an insurance company may make, but may restrict the extent to which they are admissible as part of the required solvency margin.

Petrol

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recommendations have been circulated within the Government from the DTI regarding altering the tax differential between leaded and unleaded petrol; and what implications these recommendations have for the Government's commitment to sustainable development.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No such recommendations have been made. I am, however, interested in the question of cost-benefit analyses of Government decisions, including the case of the excise duty differential in favour of unleaded petrol.

Gas

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the cost of gas supplied to his Department for heating purposes in each of the past two years.

Mr. Eggar: The cost of gas for the year 1992-93 was £998,598. This figure is for all gas consumption, not only for heating. Information for 1991-92 is not available.

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the gas used by his Department is now purchased from independent suppliers; and what have been the consequent effects on public expenditure.

Mr. Eggar: Thirty-one per cent. of the gas used in DTI's nine headquarters buildings is purchased from independent suppliers producing an estimated saving in the first year of £7,700.

Headquarters buildings account for about 20 per cent. of the Department's gas consumption. Information about supply arrangements outside the headquarters estate is not available centrally.

Rolls-Royce

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much Rolls-Royce has received in launch aid since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since 1979 the Department has provided £458·4 million in launch aid to Rolls-Royce.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 14 March 1994

NATIONAL FINANCE

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by each of his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Nelson: Disaggregated information of this sort could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of new furniture for each private office in his Departments during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Nelson: The cost of new furniture in the Chancellor's office was £1,150. There was no expenditure on new furniture in other private offices.

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many agency chief executives in his Departments are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Dorrell: One agency chief executive in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Departments is paid more than £82,925 per year, excluding performance-related bonuses. The person in question was recruited directly to the post from outside the civil service.

Exchequer Property

Mr. Enright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what property, leased or owned for the purposes of the Exchequer, is not in current use.

Mr. Nelson: None. All the properties occupied and used by the Treasury form part of the Government's common user estate which is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for the Environment, who will answer in respect of that property. The Treasury has no other property holdings.

Inflation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what steps the Government are taking to prevent inflation in asset prices from spreading to goods and services;

(2) what assessment the Government have made of the inflationary effect of increases in house prices; and what steps the Government intend to take to prevent house prices from rising further in 1994.

Mr. Nelson: The Government are committed to low inflation and will continue to conduct monetary policy so as to deliver their inflation target.

Monetary policy decisions are based on assessments of a range of monetary and other indicators, including house prices and other asset prices. Asset price movements have in the past been valuable leading indicators of inflation, but the Government do not rely on any single indicator.

As stated in the 1994-95 "Financial Statement and Budget Report," while some recovery in house prices is expected in 1994, inflation is still forecast to remain within the Government's target range.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent the Government distinguish between asset inflation, cost-push inflation and demand-pull inflation for the purposes of fiscal and monetary policy; and which of the three principally characterised inflation between 1987 and 1990.

Mr. Nelson: The Government's monetary policy is set to deliver low inflation irrespective of its cause. Figures on a wide range of monetary and other indicators are monitored, including asset prices, earnings, other input prices and activity. These are published regularly in the monthly monetary report, which has included charts for the period referred to.

PSBR

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the proportions and the amounts of the public sector borrowing requirement funded by the trading banks for each year since 1985 in the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy; and what amount of United Kingdom gilts in each year were purchased and held by *(a)* banks, *(b)* pension funds and *(c)* other financial institutions.

Mr. Nelson: Data on Government financing by type of debt holder are published by the International Monetary Fund in its "Government Finance Statistics Yearbook". This covers the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy. More detailed sectoral analyses of United Kingdom gilt transactions are published by the Bank of England in its "Statistical Abstract".

Value Added Tax

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many collection staff were working for the Inland Revenue in each year since 1980 *(a)* in London and the south-east and *(b)* in the United Kingdom as a whole in the area of value added tax.

Mr. Dorrell: No Inland Revenue staff are employed in the area of value added tax. Value added tax is entirely dealt with by Customs and Excise.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the total number of Customs and Excise officers engaged in value added tax inspections in the Doncaster area in each year for the last 10 years;

(2) what was the total number of value added tax inspections carried out in the Doncaster area by Customs and Excise officers in each year for the last 10 years.

Sir John Cope: Information is not available for the whole period requested. For the years to the end of March 1991, March 1992 and March 1993 Doncaster local VAT office assigned 48, 50 and 47 officers respectively to visiting duties. For the year to the end of March 1994, it is expected that 45 officers will be assigned to this work.

A total of 4,088 visits were carried out by those staff in the year ending 31 March 1991, 3,197 in 1992 and 2,956 in 1993. It is planned to complete some 2,500 visits by the end of March 1994. Businesses are selected in accordance with their risk profile which may vary from year to year. Better targeting of resources and the time needed to carry out each visit also has an effect.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of what proportion of the total value added tax revenue is raised in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* England, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

Sir John Cope: Estimated proportions are:

	Per cent.
Wales	4·6
England	85·2
Scotland	8·0
Northern Ireland	2·2

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the outstanding value added tax debt of registered business in the Doncaster area.

Sir John Cope: Information regarding total outstanding value added tax debt is not analysed by geographical areas. Providing this information for the Doncaster area would involve disproportionate cost.

Excise Duties (Evasion)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what basis cases of evasion of duty on imports of wine, spirits or tobacco are dealt with in magistrates courts.

Sir John Cope: Proceedings for such cases may be taken in the magistrates court under sections 170(A) or (B) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979, or under sections 170(1) or (2) of that Act if the magistrates court accepts jurisdiction where it considers its powers of sentencing adequate following representations from Customs and the defendant or his representative.

Sections 170(A) or (B) carry maximum penalties of £5,000. Sections 170(1) or (2) involve fraudulent intent to evade duty and carry maximum penalties of six months' imprisonment and a penalty of £5,000 or three times the value of the goods concerned.

ENVIRONMENT

Rough Sleepers Initiative

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the projects which have received rough sleepers initiative funding during 1993-94, the amounts allocated and the London boroughs in which they are located.

Sir George Young: As part of the rough sleepers initiative in central London my Department has allocated grant aid in 1993-94 under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 to the housing associations and voluntary organisations shown in the following table.

In addition, the Housing Corporation has made capital allocations of £67 million to 23 housing associations to provide at least 1,500 places in permanent accommodation for people who are in hostels or on the streets to move on to.

List of voluntary organisations and housing associations who receive funding through section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 under the Rough Sleepers Initiative in 1993-94

Organisation/ Association	*Project*	*London Borough*	*Total grant (£)*
Alone in London Service	Resettlement Work	Camden	21,000
Arlington HA	Arlington House hostel[1]	Camden	31,000
	Resettlement Work		
Centrepoint	Vauxhall Hostel[1]	Lambeth	894,327
	'Off the Streets'	Westminster	
	Management of PSL properties[1]	Westminster	
	Resettlement Work	Camden/Lambeth/Westminster	
	Soho Square winter shelter	Westminster	
CLHAS	Resettlement Work	Westminster/Camden/Islington	80,467
Crisis	Tooley Street winter shelter	Southwark	216,225
DePaul Trust	Lord Clyde nightshelter[1]	Lambeth	295,211
	Moorhouse Road hostel[1]	Westminster	
	Resettlement Work	Lambeth	
Drink Crisis Centre	Hostel Workers	Lambeth	50,000
English Churches Housing Group	Station Hotel hostel[1]	Camden	880,164
	New To London hostel[1]	Westminster	
	MacNaghten House hostel[1]	Camden	
	Nevern Mansions hostel[1]	Kensington and Chelsea	
	Resettlement Work	Camden/Westminster	
	Allied House winter shelter	Islington	
Homeless Network	Improved Support Project	Westminster	59,000
Housing Services Agency	Managing PSL properties	Camden	273,295
	Clearing Housing Project	Camden	
	Resettlement Work	Camden	
Hyde HA	Private Sector Leasing[1]	Bromley	106,100
London Borough of Camden	Albert Street winter shelter	Camden	79,000

Organisation/ Association	Project	London Borough	Total grant (£)
London Connection	Resettlement Work	Westminster	182,448
London and Quadrant Housing Trust	Private Sector Leasing[1]	Lewisham	89,000
Look Ahead HA	Resettlement Work	Westminster	18,000
Met Office	Weather Forecasting	—	1,463
National Council of YMCAs	West Cromwell Road Hostel[1]	Kensington and Chelsea	74,000
New Horizon Youth Centre	Resettlement Work	Westminster	26,000
North Lambeth Day Centre	Resettlement Work	Lambeth/Southwark	95,730
Notting Hill Housing Trust	Private Sector Leasing Rent Deposit Fund	Kensington and Chelsea	223,000
The Passage	Passage Nightshelter	Westminster	190,000
Providence Row	47/49 Crispin St. hostel[1] 50 Crispin St. hostel[1] Ede House hostel[1] Resettlement Work	City of London City of London Hackney City of London	418,000
Resource Information Service	Information gathering	—	3,180
Riverpoint	Management of PSL properties[1] John Street winter shelter	Hammersmith and Fulham Camden	241,622
St. Mungo Association	Nevern Square hostel[1] Bassett Road hostel Vestry Road hostel[1] Chichester Road hostel[1] City Road hostel[1] Hatton Gardens hostel Siddons Buildings hostel Outreach/Resettlement Work Neville House winter shelter	Kensington and Chelsea Kensington and Chelsea Haringey Brent Islington Islington Westminster Westminster/Lambeth/Camden Westminster	1,205,005
Salvation Army	Outreach/Resettlement Tudor Street winter shelter	Hackney Camden	168,641
SHAC	Hostels Vacancy Information Project	Westminster	114,000
Shaftesbury Society	Lansdowne Centre hostel[1] John Kirk Centre hostel[1] Aldershot Road hostel[1]	Southwark Southwark Brent	171,000
Short Term Leasing	Management of PSL properties[1]	Islington	167,000
South London Family HA	Private Sector Leasing[1]	Lambeth	11,000
Thames Reach	Outreach/Resettlement Work Lincoln's Inn Outreach Team	Southwark Camden	59,000
Threshold HA	Private Sector Leasing[1]	Wandsworth	21,000
West Hampstead HA	Private Sector Leasing[1]	Camden	173,000

[1] These organisations also receive RSI revenue funding from the Housing Corporation.

Use Classes Order

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has completed his review of the working of the use classes order in relation to houses in multiple occupation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environenmt if he will make a statement on the control of the change of use of hotels to hostels by planning authorities.

Mr. Curry: The review has now been completed. The Government are satisfied that there is a real and specific threat to the amenity of tourist areas from the establishment of such hostels in traditional hotel areas. It is investigating the feasibility of legislation to introduce a licensing system for the establishment of hostels.

As a temporary measure pending the introduction of any such licensing scheme, an amending order being made today will amend the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 to require planning permission for the change of use from a hotel to a hostel.

Derelict Land

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the interdepartmental working group on derelict land to report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: There is no interdepartmental working group on derelict land. If, however, the hon. Member is referring to the review of the arrangements for dealing with contaminated land, I refer him to the answer I gave on 8 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *110*.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to complete the register of derelict land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: If the hon. Member is referring to registers of land subject to contaminative uses under section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Government withdrew their proposals on 24 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *633*.

If the hon. Member is referring to the registers of vacant and underused public sector land, these are compiled each year by local authorities and other public bodies. My Department does not have a central register.

Area Cost Adjustment

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for changes to the area cost adjustment.

Mr. Baldry: The area cost adjustment was given extensive consideration during the 1993 review of standard spending assessments. We do, however, wish to look again at the way the adjustment works within the south-east region outside London. We shall be discussing shortly with the local authority associations the 1994 programme of technical work on SSAs.

Wind Farms

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that wind farms are not located in environmentally sensitive areas or in areas of natural beauty.

Mr. Baldry: Planning policy guidance note 22 gives advice on renewable energy projects which local planning authorities should take into account when they consider planning applications for wind farms. This guidance makes it clear that authorities must always weigh the desirability of exploiting a clean, renewable energy resource against the visual impact which the development may have on the landscape.

The PPG also emphasises that particular care should be taken in assessing proposals for developing all renewable projects, including wind farms, in national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty, the Broads and sites of special scientific interest.

Grand Island Gas Scheme

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much grant was paid to British Gas by Greater Manchester development corporation for the development of the Grand Island scheme;

(2) what is the current situation concerning the grant dispute with British Gas for the Grand Island scheme in Manchester.

Mr. Baldry: The Central Manchester development corporation has paid grant of £4,464,940 to British Gas land division. CMDC is now taking steps to recover this grant.

Development Grants

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what checks are made by his Department to ensure that grant levels paid for development purposes are appropriate.

Mr. Baldry: My Department operates a range of grants. Grant schemes have a stipulated set of conditions including monitoring and appraisal requirements.

City Grant

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning possible abuse of grants analogous to city grant which are offered by urban development corporations in their own areas.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Foleshill Gas Works

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether agreement has been reached with British Gas on the appropriate level of grant needed to ensure the development of the Foleshill gas works site in Coventry.

Mr. Baldry: English Partnerships has made a proposal to British Gas, the site owners, under which a grant could be offered for a first phase of development on the Foleshill site. English Partnerships has also suggested a possible joint venture for the development of a second phase.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department spends on child care provision for the under-fives and out-of-school provision for children aged over five either directly, excluding provision for departmental staff, or indirectly through resources made available to local authorities or other organisations; what form of provision is thereby provided; how many places are thereby provided; and if he will make a statement on child care.

Mr. Baldry: The amount included in local authority standard spending assessments for 1994-95 in respect of the education of children under five is £935·2 million. The amount spent by local authorities on provision for child care, and the number of places thereby provided, are matters for individual authorities.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations were made in the development of the single regeneration budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: There has been extensive consultation on draft bidding guidance for the single regeneration budget, both centrally and at local level. Some 10,000 copies of the draft bidding guidance on the single regeneration budget have been distributed; 11 seminars organised by the Department have been held throughout England; and several hundred written responses have been received. The responses will be taken into account in finalising the bidding guidance which is expected to be issued in early April.

Dog Fouling

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what powers individual citizens have to force local authorities to control fouling by dogs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what powers local authorities have to control and deal with dog faeces; what representations he has received to increase those powers; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what plans he has to amend the law to classify dog mess as litter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Under the provisions of part IV of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, local authorities have a duty to keep certain public areas, such as parks and highways, clear of dog faeces. Citizens can apply to a magistrates court for a litter abatement order if a local authority fails to carry out this duty.

Local authorities in England and Wales can also adopt "poop-scoop" byelaws which make it an offence for owners not to clear up after their dogs in designated areas. It is however, for each local authority to decide whether or not to adopt such byelaws.

The Tidy Britain Group and others have proposed replacement of poop-scoop byelaws with national legislation to make it an offence for any person to allow a dog to foul any area to which the public have access. The Department's advisory group on litter is currently considering this proposal as well as the suggestion that dog mess should be defined as litter. The advisory group's report is expected to be completed in the near future.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his office on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Prime Minister in 1990-91 and after 28 November 1990, 1991-92, 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94;

(2) what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his office on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Prime Minister in 1990-91, after 28 November 1990, 1991-92, 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

The Prime Minister: Disaggregated budget information is not available, nor is information for portions of financial years. The outturn for total travel and subsistence costs for domestic and overseas travel recorded in the financial years in question was as follows:

	Domestic travel £	*Overseas travel* £
1990-91	617,943	
1991-92	89,810	860,307
1992-93	71,078	1,190,087

Information on spending in 1993-94 will be available after the end of the financial year.

These figures relate to sums paid in the relevant financial years: in some cases payments may relate to travel in the previous financial year.

No. 10 Downing Street (Costs)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what is the budget for the running cost for the Prime Minister's residence at 10 Downing street for 1994-95; and what was the running cost of 10 Downing street over the last 14 years.

The Prime Minister: Figures on a consistent basis are not available. In 1980-81, recorded spending on 10 Downing street and Chequers on the votes of the Cabinet Office, OPSS, was £1·745 million. In 1981-82, charges were introduced for the use of Ministry of Defence aircraft. Including those charges, spending was £2·415 million in 1981-82 and £2·700 million in 1982-83. In 1983-84, charges were introduced by the Property Services Agency for buildings and services. Including those charges, spending was £3·026 million in 1983-84. In 1984-85, charges were introduced for use of the Government car service and for service personnel at Chequers. Including those charges, spending was £3·787 million in 1984-85 and £4·406 million in 1985-86. In 1986-87, the cost of office services was included in the No. 10 budget. Including those costs, spending since then has been as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1986-87	4·963
1987-88	5·418
1988-89	6·554
1989-90	7·669
1990-91	8·226
1991-92	8·664
1992-93	9·866

An outturn for 1993-94 will be available shortly; it is likely to be around the same level of spending as in 1992-93. The provisional budget for 1994-95 is £9·486 million.

"Back to Basics"

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *849*, what has been the total expenditure to date by the Government on the Government's "back to basics" policy; and how many departmental staff are currently working on the Government's "back to basics" policy.

The Prime Minister: As "back to basics" applies across a range of Government policies, the information which the hon. Gentleman requests could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

"Jimmy Young Programme"

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library a copy of the transcript of his interview of the "Jimmy Young Programme" on BBC Radio 2 broadcast on 7 March; and if he will make a statement on new policy positions announced in the interview.

The Prime Minister: No. The objectives of this Government remain unchanged.

10 Downing Street (Jewellery)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister when the last independent audit of the 10 Downing street jewellery inventory took place; who carried out the audit; and what were the findings.

The Prime Minister: There has been no such audit in recent years, although the items are and have been available for inspection by the auditors in the Cabinet Office or in the National Audit Office. I am satisfied that all the items concerned are in safe-keeping in Number 10.

Ministers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish a list of the number of Ministers in each Department with the numbers of Ministers in each corresponding Department in the period 1964 to 1970; and how the responsibilities of the respective Departments have altered.

The Prime Minister: Current information on the number of Ministers in each Department can be found in the "List of Ministerial Responsibilities", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The responsibilities of Departments and the numbers of Ministers changed during the period 1964-1970. Tables of ministeral office holders were published regularly in *Hansard*.

Cornwall

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on ministerial responsibility for Cornwall.

The Prime Minister: The Government are collectively responsible for all regions of the United Kingdom.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, columns *829-30*, by how much United Kingdom output has fallen since the United Kingdom joined the EEC; and what have been the corresponding percentage changes since 1973 in Germany, France, Italy, Belgium and Spain.

Mr. Sainsbury: Changes in output between 1973 and 1983, as measured by the number of cars produced, were as follows:

	Per cent.
United Kingdom	–21
Germany	+3
France	–1
Italy	–39
Belgium[1]	–26
Spain	+113

[1] The comparision for Belgium is for the period from 1976 to 1992.
Sources: "Motor Industry of Great Britain: World Automotive Statistics" and Motorstat Express, Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

Motor Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *830*, by what percentage employment in the United Kingdom vehicle and parts industry has fallen since 1973; and what have been the corresponding percentage changes in Germany, France, Italy, Belgium and Spain.

Mr. Sainsbury: Between 1973 and 1993 the number of people employed in the United Kingdom motor vehicle and parts industry fell by 58 per cent.

Figures for Germany, France, Italy, Belgium and Spain are not available for the same period. But available figures show changes in people employed in the motor vehicles and parts industry were as follows:

	1976-1993 *Per cent.*	*1980-1992* *Per cent.*
United Kingdom	–52	–45
Germany	+20	+11
France	+35	–32
Italy	–45	–37
Belgium	n/a	+3
Spain	n/a	–6

Source: Eurostat VISA database.

Know-how Projects

Mr. David Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade to what extent his Department participates in the know-how projects to assist the development of enterprise in eastern Europe.

Mr. Needham: My Department works closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which has responsibility for the know-how fund scheme, on schemes to encourage enterprise in eastern Europe, including the former Soviet Union. The Department is consulted on applications from United Kingdom companies for grants under the pre-investment feasibility scheme for potential investment projects in the region and for support under the training investment personnel scheme. My Department also provides advice as appropriate on projects to encourage the development of enterprise under the know-how fund country programmes and is consulted on aspects of the joint industrial company awards programme under which entrepreneurs from the region are seconded to United Kingdom companies in order to gain valuable commercial experience. Two officials from the Department have been seconded to the FCO to work on the know-how-fund programme.

Mr. David Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the contribution of the university of Hertfordshire to the know-how-funded projects in Romania.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

The university of Hertfordshire has made an important contribution to the know-how fund's activities in Romania through its involvement in the successful launch of the Romanian centre for the improvement of management performance. The know-how fund will continue to support the university's work with the centre into the next financial year. It is planned that the centre will be financially self-sustainable in early 1995.

Departmental Property

Mr. Enright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much office space, currently on lease to, or owned by, his Department, is not in current use.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Eastern Europe

Mr. David Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to assist the countries of eastern Europe to benefit from the experience of the United Kingdom in respect of encouraging small businesses and the privatisation of state-owned industries.

Mr. Needham: The know-how fund, for which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is responsible, is the Government's principal programme to assist the countries of eastern Europe, including the former Soviet Union, to move to free market economies through the provision of advice and expertise. Two of the know-how fund key priority areas are assistance with the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and the encouragement of privatisation.

When Ministers from this Department visit the countries of eastern Europe, they use every opportunity to encourage the Governments concerned to continue on the path of economic reform including following policies which will promote the growth of a vibrant small firms sector and accelerate privatisation.

Manufactures (Imports)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the increase in the United Kingdom of imports of manufactures by the Irish Republic, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Austria and Portugal since 1970; and what was the forecast in the 1970 "Economic Assessment", Cm 4289.

Mr. Needham: Information concerning the increase in United Kingdom imports is given in the following table. Cm 4289 is available in the Library of the House.

United Kingdom imports of manufactures

(£ million, current prices)

				Percentage change		*Annualised percentage change*	
	1970	*1992*	*1993*	*1970-92*	*1970-93*	*1970-92*	*1970-93*
Irish Republic	128	3,249	n/a	2,432	n/a	16	n/a
Sweden	236	2,783	3,006	1,077	1,171	12	12
Norway	118	965	1,048	719	789	10	10
Denmark	75	1,305	n/a	1,642	n/a	14	n/a
Switzerland	188	3,823	4,375	1,935	2,229	15	15
Austria	73	922	942	1,157	1,185	12	12
Portugal	56	962	n/a	1,604	n/a	14	n/a

Note:
n/a—1993 information on United Kingdom trade with EC member states is not available.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Proton Cars

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many Proton cars were imported from Malaysia in each year since 1990.

Mr. Needham: The figures for imports by manufacturer are not available. Information on United Kingdom new registrations of Proton cars, all of which were imported from Malaysia, are published annually by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders in "Motor Industry of Great Britain: World Automotive Statistics." The most recent data are published in "Monthly Statistical Review". Copies are available in the Library of the House.

Economic Development Agencies (North-west)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the number of economic development agencies in the north-west; and if he will list them.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: There is no agreed definition on the basis of which to identify bodies as economic development agencies.

A number of organisations in the north-west are involved in assisting economic development, some independent, and some directly attached to existing bodies such as local authorities and chambers of commerce. The Government seek to promote a coherent and co-ordinated approach by all these bodies, for example through the business link initiative.

Malaysia

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list in order of pound sterling volumes the 10 principal product imports from Malaysia.

Mr. Needham: The information is provided in the following table.

Top ten imports from Malaysia (£ million, current prices)

Commodity	*Value*
Microprocessors with a processing capacity between 16 bits and 32 bits.	208
Motor vehicles of a cylinder capacity between 1000cc and 1500cc, new, assembled, other than station wagons and estate cars.	84
Digital monolithic integrated units, other than memories, microprocessors, microcontrollers; other than gate arrays, standard cells, programmable logic devices; other than control circuits, interface circuits.	51
Data processing equipment, not elsewhere specified, other than peripheral units, punches, verifiers and calculators.	29
Microcontrollers with a processing capacity not exceeding 8 bits.	25
Plywood consisting solely of sheets of wood, each plynot exceeding 6mm thickness with at least one outer ply of: Dark Red Meranti, Light Red Meranti, White Lauan, Sipo, Limba, Okoume, Obeche, Acajou' Afrique, Sapelli, Baboen, Mahogany, Palissandre du Bresil or Bois de Rose Femelle.	24
Unwrought tin, not alloyed.	23
Wood of Dark, Red Meranti, Light Red Meranti and Meranti Bakau, sawn or chipped lengthwise, sliced or peeled, of a thickness exceeding 6mm.	23

Commodity	Value
Colour TV receivers with an integral tube, with a screen width/height ratio less than 1·5, with a diagonal measurement of the screen between 32cm and 37cm.	23
Non-ditigal monolithic integrated units other than amplifiers, voltage and current regulators, control circuits, interface circuits.	22

Source: HM Customs and Excise.

Vehicle Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the number of buses, coaches and mini-buses on British roads *(a)* in 1970, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1988 and *(d)* 1992; what was the proportion of imported vehicles in each year; and what factors underlie the trend in this proportion.

Mr. Needham: The available data are published by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd. in the annual series of "Motor Industry of Great Britain, World Automotive Statistics". Data for the number of buses and coaches, excluding minibuses, in use can be found in table 40—Great Britain—and table 47—Northern Ireland. The number of vehicles with 10 or more seats imported by the United Kingdom can be found in table 91 of the aforementioned publication. Table numbers refer to the 1993 edition; there may be differences in earlier years. Figures for the proportion of imported vehicles in the total stock are not available.

This publication is available in the Library of the House.

EC Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of United Kingdom trade is with the EC; and what are his sources for the statistic.

Mr. Needham: The latest information on United Kingdom trade with EC and the rest of the world was published in the first release, balance of United Kingdom visible trade December 1993, CSO(94)47, by the Central Satatistical Office on 11 March 1994. The release is available in the Library of the House.

Lloyd's

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all regulatory and statutory changes which were designed to have, or had, the effect of benefiting persons who have been or remained members of syndicates of Lloyd's of London.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The regulation of Lloyd's is based mainly on the Lloyd's Act 1982 and the Insurance Companies Act 1982. Under the latter, the Secretary of State monitors the adequacy of Lloyd's solvency to ensure that its assets are sufficient to pay policyholders' valid claims rather than being designed to benefit members of Lloyd's. Regulation under the Lloyd's Act is a matter for the council of Lloyd's. Substantial changes to the taxation of individual members of Lloyd's were made by the Finance Act 1993. Further changes are proposed in the current Finance Bill; these reflect the admission of corporate members and also align the taxation of individual members with the self-assessment procedures introduced for individuals generally. Taken as a whole, the measures have no significant cost to the Exchequer, and therefore convey no benefit to members of Lloyd's.

Iran

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the trade figures between the United Kingdom and Iran since the restoration of relations in September 1990.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom visible trade is regularly published in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Indonesia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the purpose and outcome of his visit to Indonesia in December 1993.

Mr. Needham: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade did not visit Indonesia in December 1993.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with his Portuguese counterpart over EC and United Kingdom trade with Indonesia.

Mr. Needham: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade have held such discussions, although when I visited Portugal recently I stressed the importance of increasing trade with far eastern markets generally.

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Worthington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which British firms have benefited from aid and trade provision assistance; by how much; and for what projects in Malaysia and Indonesia in each year since 1979.

Mr. Needham: Information on the topic was published annually in "Business Monitor MA20, Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom" until 1992, and summary tables spanning 10 years are published in the "Annual Abstract of Statistics". Figures for 1993 are published in the December 1993 issue of "Business Monitor MM20, Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom with countries outside the European Community (Extra-EC Trade)". Copies of these publications are available in the Library of the House.

Design Council

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will announce the Government's response to the review of the Design Council undertaken by Mr. John Sorrell.

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to Mr. Sorrell for his review of the future of the Design Council, which he presented to my Department on 27 January. I shall place a copy of the review, together with the Government's response, in the Library of the House on 15 March.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column 22, if he will provide whatever information is available of those occasions on which he, or other Ministers in his Department, have signed public interest immunity certificates, and for what reasons.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* This information is not immediately available. I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Manufacturing Industry

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the change in competitiveness of United Kingdom manufacturing industry relative to France.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 9 March 1994]:* Between 1973 and 1979, manufacturing productivity and unit wage costs for the United Kingdom and France were as follows:

Annual average growth 1973-79

Per cent.

	United Kingdom	*France*
Manufacturing production	–0·96	1·54
Manufacturing productivity	0·6	3·7
Manufacturing unit wage costs	18·0	11·2

Source: OECD Main Economic Indicators.

During the last economic cycle, 1979 to 1990, however, manufacturing output and productivity grew more rapidly in the United Kingdom than in France. More recently, the latest available quarterly figures shows that manufacturing unit wage costs have risen, since the same period last year, by 1 per cent. in the United Kingdom and 6 per cent. in France.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Zimbabwe

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make a statement on the legal rights of United Kingdom citizens in Zimbabwe when threatened with deportation to the United Kingdom;

(2) on what legal basis, other than extradition, United Kingdom citizens may be deported from Zimbabwe to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: That is a matter for the Zimbabwe authorities.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the circumstances surrounding the return from Zimbabwe to the United Kingdom of Nicholas Mullen in February 1989 and their legal basis.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We understand that Mr. Mullen, who had an Irish passport, was deported on 6 February 1989 on the grounds of offences against Zimbabwe Immigration law. Our understanding is that the legal basis for deportations from Zimbabwe is contained in the Zimbabwe Immigration Act 18 of 1979.

Kurds

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the treatment of the Kurds in Syria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received a number of representations about the plight of the Kurdish community in Syria and elsewhere. We regularly raise our concerns about human rights issues with the Syrian authorities.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the treatment of the Kurdish community in Iran; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received some representations on the treatment of Kurds in Iran. We are naturally sympathetic to the plight of the Kurdish people throughout the region and are following closely developments in this area, including Iran[illegible]ction against the Kurdish democratic party of Iran o[illegible] the Iran-Iraq border, about which we have made clear our concern to the Iranian authorities.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the treatment of the Kurds in Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have received a number of letters from honourable Members about the treatment of Kurds in Iraq. Foreign Office officials are in regular contact with representatives of the Kurdish administration.

We condemn Iraq's continued abuse of the human rights of all its citizens, including the Kurds. We urge Iraq to observe Security Council resolution 688, which calls on Iraq to cease repression of its civilians. We condemn the continued blockade of the Kurdish area of northern Iraq, and the cutting off of electricity to Dohuk governorate.

Occupied Territories

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the number of deaths in the occupied territories following the Hebron massacre.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We understand that there were around 30 Palestinian deaths in disturbances in the occupied territories in the two weeks following the Hebron massacre on 25 February.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held at the United Nations or in the European Union on the issue of the establishment of safe havens in southern Sudan; and what was the outcome.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There have been no such discussions at the United Nations or within the European Union.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about Sudanese-backed terrorist infiltration into Eritrea.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Eritrean Government have informed the president of the United Nations Security Council of an incursion into Eritrean territory from Sudan by 20 agents of Eritrean Jihad on 16 December 1993. The Eritreans have subsequently informed the President that gunmen killed an Eritrean official in the Sudanese town of Kassala on 18 February.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps he intends to urge upon the international community to maintain pressure upon the Sudanese Government to end the civil war and human rights abuses.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We will continue to support the peace initiative of the Kenyan, Ugandan, Ethiopian and Eritrean Governments and to urge the parties to the conflict to respond positively. With our European Union partners we have decided to impose an arms embargo on Sudan as a further expression of our abhorrence of the continuing violence.

On 10 March, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights passed by 35 votes to nine a further resolution, which we fully supported, highlighting continued human rights abuses in Sudan. We will continue to press bilaterally and with our European union partners for an end to such abuses. The resolution renewed the mandate of the special rapporteur.

Bosnia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has identified whose planes were recently shot down by NATO forces over Bosnia; and from where they were flying.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Nations investigations continue, but it is almost certain that the planes were flying from Udbina airfield in the Serb-held area of Croatia. It is not yet certain to whom these aircraft belonged.

East Timor

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *20*, if he will set out what Her Majesty's Government were told by the Indonesian authorities in response to the inquiries made about the death of Mr. Peters and Mr. Rennie in East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: The deaths occurred over seven weeks before the Indonesian invasion of East Timor.

Facts were difficult to establish in a territory for which Indonesia was not the administering authority. But the results of its inquiries, at our and Australia's request, led to the conclusion that Mr. Peters and Mr. Rennie, along with the other members of the Australian TV crew, had been killed in Balibo on 16 October 1975. Local reports at the time suggest that the House in which the crew were sheltering was caught in heavy crossfire between the forces of the three internal warring parties—UDT, APODETI and FRETILIN—and set on fire. There were no survivors.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest estimate of the number of Timorese killed by arms exported from the United Kingdom; what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the United Nations Human Rights Commission concerning the actions of the Indonesian Government in East Timor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: None. We have no evidence that British-supplied defence equipment has ever been used against the people of East Timor. With our European Union partners we have welcomed Indonesian and Portuguese agreement to a consensus statement on East Timor at this year's session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the supply of military hardware by British companies to Indonesia for use by Indonesian forces in East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: In accordance with our guidelines for considering export license applications, we have not supplied any military equipment to Indonesia which is likely to be used for repressive purposes against the civilian population in East Timor.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current situation regarding human rights in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Sri Lanka's human rights record continues to improve. The Sri Lankan Government committed themselves to a further programme of reform on 7 March at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

Macedonia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken by the Government and the European Union to end Greece's unilateral blockade of Macedonia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have strongly urged the Greek Government to lift these unjustifiable measures. The Commission has written to the Greek Government questioning the legality of their action in respect of the European Community's customs union, the common commercial policy and the functioning of the internal market. It is for the Commission, as guardians of the treaty, to decide whether to institute infraction proceedings before the European Court of Justice.

European Union

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library all draft treaties and proposals relating to economic, monetary and political union as soon as they are received.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes. All published proposals emanating from Community institutions or from member states will be placed in the Library.

General Affairs Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Minister or Ministers represent the United Kingdom at the European

Council's General Affairs meetings; how it is decided how the United Kingdom will be represented at the General Affairs Council; and what matters were discussed and decisions taken at the General Affairs Council in Brussels on 7 and 8 March.

Mr. Hurd: I normally represent the United Kingdom at the Foreign Affairs Council and I am normally accompanied by a Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Where issues concerning other Departments feature on the Council agenda, a Minister from the relevant Department may also attend.

I take the decision on who represents the United Kingdom at these meetings, in consultation with my colleagues.

I attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 7-8 March accompanied by my hon. Friends the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), the Minister for Trade, the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), and the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack).

Association councils were held with Poland and Hungary. These were the first to take place under the terms of the European Community's association agreements with those countries.

Ministers agreed a package of proposals to involve the six central and eastern Europe associate countries—Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania—in the work of the CFSP pillar of the European Union. This builds on the initiative which Mr. Andreatta, the Italian Foreign Minister, and I launched in December 1993. The proposals will now be put to the six associate countries.

Ministers discussed the practical arrangements for handling CFSP expenditure and instructed officials to undertake further work on the options.

The President of the Commission, Mr. Delors, presented a progress report on follow-up to the December European Council conclusions on the White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment. He highlighted four main areas of action: deepening the single market; taking forward the creation of trans-European networks; improving information infrastructures; and making labour markets more flexible.

The Council discussed the own resources decision and reached agreement on most outstanding points. The budget discipline decision was also discussed, but no agreement was reached.

The Commission reported to the Council on market access offers following the completion of the Uruguay round negotiations. The Council decided that the Presidency and the Commission should sign the final act embodying the results of the Uruguay round negotiations, and the agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation, on behalf of the Council on 15 April at Marrakesh. Signature will be subject to verification of the final text and completion of the necessary approval procedures. Representatives of the member states will also sign the final act and the WTO agreement at Marrakesh.

The Council agreed a statement expressing concern at the recent announcement by the United States of its intention to resuscitate the Super 301 procedures of the Trade Act 1974. It requested the Commission to scrutinise the legality and implementation of these provisions to ensure that the European Community's GATT rights are not violated.

The Council heard a report from Sir Leon Brittan on the meeting of the EC-China joint commission in Peking on 28 February.

The President of the European Commission introduced the Commission's communication on immigration and asylum. The communication will now be discussed in working groups within the justice and home affairs pillar. The Government will shortly provide the House with an explanatory memorandum in accordance with the usual scrutiny procedures.

Ministers discussed latest developments in the former Yugoslavia. The Council agreed to extend for six months the Union's joint action to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to Bosnia.

Ministers issued a declaration calling for the resumption of middle east peace negotiations and noting the Union's willingness to contribute to an international presence in the occupied territories, should this be agreed in the United Nations Security Council.

The Council agreed in principle on the extension to the EFTA states, under the European Economic Area agreement, of some 300 single market measures passed between August 1991 and December 1993, the interim acquis. Ministers also discussed aspects of the EEA internal regulation.

The Council discussed the negotiating mandates for voluntary restraint agreements on steel imports from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

Members of the Council reconstituted themselves as a ministerial meeting in order to continue the accession negotiations in Norway. This followed the good progress made at the ministerial meeting held between 28 February and 1 March to negotiate the accession of Austria, Sweden and Finland.

By the time of the conclusion of a meeting on 8 March, agreement had been reached on the following main elements:

A wide-ranging package of measures to enable the orderly integration of the four applicants into the common agriculture policy. Agriculture prices in all four countries will be aligned with EC prices on accession. But in Austria, Finland and Norway, it was agreed that, for a transitional period, digressive national aids to farmers should be authorised where support levels differ significantly.

It was agreed that the Austrian region of Burgenland should be designated eligible for objective 1 status under the structural funds. In recognition of the unique problems of northern Scandinavia, it was also agreed to institute a new objective 6 for regions with a very low population density—less than eight inhabitants per sq km. A number of areas in Sweden, Finland and Norway were designated eligible for objective 6. Eligibility for objectives 2 to 5b will be determined before accession.

All four applicants were granted a number of derogations in the fields of VAT and excise. Similar derogations are already enjoyed by a number of existing member states.

The Union has agreed to fund, after accession, the applicants' commitments to the financial mechanism set up under the European Economic Area agreement. The operation of the mechanism, which benefits Northern Ireland, will remain unchanged.

All four applicants will pay their full contribution to the EC budget from the date of accession. But in recognition of the shortfall in CAP receipts in the first year of membership, and the financial costs of bringing their agricultural policies into line with the CAP, the Union has agreed a temporary package of financial

assistance to the applicants, worth 2,966 mecu in 1995-98. The four applicants will, collectively, remain net contributors to the Community budget over this period.

The European Union has assured Austria that the essential objectives of the 1992 EC/Austria bilateral transit agreement will be respected. The eco-points system for controlling transit traffic through Austria will continue for a transitional period after accession, if necessary until 2004. There will also be a progressive liberalisation of the arrangements for terminating traffic from accession, with complete liberalisation on 1 January 1997.

All four applicants have been granted a five-year transitional period during which they can maintain national legislation on the purchase of second homes.

Discussion of the institutional consequences of enlargement, and of Norwegian fisheries, are expected to resume on 15 March.

World Summit on Social Development

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what decision Her Majesty's Government have made on the establishment of a national committee on the World summit on social development; which Government Departments have been involved in discussions to formulate the United Kingdom Government's approach to the summit; and which Government Department will be leading co-ordination of United Kingdom activity in relation to the summit.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There has been no decision to establish a national committee for the World summit for social development. Consultations at official level have taken place with the participation of several Whitehall Departments. These include the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Departments of Social Security, of Trade and Industry, of Employment, and of Health, Her Majesty's Treasury and the Overseas Development Administration. Other interested Departments have been made aware of preparations for the summit. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is co-ordinating the United Kingdom's approach to the summit.

Haiti

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation Her Majesty's Government have in Haiti; what reports have been received concerning abuses of human rights in Haiti; and what representations have been made to the Haitian authorities.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Britain is represented by Her Majesty's ambassador resident at Kingston, Jamaica, and a vice-consul in Port au Prince, Haiti, Reports of human rights abuses are compiled by a special rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights; by United Nations civilian observer in Port au Prince who also register complaints locally; and by non-governmental organisations such as Amnesty International. We have supported United Nations resolutions expressing concern about human rights violations in Haiti. The European Union has also made several statements on this question.

Algeria

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with representatives of the Government of Algeria concerning the reasons citizens of Algeria seek asylum elsewhere.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Russia

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of reform and democracy in Russia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Russia has come a remarkably long way since the collapse of the Soviet Union two years ago. She now has a new constitution guaranteeing human rights and a democratically elected parliament. The way ahead will not be easy, not least in terms of economic reform; but President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin have both stressed their commitment to the reform process.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the annualised level of reimbursement from *(a)* international and *(b)* other non-United Kingdom sources paid to the United Kingdom to defray the cost of British military operations associated with Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom can reclaim from the United Nations about 50 per cent. of the total Ministry of Defence extra costs for United Kingdom military participation in UNPROFOR, but the timing of actual reimbursement depends on the United Nations cash flow situation.

UNPROFOR Croatia—UNPROFOR I—started operations in February 1992. UNPROFOR Bosnia Hercegovina command—UNPROFOR II—first deployed in September 1992, but was only brought on to United Nations assessed contribution funding from 1 April 1993. National costs were therefore non-reimbursable in financial year 1992-93. Reimbursement in financial year 1992-93, for the British contribution to UNPROFOR I totalled £191,663. Refunds for financial year 1993-94, UNPROFOR I and II, so far total £18·1 million.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Motability Scheme

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will outline the number of people currently provided with vehicles under the motability scheme, the number of new people coming on to the scheme each year, the current annual cost of the scheme and the estimated annual profit to the motor industry from the scheme.

Mr. Scott: As at 31 December 1993, 178,317 vehicles were being provided under the motability scheme. The number of vehicles provided under the scheme each year since 1983, the first year for which records are available, are in the table. Motability's annual administration cost during the last full accounting year, 1992-93, was £1·8 million. Details of estimated annual profit to the motor industry as a result of the scheme are not available.

Vehicles supplied since 1983

Year	HP (new)	Contract Hire	Total (new)	HP (used)	Total cars	Total wheelchair	Total vehicles
1983	4,656	3,915	8,571	1,141	9,712	858	10,570
1984	5,058	4,217	9,275	1,354	10,629	821	11,450
1985	5,509	5,436	10,945	1,461	12,406	820	13,226
1986	5,953	11,693	17,646	1,183	18,829	712	19,541
1987	5,885	17,530	23,415	853	24,268	655	24,923
1988	7,064	21,357	28,421	646	29,067	807	29,874
1989	4,692	31,808	36,500	587	37,087	926	38,013
1990	2,873	40,299	43,172	685	43,857	900	44,757
1991	2,324	44,136	46,460	1,145	47,605	1,005	48,610
1992	2,896	57,898	60,794	1,587	62,381	1,364	63,745
1993	4,542	69,748	74,290	2,949	77,239	1,924	79,163

Grand total vehicles supplied (1978 to 31 December 1993)

HP (new)	Contract Hire	Total (new)	HP used	Total cars	Total wheelchair	Total vehicles
57,354	320,375	377,729	14,461	392,190	11,641	403,831

Departmental Property

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what property, leased or owned for the purposes of his Department, is not currently occupied.

Mr. Hague: There are no properties currently unoccupied on the departmental estate. The provision and disposal of property leased for Government Departments is the responsibility of Property Holdings, Department of the Environment, which is replying on behalf of the common user estate.

Housing Benefit

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each local authority *(a)* the total amount paid by his Department in housing benefit, *(b)* the number of council properties, *(c)* the political control of the authority, *(d)* the average claim per council property and *(e)* the average claim per claimant in respect of the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: Information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Child Support

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many child support cases have been referred to him by *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* the general public.

Mr. Hague: Information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Between 1 September 1993 and 10 March 1994 Ministers received 5,089 letters from hon. Members concerning child support issues. These included questions about both individual cases and general policy.

The number of letters received from the general public about child support cases is not available.

Savings Disregard

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much the savings disregard of £3,000 would have to be increased to have the same value as when it was introduced in 1988.

Mr. Burt: An increase of £960 would be required to restore the real value of the £3,000 disregard, at 1993-94 prices, to its level in 1988.

Note: Calculation based on Rossi index, rounded to nearest £10.

Performance-related Pay

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many employees of *(a)* his Department and *(b)* agencies established by him are on (i) individual contracts and (ii) performance-related pay; and what were the average salaries and bonuses paid to these people in (1) 1992-93 and (2) 1993-94.

Mr. Hague: There are currently five such employees in the Department's agencies, and one in the war pensions unit which will achieve agency status from April 1994. All have contracts which incorporate performance bonus arrangements. The average salary, including bonuses, paid to these employees in 1992-93 was £55,834. Figures for 1993-94 are not yet available.

Savings Rule

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the basis for calculating the savings rule for people with between £3,000 and £8,000; and how this has changed since the rule was introduced.

Mr. Burt: A weekly deduction of £1 is made for each £250, or part of £250, of capital held between £3,000 and the upper capital limit, which was increased from £6,000 to £8,000 in 1990. This rule gives most help to those with the least savings. The formula is not linked to any particular rate of return that could be secured from investment and has not changed since the rule was introduced.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Arts Council

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many touring weeks have been lost as a result of the reductions made to the Arts Council's national touring allocation for drama.

Mr. Brooke: These are matters for the Arts Council.

Film Exports

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what contribution the export of United Kingdom-produced films has made to the United Kingdom's annual balance of trade in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Brooke: Over the past 10 years for which figures are available, United Kingdom-produced films have contributed the following amounts to the balance of trade:

Year	£ million at current prices
1983	99
1984	104
1985	131
1986	115
1987	147
1988	145
1989	158
1990	179
1991	182
1992	189

These figures do not take account of earnings from overseas companies which pay for production services in the United Kingdom.

Royal Palaces

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the range of rents paid for all accommodation at each of the occupied royal palaces.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* Rent paid by official employees of the Queen is presently set at 6 per cent. of after-tax salary wherever they are housed. This is equivalent to 7·5 per cent. of pre-tax salary—not 8·5 per cent. as stated on 9 February, *Official Report*, column *352*. Pensioners allocated accommodation since 1 April 1991 and Crown Estate employees pay 8·5 per cent. of their gross pension or pensionable pay wherever housed.

Rents paid by the Queen's private employees and by Royal Collection Enterprises Ltd. staff are equivalent to local authority rents in the area.

Since my reply to the right hon. Member on 12 January, *Official Report*, column *201*, about costs of accommodation borne by the Department it has been brought to my attention that in accordance with the memorandum of understanding the Department has been bearing the cost of furnishing apartments in the occupied royal palaces occupied by heads of department in the royal household.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Kenya (Cereals)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Kenya as to the possible purchase of surplus EC cereals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. The primary relief need in Kenya is for white maize which is not produced within the EC. We are supplying 15,000 tonnes of white maize bought from African regional sources and financed from our bilateral food aid funds.

Philippines

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the level of aid to the Philippines *(a)* from the European Community and *(b)* from the British overseas aid programme, for each year since 1986; and what is *(b)* as a proportion of *(a)*.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: *(a)* European Community aid expenditure on the Philippines for each year since 1986 has been:

	Million ecu	Sterling equivalent million[1]
1986	21·90	16·31
1987	4·50	3·35
1988	14·00	10·43
1989	22·50	16·76
1990	31·66	23·90
1991	5·46	4·07
1992	53·15	39·59
1993	49·06	36·54

[1] ecu—sterling exchange rate £1 = 1·3426.

(b) British bilateral aid expenditure on the Philippines since 1986 has been:

	£'s million
1986	0·205
1987	0·262
1987-88	0·666
1988-89	1·003
1989-90	13·290
1990-91	4·042
1991-92	1·934
1992-93	9·038

(C) As a proportion of (a), (b) is:

	Per cent.
1986	1·3
1987	7·8
1987-88:1988	6·4
1988-89:1989	5·9
1989-90:1990	55·6
1990-91:1991	99·3
1991-92:1992	4·9
1992-93:1993	24·7

In respect of United Kingdom financial year 1989-90 the percentage figure is high because it coincided with payments, made under our aid and trade programme; in 1990-91, EC aid was, as will be seen from table *(a)*, unusually low. Direct comparisons of this sort can be misleading, as is shown by the figures for these two financial years.

Occupied Territories

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what medical assistance he had offered the Palestinians in the occupied territories following the Hebron massacre.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have provided £34,000 via Medical Aid for Palestinians, a non-governmental

organisation. This contributed to the expenses of a Jordanian specialist surgical team and associated medical supplies. We are discussing with MAP a donation of up to £40,000 in order to purchase additional life-saving equipment for two of the hospitals concerned in treating the victims.

Aid

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each country the financial amount of overseas aid received in 1993, five years ago and 10 years ago.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This information is given in "British Aid Statistics", published annually, copies of which are in the Library of the House. Expenditure is now recorded on a financial year, rather than calendar year, basis.

Health Projects

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining the policy of the degree of priority to be afforded to future primary health projects in least developed countries within Her Majesty's Government's overseas aid programme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our overall aid policy includes better health as an essential element in promoting human development which is one of our seven priority objectives. Programmes to implement this objective are settled at country level in the framework of establishing our overall pattern of assistance to the particular country. The countries we have selected for particular attention with regard to our health care and Children by Choice objectives include: Bangladesh, Nepal, Cambodia, Uganda, Tanzania, the Gambia, Zambia and Malawi which are least developed countries.

Our approach at country level focuses on assisting health sector reform, Children by Choice policies and better reproductive health and combating particularly significant problems with malaria, tuberculosis and HIV.

China

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what evidence he has of the effects of the Chinese population control programme in creating an imbalance between the sexes in China;

(2) what information he has regarding the incidence of female infanticide, abortion of female unborn children and female slavery as a result of the Chinese population control programme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* Her Majesty's Government are aware of reports from China of female infanticide and abortion of female foetuses, and of an imbalance between the sexes. We have received no authoritative information which would lead to relating these reports to Chinese Government policies.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what meetings officials from his Department have had with the Chinese Family Planning Association to discuss the implementation of the Chinese population control programme since November 1992;

(2) what meetings officials from his Department have had with the Committee of Population and the Economy to discuss the implementation of the Chinese population control programme since November 1992;

(3) what meetings officials from his Department have had with the Chinese state Family Planning Commission to discuss the implementation of the Chinese population control programme since November 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answers 11 March 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 5 November 1993, *Official Report*, columns *599-600*. Staff of the British embassy in Beijing have also had contacts with the two other organisations to which the hon. Member refers.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has received since November 1992 from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities regarding human rights violations as a result of the implementation of the Chinese population control programme;

(2) what information he has received from the International Planned Parenthood Federation regarding human rights violations as a result of the implementation of the Chinese population control programme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answers 11 March 1994]:* The United Nations Population Fund and International Planned Parenthood Federation have not provided authoritative information on such human rights violations. These organisations are encouraging the Chinese authorities and the Chinese Family Planning Association to establish mechanisms for reporting and dealing with any such violations.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has received from other Government Departments regarding the need to continue overseas aid provision to China.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* By long-standing convention discussions of this sort between Departments are confidential.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what meetings officials from his Department have had with the United Nations Fund for Population Activities to discuss the implementation of the Chinese population control programme since November 1992;

(2) what meetings officials from his Department have had with the International Planned Parenthood Federation to discuss the Chinese population control programme since November 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answers 11 March 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey to Lord Braine of Wheatley in another place on 20 January 1994, *House of Lords Official Report*, column *53*.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings officials from his Department have had with the campaign Free Tibet to discuss the implementation of the Chinese population control programme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* Officials of the Overseas Development Administration and

diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have had contacts with the campaign Free Tibet, including a meeting on 1 December 1993 at which human rights issues were discussed.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to differences between the implementation of the Chinese population control programme in China and Tibet.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* There are variations in the family planning programmes between individual provinces throughout China, including Tibet. An analysis of the regulations will be undertaken by the Chinese Family Planning Association during 1994.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has on trends in the level of breaches of human rights arising from the Chinese population control programme since November 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* Authoritative information is not available.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Attorney-General how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by each of his private offices in 1993-94.

The Attorney-General: *(a)* none and *(b)* none.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Attorney-General what was the cost of new furniture for the private offices in his Department during the year 1993-94.

The Attorney-General: The cost was £2,900.

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Attorney-General what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

The Attorney-General: The cost was £1,300.

Racial Hatred

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Attorney-General how many prosecutions for incitement to racial hatred under the Public Order Act 1986 he has authorised in each year since 1987; and on how many occasions the prosecution has been successful.

The Solicitor-General: In each of the years since 1987 consent has been given to prosecute the following numbers of persons for offences contrary to part III of the Public Order Act 1986:

	Number
1987	0
1988	2
1989	1
1990	2
1991	3
1992	3
1993	2
1994	1

Seven cases resulted in conviction and one in acquittal. In addition, one defendant was bound over, one died before trial and one case was discontinued by the Crown Prosecution Service. Prosecutions have been started, but have not been concluded, in three cases. In one further case, although consent was originally granted, it was later withdrawn on public interest grounds.

Student Unions

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the current standing of the 1983 guidance issued in respect of expenditure by student unions; how many complaints about breach of the guidance have been received; how many have been investigated; how many were substantiated; and with what results.

The Attorney-General: The guidance on expenditure by student unions, first issued in 1983, is still valid and applicable save that it refers to section 24 of the Charities Act 1960 which has been repealed and re-enacted in the same terms by section 29 of the Charities Act 1993.

The guidance is intended to assist union officers who may find themselves called to account for their actions as trustees of charitable moneys in the discharge of their responsibilities for union funds.

Complaints of breach of charity law made to me are referred to the Treasury Solicitor for investigation. No single continuous record is maintained, but a search of files shows that since the guidance was issued, 53 complaints have been referred to the Treasury Solicitor, all of which have been investigated.

In one case there is now no record of the result and two other cases are current.

Of the remaining cases, seven were found to be substantiated. The action taken in these cases is as follows:

(a) in one case an injunction was obtained after one ultra vires payment to halt a proposed further payment,

(b) in four cases repayments (in whole or in part) of ultra vires payments were secured,

(c) in one case the union agreed not to make a proposed ultra vires payment and made arrangements to recover previous ultra vires payments, and

(d) in one case the union agreed to discontinue ultra vires payments.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Information Super Highways

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures he has taken to promote the development of information super highways in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information super highways are an emerging technology on which much interest has focused recently, particularly on the possible access to services for the citizen that such technology could offer. There are to date only a few pilots in operation globally, most notably in the United States.

Clearly, these developments are being watched with interest. The Government are also working closely with other members of the European Union in considering the requirements for such networks within Europe. The CCTA —Government centre for information systems—has already begun work on a study to look in detail at the

possible development of information super highways within the United Kingdom It will be working closely with the Department of Trade and Industry in considering this issue.

It is important that the roles of the private and public sector are taken into account. Full and thorough analysis of the global pilot projects will be needed to evaluate their benefits to the citizen and to the public and private sectors both within the United Kingdom and across Europe as a whole.

National Science Week

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the proposed national science week; and what contribution he will make to it.

Mr. Waldegrave: The national week of science, engineering and technology—"SET[7]"—will begin on Friday 18 March 1994. It is being organised, with Government funding, by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and will involve over 1,000 events taking place in some 230 towns and cities nationwide. SET[7] will, I am confident, make a significant impact by promoting a better appreciation among the general public of the invaluable contribution that science, engineering and technology make to our well-being as a nation.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and I will be doing our best to get to as many events as possible during SET[7]. Among other things, I will be opening the week at the natural history museum on the Friday morning; I will also deliver the Friday evening discourse at the Royal Institution; my family and I will be visiting the Bristol Exploratory on Saturday; on Monday, I will be opening the new science line telephone answering service at Channel 4's headquarters; on Wednesday, I shall be attending a Royal Society of Chemistry presentation ceremony at the House of Commons; and on Friday 25 March, I will be holding a breakfast briefing on the week in the House. I will also, of course, be doing a number of radio and television interviews.

British Antarctic Survey

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what the Government have paid to the British Antarctic Survey in each of the past 10 years; and what grant is proposed for 1994-95.

Mr. David Davis: The Government make money available to the research councils through the science budget. The amounts of such money allocated to the British Antarctic Survey from its parent body, the Natural Environment Research Council, are as follows:

	Capital £ million	*Recurrent £ million*	*Total £ million*
1984-85	1·435	9·354	10·789
1985-86	2·873	9·375	12·248
1986-87	2·458	9·211	11·669
1987-88	3·156	10·898	14·054
1988-89	12·032	12·693	24·725
1989-90	18·559	14·064	32·623
1990-91	30·023	16·067	46·090
1991-92	9·030	17·064	26·094
1992-93	4·010	18·016	22·026
1993-94	2·177	19·491	21·668

The proposed grant for 1994-95 is £24·31 million, including £2·15 million for capital expenditure.

Public Bodies

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 4 March, *Official Report*, columns *899-900*, if he will provide a list of known *(a)* Conservative and *(b)* Liberal Democrat supporters appointed to public bodies to which he referred.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The list I provided in my answer on 4 March was constructed by me for use in the Opposition Day debate on 24 February. I have no other list.

HMSO

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster pursuant to the answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, columns *767-68*, what was the result of the response to each HMSO campaign listed.

Mr. David Davis: HMSO's revenue from the sale of publications and videos in 1993 increased by 5·6 per cent. over the previous year, while revenue from the sale of IT products increased by 37 per cent. Sales of BSI titles at HMSO bookshops over the first five months since becoming main agents totalled £146,000. The campaign to strengthen awareness in central and local government, the health service and public utilities took place more recently and it is too soon to assess the impact.

Questions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many questions he has declined to answer on the grounds that to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since my Department was established in May 1992 I have declined to answer six questions on a disproportionate cost basis. I have also declined to answer parts of 10 further questions on the same basis.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

CAP

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest figure she has for *(a)* the total value of moneys purloined from the common agricultural policy's export refund and price support schemes and *(b)* how much the common agricultural policy has lost through the evasion of customs duties and farm levies; and if she will estimate the proportion of defrauded funds that are recouped.

Mr. Jack: Cases reported by member states of irregularity, including details of the amounts recovered, under the EAGGF guarantee, fund, which includes CAP export refund and price support schemes, and cases of irregularity under the own resources regulation, which includes customs duties and farm levies under the CAP, are shown in table 1.1 of the annual report from the Commission on the Fight Against Fraud[1], a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Details of the value of own resources irregularities recovered are not separately identifiable.

Irregularity in this context encompasses all reported overpayments, whether caused by simply negligence or deliberate intent to defraud. Statistics on the number of irregularities should not therefore be interpreted as an indication of the extent of detected fraud within the Community.

[1] 1992 Report, COM(93) Final of 20 April 1993—Table 1.1, cases of fraud or irregularity reported above deminimus level of 10,000 ecu Own Resources and 4,000 ecu Guarantee Fund.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what level of European Community expenditure will be necessary to sustain the current level of production.

Mr. Jack: Level of agricultural production is ultimately determined by the aggregate decisions of individual farmers, who when making these decisions will take into account forecast returns for each crop, including Community support payments to which they may be entitled.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will estimate by how much common agricultural prices have risen in weak currency countries as a direct result of the system of pegging farm prices to the deutschmark via the switchover system for each country.

Mr. Jack: Common agricultural policy support prices in all European Community member states are 20·75 per cent. higher in national currency terms than they would be without the application of the switchover coefficient. The effect of this coefficient has, however, been offset to some extent by associated reductions in the common ecu level of support prices: the net effect is that prices are just under 19 per cent. higher. However, support prices are set by the Council of Ministers in the annual price-fixing negotiations. It is not possible to say what prices would have been set had the switchover system not existed.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the common agricultural policy's budget is accounted for by *(a)* administrative costs, *(b)* storage costs, *(c)* disposal costs and *(d)* export restitutions in the current financial year.

Mr. Jack: The CAP budget for 1994 has been set at 36,465 mecu—£27,566 million. This does not cover expenditure incurred by either the Commission or the member states in the administration of the CAP, with the exception of some anti-fraud measures, which account for about 0·4 per cent. of the budget. Intervention storage, including depreciation costs and profits on sale, and export refunds account for 9 per cent and 20·8 per cent., respectively. With regard to disposal costs, surpluses are generally either exported on to world markets with the aid of export refunds, or purchased into intervention storage, from which they are eventually sold out again. Some perishable products, such as fruit and vegetables and fish, may be withdrawn from the market, and may, for example, be used for non-food purposes or be donated to charities. Some of this produce, because of its perishable nature, may be destroyed. Withdrawals and similar operations account for 2·6 per cent. of the 1994 budget.

Beef

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will state *(a)* the price at which British wholesalers buy beef per tonne, *(b)* what she estimates the price of beef per tonne would be in a free market without European Community price intervention, *(c)* the levels of European Community production and consumption of beef, *(d)* the level of common agricultural policy expenditure on beef subsidies and *(e)* the cost to the British Exchequer of European Community intervention in the beef market.

Mr. Jack: The cattle reference price for the week commencing 17 February 1994 was £1,152·30 per tonne. However, it is not possible to make precise estimates about what prices might result if there were no market support in the EC. A large number of assumptions would be required in order to assess how domestic and world markets would react if Community policy were to be changed.

It is provisionally estimated that EC production of beef in 1993 was 7,980 thousand tonnes and EC consumption was 7,755 thousand tonnes.

The level CAP expenditure on beef subsidies in the 1993 EC budget years was some £3,131 million and the Exchequer costs of CAP support for beef in the United Kingdom is estimated at £308 million for the 1993-94 financial year. The United Kingdom also contributes to the EC budget as a whole, which funds the cost of beef support in other member states.

Apples

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what proposals are under consideration for introduction by the European Community in respect of grubbing grants for apple orchards; and what is her policy on this matter;

(2) what proposals are under consideration for altering the intervention system for apples within the European Community; and what is her policy on this matter.

Mr. Jack: The Council of Ministers has asked the Commission to come forward with proposals to reform the EC regime in fruit and vegetables. Their proposals are awaited; our view is that the intervention system for apples, and other products, sustains over-production and distorts the market, to which the regime should pay more attention. Our view on grubbing grants, should those be included in the Commission's proposals, will depend on the shape of the package as a whole. Such schemes have been unsuccessful in the past when introduced in isolation.

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in her Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Jack: The cost of receptions is included in the Department's overall administration costs which are published every year in the MAFF-IBEA departmental report.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost of new furniture for her private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Jack: The cost of such furniture is included in the Department's overall administration costs which are published every year in the MAFF-IBEA departmental report.

Horses

Mr. Gale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the effect of the introduction of maximum residue levels on the veterinary care of horses in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Under Council regulation 2377/90, maximum residue limits must be established by 1996 for active ingredients in veterinary medicines used in food producing species. The status of horses as food producing animals was established under directive 64/433/EEC relating to the sanitary conditions for the production and marketing of fresh meat. The European Commission has now confirmed however that, in line with existing United Kingdom policy, if a horse is not destined for human consumption, maximum residue limits will not be required. In addition, the Commission has emphasised that it is not the intention of the regulatory authorities to deny veterinarians the possibility of treating any animals.

In the United Kingdom, therefore, we shall continue to require that where no MRLs have been established, the medicinal product should be clearly marked as not to be used on any animal that might be intended for human consumption. This applies to all horses irrespective of value. I am satisfied this provides the necessary guarantees to consumers of the safety of food whilst safeguarding animal health and welfare. The introduction of MRLs should therefore have no effect on the veterinary care of horses in the United Kingdom.

Cereals

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what reasons the United Kingdom did not apply for derogation on the moisture content of cereals in the 1993 harvest.

Mr. Jack: The state of interventionable grain at harvest did not justify the application of the moisture content derogation on this occasion.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which major cereal-producing countries in the EC obtained derogation on the moisture content of the 1993 cereal harvest.

Mr. Jack: Of the four largest cereal producers in the EC, France and Germany both obtained the moisture content derogation for the 1993 harvest. Italy and the United Kingdom did not apply.

Fishing (Norway)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what species and quantitites of fish are caught by Norway in waters within the Fishery Limits Act 1976.

Mr. Jack: The Fishery Limits Act 1976 established British fishery limits extending to 200 miles from baselines or, where appropriate, to the median line. Since the establishment of the common fisheries policy in 1983 these waters, except for those out to 12 miles from baselines, are Community waters. Norway's entitlements to fish in Community waters are fixed annually under bilateral EC-Norway agreements in relation to specified ICES—International Council for the Exploration of the Sea—zones. Listed in the table are the species and quantities of fish for 1994 which Norway is entitled to take in the Community waters around the United Kingdom:—

ICES area	*Species*	*Tonnage ('000)*
IV	Cod	8·8
	Haddock	20
IV and IIIa	Saithe	40
IV	Whiting	10
	Plaice	6
IV and IIIa	Mackerel	63·79
IV and VIId	Herring	50
IV	Norway pout	20
IV	Sandeel	30
II, IVa, VIa, VIb, VII	Blue whiting	205
IV, Vb, VI, VII, IIa	Blue ling	1
IV, Vb, VI, VII, IIa	Ling	10
IV, Vb, VI, VII, IIa	Tusk	5
Vb, VI, VII	Combined quota[1]	2
IV, VI, VII	Dogfish	1·5
IV, VI, VII	Basking shark (liver)	0·1
IV, VI, VII	Porbeagle	0·2
IV	Shrimps	0·1
IV	Horse mackerel	5
IV, IIa	Others	5
VIa	Herring	6·2
IV	Sprat	20
IIa, VI	Greenland halibut	1·7

[1] Fishing with long lines for grenadiers, rat tails, mora mora and greater fork beard.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what species and quantities of fish were caught by *(a)* British, *(b)* German and *(c)* Spanish vessels within Norwegian fishing limits in (i) 1977, (ii) 1982, (iii) 1986, (iv) 1990 and (v) 1993.

Mr. Jack: The table details landings from Norwegian waters, by vessels of the three nationalities in question, in each of the years 1986, 1990 and 1993.

Comparable data for the earlier two years are not available.

Tonnes liveweight

Nationality and species	*Year* 1986	1990	[1]1993
United Kingdom			
Cod	6,572	2,573	9,667
Haddock	429	320	1,065
Saithe	48	257	384
Redfish	122	129	455
Greenland Halibut	2	0	0
Other species	1,702	2,051	7,974
German			
Cod	1,938	649	2,598
Haddock	880	123	426
Saithe	3,452	1,050	3,580
Blue whiting	0	0	2
Mackerel	0	0	17,760
Redfish	3,367	1,118	464
Greenland Halibut	9	4	4
Other species	772	386	374
Spanish			
Cod	0	0	203

[1] Provisional year-end data.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion and

quantity of Norwegian fish exports went to *(a)* the United Kingdom *(b)* Denmark, *(c)* the Netherlands and *(d)* France in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: Norwegian exports of fish and fish products to the European Union in 1992 totalled 411,808 tonnes, of which:

	Tonnes	*Per cent*
United Kingdom	43,263	11
Denmark	116,575	28
Netherlands	25,772	6
France	68,156	17

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many agency chief executives in her Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Jack: None.

Cattle Transport

Mr. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions she has had with *(a)* France and *(b)* other European Union countries regarding European Union restrictions on the transport of British cattle to Switzerland: and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: None. European Community animal health rules prevent the export from the United Kingdom to non-EC countries *via* other member states of live cattle, other than those of less than six months of age or which have been imported into the United Kingdom after 18 July 1988.

Departmental Property

Mr. Enright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what buildings or open spaces, on lease or owned by her Department, are not in current use.

Mr. Jack: Storage depots at the following locations are closed and awaiting disposal.

Abergavenny
Adlington, Nr Macclesfield
Alton, Hants
Betchworth, Surrey
Bishops Lydeard, Nr Taunton
Brenchley, Nr Tonbridge
Burscough, Nr Ormskirk
Carmarthen
Chobham, Surrey
Dalston, Nr Carlisle
Earl Shilton, Nr Leicester
Glen Parva, Nr Leicester
Grimsargh, Nr Preston
Gunthorpe Lock, Nr Nottingham
Honeybourne, Nr Evesham
Humshaugh, Nr Hexham
Hemel Hempstead, Herts
Lanark
Marden, Kent
Newark, Notts
Pollington, Nr Goole
Rattlesden, Suffolk
Redhill, Surrey
Ringmer, Nr Lewes
Sevenhampton, Nr Swindon
Sowerby, Nr Thirsk
Strubby, Nr Alford, Lincs
Sunbury on Thames
Tring, Herts
West Pennard, Nr Glastonbury
Westerham, Kent

In addition, 4 acres of agricultural land at Luddington, Warwickshire, 2 acres of agricultural land at Potton in Bedfordshire and 95 acres of agricultural land near Wickford in Essex are not being used by the Ministry pending disposal.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will publish the criteria for contractors taking on the disposal of BSE-infected carcases.

Mr. Soames: Contractors disposing of BSE-suspect carcases by incineration must first obtain relevant planning and pollution approval from the appropriate local authority.

Contractors must also comply with contractural obligations drawn up by this Ministry to minimise the contamination of premises, prevent contamination of water and air and provide for safe handling of material by operators.

Mr. Pickhall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many BSE-infected carcases were incinerated in each region in 1991-92, 1992-93 and thus far in 1993-94.

Mr. Soames: The number of suspect BSE carcases slaughtered in each region and subsequently incinerated, from 1991 to 1994, is as follows. This information can be obtained only on a calendar year basis.

Region	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Northern	2,376	4,457	5,042	392
Midlands and West	4,679	9,164	9,096	726
Eastern	1,680	2,557	2,555	235
South East	2,785	3,975	3,855	343
South West	15,394	16,860	13,467	1,063
Wales	2,570	4,518	4,043	374
South Scotland	551	1,281	1,651	124
North Scotland	271	635	816	71
Total	30,306	43,447	40,525	3,328

1994 figures are as at 31 January.

Integrated Administration and Control

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the 1994 forms and explanatory booklet relating to the integrated administration and control system will become available in England and Wales.

Mrs. Shephard: The material is now available and is being sent out to farmers. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much her Department spends on child care provision for the under-fives and out-of-school

provision for children aged over five either directly, excluding provision for departmental staff, or indirectly through resources made available to local authorities or other organisations; what form of provision is thereby provided; how many places are thereby provided; and if she will make a statement on child care.

Mr. Jack: In the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food expenditure on child care is only for the benefit of Ministry staff and provision is subject to the need to establish a value-for-money case.

Fish Landing Prices

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the European Commission in relation to minimum landing prices for fish.

Mr. Jack: *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* In recent discussions in the Council of Ministers, our representations on minimum import prices have been guided by the fact that we believe they have only a short-term role in exceptional circumstances. We will continue to oppose their permanent application. From a United Kingdom perspective, minimum import prices have the serious disadvantage of making our processing industry pay more for essential raw material which cannot be obtained from Community sources.

Milk

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what quantity and value of milk and milk products formerly distributed under the school milk scheme have been redirected since 1 April 1993; and what have been their destinations.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No definitive information is available on the quantity, value or use to which the milk and milk products no longer utilised under the school milk scheme have been put.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *874*, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a substantive answer to the question tabled by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West for answer on 16 December 1993 concerning the administrative expenditure of his Department.

Sir John Wheeler: The information which I provided the hon. Member in a letter dated 11 January was as follows:

i. The provisional outturn from 1992-93 is £697 million.

ii. The running costs limit for 1993-94 is £730 million (£707 million at 1992-93 prices). An estimated outturn will be published in the Spring in the "1994 Departmental Report and the Unified Budget Statement".

The 1994 departmental report on expenditure plans and priorities which is available in the Library, gives updated information on these matters.

Independent Commissioner for the Holding Centres

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he hopes to publish Sir Louis Blom-Cooper's first annual report as Independent Commissioner for the Holding Centres.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have today arranged for copies of Sir Louis Blom-Cooper's first annual report as Independent Commissioner for the Holding Centres to be placed in the Library.

I welcome the report, which contains a very comprehensive and detailed examination of the procedures governing the custody of detainees in the police offices.

I am pleased to note that Sir Louis reports that he has "found absolutely nothing that might give anyone the slightest cause for concern about the care and treatment of detainees held in the custody of uniformed officers of the RUC".

It is most important that the police offices should permit the very necessary detention provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act to be operated properly and effectively. The police must be able to take all proper measures to secure the information they need in the interests of justice, and suspects while in custody must be treated fairly and in accordance with all relevant statutory and administrative safeguards. The Independent Commissioner provides a valuable source of information and advice in that regard, and I am most grateful to Sir Louis Blom-Cooper for his work throughout the past year.

I intend to give careful and detailed consideration to the report.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Sir John Wheeler: The cost of such purchases is included in the entertainment expenditure for the Department, which is published in the departmental annual report.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Sir John Wheeler: Such purchases are included within the Department's overall administration expenditure which is published every year in the departmental annual report.

Lough Neagh

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken to conserve fish stocks in Lough Neagh.

Mr. Ancram: The Fisheries Consolidated and Amendment Byelaws (NI) 1989 (1989 No. 483) as amended by the Fisheries Amendment Byelaws (NI) 1992 (1992 No. 483) contain measures to conserve fish stocks in Lough Neagh. The byelaws are available in the Library.

The 1992 byelaws increased the minimum size of mesh which may be used in set nets or trammel nets for the taking of pollen, trout, perch, pike and beam respectively. They increased the minimum takeable size of pollen and trout respectively and introduced a minimum takeable size for perch. They also introduced an annual close season

—1 March to 31 May—and a weekend closure—0600 hours Saturday to 0600 hours Monday—in respect of commercial fishing for perch, bream and pike.

These measures are enforced by the Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated length of illegal nets confiscated on Lough Neagh in each of the last three years; and what action is being taken by the Fisheries Conservancy Board to control illegal netting on Lough Neagh.

Mr. Ancram: The length of illegal nets confiscated on Lough Neagh is set out in the table:

Year	*Length of nets—metres*
1991	15,340
1992	52,590
1993	38,185

The Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland controls illegal netting through regular patrols on the lough. The number of patrols has doubled since early 1993.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he plans to introduce quotas for fish harvested from Lough Neagh.

Mr. Ancram: No. There are no powers to impose quotas in respect of freshwater fish species and existing controls are considered to be adequate to conserve fish stocks in Lough Neagh.

Constitutional Talks

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on further constitutional talks on the future of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend recently met the leaders of the three Northern Ireland parties that have been engaged in private bilateral discussions with me. He showed them a document containing ideas for giving direction to the talks process based on earlier discussions and covering all the main relationships. I am holding further meetings with representatives from the parties to discuss these ideas. At the last intergovernmental conference on 10 March both Governments mandated further intensive work to provide a framework to carry the talks process forward.

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Sir John Wheeler: The cost of such receptions is included in the entertainment expenditure for the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments which is published in the departmental annual report.

Blood Donation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in which of the Northern Ireland health board areas there is a surplus of donated blood; and in how many areas blood plasma is in short supply.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* The Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service is a regional service and figures are not collected on a board basis. Since April 1993 blood collection and needs for Northern Ireland have been in balance. There has been no shortage or surplus of either donated blood or blood plasma.

LORD CHANCELLORS DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

4. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has to facilitate representative actions on behalf of groups of victims in drug safety, consumer safety, safety at work and medical standards under legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board and others have suggested changes in the procedures surrounding multi-party actions which are being considered.

Debt Recovery

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action he is taking to improve procedures for the recovery of debts due as a result of court judgments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Both the Lord Chancellor and I are committed to improving the efficiency of the court system through simplifying and streamlining procedures, reducing paperwork and reducing the need to attend court. In my answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 18 February 1994, column *1006*, I mentioned the changes to county court procedures made in recent years and the plans for the introduction of some minor amendments to debt recovery procedures later this year. In addition, work is currently being done to improve the oral examination procedure with a view to introducing the new system by the beginning of 1995. There are also plans to look at ways of simplifying and improving the garnishee and charging order procedures later this year. Any proposed changes will be subject to our usual wide-ranging public consultation and it would not, therefore, be appropriate to make a statement about these initiatives at this stage.

Road Accidents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what were the numbers of road accidents *(a)* per police officer and *(b)* per 100,000 population for each year since 1979 and this year to date for (i) South Yorkshire, (ii) North Yorkshire, (iii) West Yorkshire and (iv) Humberside police authority areas.

Mr. Key: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is shown in the table. Information for 1993 and the year to date is not yet available.

Injury accidents by police force area: 1979—1992

Rate

Year of accident	*Rate per police officer*			
	North Yorkshire	*West Yorkshire*	*South Yorkshire*	*Humberside*
1979	2·4	1·7	1·8	2·0
1980	2·4	1·7	1·7	2·0
1981	2·4	1·7	1·6	1·9

Year of accident	Rate per police officer: North Yorkshire	West Yorkshire	South Yorkshire	Humberside
1982	2·4	1·7	1·7	2·0
1983	2·3	1·6	1·6	1·9
1984	2·3	1·7	1·6	2·1
1985	2·2	1·6	1·5	2·1
1986	2·4	1·6	1·6	2·1
1987	2·3	1·6	1·4	2·0
1988	2·5	1·6	1·5	2·1
1989	2·6	1·7	1·7	2·2
1990	2·5	1·7	1·6	2·2
1991	2·3	1·6	1·4	1·9
1992	2·2	1·7	1·5	1·9

Injury accidents by police force area: 1979—1992

Rate

Year of accident	Rate per 100,000 population: North Yorkshire	West Yorkshire	South Yorkshire	Humberside
1979	484	401	354	438
1980	480	425	370	464
1981	477	419	360	444
1982	482	429	381	451
1983	450	390	344	432
1984	441	405	345	472
1985	439	386	336	475
1986	468	392	344	478
1987	451	393	321	462
1988	488	412	348	482
1989	509	423	379	507
1990	476	429	375	499
1991	440	405	333	428
1992	422	401	338	439

HOME DEPARTMENT

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Howard: Such purchases are included within my Department's overall administration expenditure which is published every year in the annual report.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Howard: Such consumption is included in the entertainment expenditure for my Department which is published in the annual report.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Howard: Exceptionally, where there has been a major incident, the Prison Service has set up a temporary free telephone number for the use of relatives of those affected. The expenditure is small and could be quantified only at disproportionate expense. Freepost facilities are not used.

National Alliance of Women's Organisations

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give his reasons for withdrawing core funding from the National Alliance of Women's Organisations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office has never paid core funding to the National Alliance of Women's Organisations, so there is no question of its being withdrawn.

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Howard: The cost of such receptions is included in the entertainment expenditure for my Department which is published in the annual report.

Women's Voluntary Sector

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what support his Department gives to the women's voluntary sector.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office does not support work carried out by voluntary organisations exclusively on women's issues. Under the drugs prevention initiative funding has been provided for 20 separate drug prevention projects targeted specifically at women.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will allow asylum seekers in Britain to be joined by family members who have been given asylum in other European countries.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Close family members are entitled to join refugees granted asylum in this country. The same arrangements would not be justified for asylum seekers before it has been established whether they qualify for refugee status and have a long-term future here.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time that asylum seekers are held in detention; and what are the figures for each year since 1990, including provisional figures for 1994 to date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people who have been given exceptional leave to remain have not had their exceptional leave to remain status renewed in each year since 1991 and in 1994 to date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Precise figures are not available but, in each of the three years 1991-93, the number of asylum applications refused an extension of exceptional leave does not exceed a figure of the order of 15. Information for 1994 to date is not yet available.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *151* to show many of those asylum seekers held in detention who had applied *(a)* before 26 July 1993 and *(b)* after 26 July 1993 had been in detention for the whole of their stay in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *151*, how many of the asylum seekers currently detained are being held in ordinary prisons; how many of these are being held with people convicted on criminal charges; and how many of these are being held with people awaiting trial.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 9 March 1994, 274 asylum seekers were detained in Prison Service establishments, including 82 at the Home Office holding centre, Haslar, which is used almost exclusively for immigration detainees.

At Haslar there are 14 convicted prisoners who undertake tasks connected with the running of the centre which the detainees cannot be required to do. The further details requested are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The general policy is not, however, to hold immigration detainees together with convicted inmates unless the detainees are themselves convicted prisoners or strict segregation would be to their disadvantage by preventing them from having access to facilities enjoyed by others.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom were detained *(a)* in hostels or detention centres, *(b)* in police custody, in hostels or detention centres, *(b)* in police custody, *(c)* in prisons and *(d)* in other places on 1 January and on 1 October, 1 July and 1 April 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not available.

Young Offenders

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on whether future secure accommodation for young offenders should be sited in the grounds of adult prisons.

Mr. Maclean: The search for suitable sites on which to locate the new secure training centres for persistent juvenile offenders has included an evaluation of Prison Service sites, both those which are redundant and those surplus to requirements. No final decisions have been taken, but if Prison Service sites are used for one or more of the centres, they will operate as self-contained and fully autonomous units.

Sheehy Inquiry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the detailed accounts of the Sheehy inquiry.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 2 December 1993, columns *665-66*.

Detainees (Access to Doctors)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what access people held in detention by the immigration service have to a doctor.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is our normal practice to ask port medical inspectors to examine those passengers who are detained upon their arrival in the United Kingdom. Those subsequently detained in immigration detention centres have access on a daily basis to either a resident or visiting doctor. The Prison Service is responsible for providing similar access to a doctor for those Immigration Act detainees accommodated in prisons, and the police for those held for short periods in police cells.

Criminals (Payments)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to make it a criminal offence to make payments to convicted criminals, their relatives, or agents for publishing, by any means, details of their criminal past or crimes.

Mr. Maclean: None. It would not be feasible to devise legal restraints sufficiently broad to prevent criminals, or their associates, from profiting from published accounts of their criminal activities, while at the same time avoiding unjustifiable restrictions on media reporting of matters of legitimate public interest. Enforcement could be particularly difficult since payment could be made indirectly, covertly or outside the jurisdiction of the courts.

Video Evidence

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what equipment his Department is using to prepare video evidence for use in courts; and what assessment he has made of the quality.

Mr. Maclean: The procurement of equipment for the preparation of video evidence is a matter for chief officers of police but the Home Office has issued technical guidelines to assist them. Video playback equipment for viewing video evidence is now available in 71 Crown court centres. The Home Office has commissioned research into the new provisions for child witnesses in the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which will include an assessment of the quality and acceptability of video taped statements. Also, an interdepartmental working group was reconvened in February 1994 to consider the effectiveness of current arrangements for the presentation of video-recorded evidence at court.

Heroin

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the findings of the reports "Trends in the Cost Effectiveness of Enforcement Activity in the Illicit Heroin Market 1979-1990", published by the centre for health economics at York university; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We shall be considering the report, which was published on 7 March 1994. Heroin trafficking is a clandestine activity and so, as the authors readily acknowledge, the report relies on many assumptions, estimates and crude measures of the effectiveness of

enforcement. It is also debatable whether conclusions can be drawn about the effectiveness of drug enforcement from assumptions about the market in one particular drug.

In any case there have been significant developments in drug enforcement since the period covered by the report including improvements in the provision of drugs intelligence and the introduction by Customs of the new and successful flexible anti-smuggling teams.

Drugs (Police Informants)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police informants involved in informing on drug-related crimes have been prosecuted for acting as agents provocateur in each year since 1979.

Mr. Maclean: Information on prosecutions of police informants is not collected centrally.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of drug seizures made by the police and HM Customs and Excise were facilitated by police informants in each year since 1979;

(2) how many police informants have been engaged by the police to provide information on drug-related crime in each year since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not available.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many citizens of the former Yugoslavia, by current republic, are *(a)* permanent residents, *(b)* students, *(c)* visitors, *(d)* asylum applicants and *(e)* refugees in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: At 31 January 1994 an estimated 6,640 nationals of former Yugoslavia, excluding dependants, were awaiting a decision on their application for asylum in the United Kingdom. During the period 1 January 1985 to 31 January 1994 a total of nine nationals of the former Yugoslavia were granted asylum, and 114 were given exceptional leave. An analysis by republic of origin, and the other information requested for those in the United Kingdom, are not available.

Algeria

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many citizens of Algeria are in Britain as *(a)* permanent residents, *(b)* students, *(c)* visitors, *(d)* asylum seekers and *(e)* refugees.

Mr. Charles Wardle: At 31 January 1994, an estimate of about 350 nationals of Algeria, excluding dependants, were awaiting a decision on their application for asylum in the United Kingdom. During the period 1 January 1985 to 31 January 1994 a total of 15 nationals of Algeria were granted asylum, and 31 were given exceptional leave. The other information requested for those in the United Kingdom is not available.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he or his officials have *(a)* requested or *(b)* received advice from the Attorney-General or his officials concerning the legality of the procedures by which he is seeking to reform the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. Maclean: It is the convention neither to confirm nor deny having sought or received the advice of the Attorney-General on legal matters.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Attorney-General and if the legality of the procedures by which he is seeking to reform the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board was discussed at that meeting.

Mr. Maclean: The Home Secretary and the Attorney-General meet regularly. Their last formal bilateral meeting was on 21 September 1993. It is not the practice to disclose what matters are discussed when they meet.

Detention Centres

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people held in *(a)* Haslar and *(b)* other detention centres have refused food for more than one day in the past year; what discussions are held with such individuals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information is as follows.

In the 12 months ending 10 March 1994, 32 detainees have refused food for three days or more at the Home Office holding centre, Haslar.

In the period 10 May 1993 to 10 March 1994 the numbers of detainees who have refused food for three days or more in Immigration Service detention centres are as follows:

	Number
Campsfield House[1]	21
Harmondsworth	7
Queens Building, Heathrow	1
Total	29

[1] Since its opening on 29 November 1993.

Each case is handled on its merits, but it is made clear to detainees that they are not assisting their cases by taking such action.

Sammy Davis

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the removal of Sammy Davis from Britain; what response he gave to the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and the hon. Member for Islington, North; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Representations about the deportation of Mr. Sammy Davis were received from a noble Lord, four hon. Members, eight Members of the European Parliament, 14 organisations and 20 members of the public. Nevertheless, my right hon. and learned Friend decided that in all the circumstances the decision to deport Mr. Davis was correct. The reasons for this decision were fully explained to the hon. Member and to the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants before Mr. Davis left the United Kingdom on 8 March.

Racial Attack Group

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the inter-departmental racial attack group last met; who is represented on the group; and when the group is next scheduled to meet.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has recently reconvened the racial attacks group. It had its first meeting on 25 February 1994 and next meets on 9 May 1994.

The group is chaired by the Home Office and draws members from the Home Office, the Scottish Office, the Department of the Environment, the Department for Education, the Department of Health, the Crown Prosecution Service, the legal secretariat to the Law Officers, and representatives from the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Metropolitan police and the Commission for Racial Equality. In addition, other groups and individuals will be invited to contribute to the working of the group as circumstances and subject matter dictate.

Foreign National Flags

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what current regulations and restrictions there are for prohibiting the flying of a foreign national flag from a building other than the embassy which is the property of the country concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

Provisions in the Town and Country Planning Act (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992 permit the flying of the national flag of any country, provided it is on a single, vertical flagstaff and displays no advertisement or subject matter additional to the flag's design. If the flagstaff is not vertical, it may require planning permission. If any building to which the flagstaff is attached is statutorily "listed", it may require listed building consent.

My right hon. Friend has no proposals to amend these provisions.

TRANSPORT

Public/Private Partnerships

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those transport projects involving public/private partnerships, initiated since 1989 which *(a)* await parliamentary approval, *(b)* have been approved but are not yet to begin construction, *(c)* are under construction or *(d)* are completed or opened;

(2) if he will list those transport projects involving public/private partnerships, initiated between 1979 and 1989 which *(a)* await parliamentary approval, *(b)* have been approved but are not yet to begin construction, *(c)* are under construction or *(d)* are completed or opened.

Mr. MacGregor: The information is as follows:

	1979-1989	*Since 1989*
(a) Awaiting parliamentary approval	—	Second Channel Tunnel Rail Link
		Crossrail
		Croydon Tramlink
(b) Awaiting construction	—	Birmingham Western Orbital Route
		West Coast Main Line
(c) Under construction	Jubilee Line Extension	Ashford International Station
	Heathrow Express	

Bypasses

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypasses in the trunk roads programme are expected to be opened in the period 1992 to 1995; and if he will list them.

Mr. Key: I set out the bypasses completed in 1991-92 to 1993-94 and plans for 1994-95 to 1995-96:

1991-92

15 bypasses completed:

A5 Chirk Bypass
A6 Burton Latimer Bypass
A6 Quorn-Mountsorrel Bypass
A16 Louth Bypass
A30 Zelah Bypass
A35 Axminster Bypass
A41 Whitchurch Bypass
A43 Blisworth Bypass
A47 Eye Bypass
A65 Draughton Bypass
A134 Fornham St. Martin Bypass
A418 Leighton Linslade Bypass
A516 Etwall Bypass
A595 Hensingham Bypass
A650 Drighlington Bypass

1992-93

14 bypasses completed:

A3 Lipbook-Petersfield Bypass
A3 Milford Bypass
A5 Little Brickhill Bypass
A5 Telford-Shrewsbury Bypass
A6 Market Harborough Bypass
A16 Ludborough Bypass
A16 Stickford Bypass
A27 Brighton and Hove Bypass (Patcham-Coldean)
A47 East Dereham-North Tuddenham Bypass
A47 Norwich Southern Bypass (Contracts 1, 2, 3 and 4)
A66 Bowes Bypass
A523 Macclesfield Relief Road Bypass
A420 Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor Bypass
A602 Little Wymondley Bypass

1993-94

8 bypasses completed:

A27 Crossbush Bypass
A27 Westhampnett Bypass
A39 Wadebridge Bypass
A41 Berkhamsted Bypass
A41 Kingslangley Bypass
A339 Basingstoke Northern Bypass (Stage 3)
A595 Egremont Bypass
A596 Wigton Bypass

1994-95

5 bypasses planned to complete:

A19 Easingwold Bypass
A52 Ashbourne Relief Road Bypass
A65 Burley in Wharfedale Bypass
A564 Foston, Hatton, Hilton Bypass
A568 Widnes Eastern Bypass (North)

1995-96[1]

10 bypasses planned to complete:

A5 Fazely—Two Gates Bypass
A17 Leadenham Bypass
A17 Wigtoft—Sutterton Bypass
A27 Brighton & Hove Bypass (Kingston—Hangleton)
A30/A39 Indian Queens—Fraddon Bypass
A46 Leicester Western Bypass
A249 M2—Iwade Bypass Improvement
A417 Brockworth Bypass
A428 Bedford Southern Bypass
A435 Norton—Lenchwick Bypass

[1] subject to successful completion of statutory procedures and the availability of funds.

Rail Privatisation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is his current estimate of the cost of rail privatisation in the forthcoming financial year;

(2) what is the current estimate for the costs of rail privatisation for the forthcoming financial year.

Mr. Freeman: Planned expenditure by my Department, the Office of the Rail Regulator, and the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising for 1994-95 is £28·9 million. British Rail's and Railtrack's estimates of costs associated with reorganisation are a matter for them.

The breakdown of this estimate is given in the following table:

Expenditure on rail privatisation 1994-95	*Staff and internal costs (£ million)*	*External consultants (£ million)*	*Total (£ million)*
Department of Transport	2·0	12·0	14·0
Office of the Rail Regulator	3·8	1·6	5·4
Office of Passenger Rail Franchising	3·6	5·9	9·5
			28·9

Aircraft (Smoke Hoods)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the fitting of smoke hoods in aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The responsibility for the safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority. It is for the authority to determine the requirements for passenger safety equipment. In the past five years my Department has received the following representations on the subject of smokehoods:

	Number
Transport Select Committee Meetings	3
Early Day Motions	3
Parliamentary Questions	17
Letters from Members of Parliament	23
Letters from the public/smokehood manufacturers	8
Meetings between DOT Ministers and Interested parties	2

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. MacGregor: The total cost of furniture for my private office for the year 1993-94 was £1,149·15.

British Rail

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, columns *244-45*, whether the public service obligation grant to British Rail was taxed *(a)* in the year to 31 March 1992 and *(b)* in the year to 31 March 1991.

Mr. Freeman: Although the revenue element of PSO grant is taxable, and is taken into account as income in calculating BR's liability for corporation tax, none has been payable for the last few years because BR has had a trading loss even after taking the grant payment into account. The capital element of PSO grant is also taxable, but is taken into account by reducing the amount of expenditure which would otherwise have qualified for tax depreciation allowances.

Network SouthEast Stations

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of all the stations under the Network SouthEast operational area indicating whether they are *(a)* staffed at all times when rail services are operating, *(b)* unstaffed at certain times of day, *(c)* unstaffed at weekend or *(d)* unstaffed at all times, and listing the number of (i) reported assaults, (ii) other reported crimes, (iii) other incidents, (iv) complaints relating to the availability of tickets and (v) other complaints that have occurred at each station over the past year.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally and, therefore, is not available in the form requested.

Within the operational area of Network SouthEast, which includes five stations belonging to InterCity, there is a total of 948 stations. Of these, as at June 1993, 191 were totally unstaffed, 104 were staffed at all times when rail services were operating, with the remaining 653 being staffed at certain times during the day. I am placing a list of staffed and unstaffed stations in the Library of the House.

The British Transport police keep statistics of crimes by category rather than by station. The Network SouthEast operational area falls within two of the BTP's operational areas, London north and London south. The total reported crime for the London north area in 1993 was 14,680 and 17,826 for London south. There were a total of 645 reported assaults throughout Network SouthEast in 1993 together with 800 reported robberies.

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Norris: One. Mr. L. J. Haynes took up post on 14 February as chief executive designate of the Highways Agency. He was recruited from outside the civil service following an open competition.

New Road Schemes

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the extent to which his proposed new procedures for expediting new road scheme approvals will be compatible with existing European Union rules.

Mr. Key: The proposed changes to the Highways Inquiries Procedure Rules 1976 and the Compulsory Purchase by Ministers Inquiry Procedure Rules 1967 are compatible with existing European Community rules.

HGVs (Taxation)

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to amend the criteria for restricted HGV taxation class to exclude all vehicles with a plating certificate; what are the reasons for these plans; and if he will ensure that no amendments are made until the next licence renewal or the end of 1994 whichever is the later.

Mr. Key: The restricted HGV taxation class is for vehicles with no plated weight. After April 1994 and only when current licences expire, a small number of vehicles which have been issued with a plating certificate specifying a plated weight but which are currently exempt from plating and testing will, on legal advice, be excluded from the restricted HGV tax class.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to narrow the criteria for heavy and light locomotives and motor tractors, as defined in the Road Traffic Act 1988, in relation to the equipment that may be carried, to qualify for showman's concessionary HGV licensing class; what are the reasons for these plans; and if he will allow a phasing in period to allow showmen and others to adapt their vehicles to meet the Department's new criteria.

Mr. Key: There are no plans to change the definitions of a heavy or light locomotive or a motor tractor in the Road Traffic Act 1988. For the purposes of the Road Traffic Act none of these vehicles, by definition, is designed itself to carry a load—though a crane, a dynamo or welding plant or other special appliance or apparatus which is an essentially permanent fixture, is not regarded as a load. Under the Vehicle Excise Act, if operated by a travelling showman, they should be licensed in the showman's haulage tax class, or else, if carrying any of the equipment mentioned above—which would, for vehicle excise purposes, be considered goods or burden—the showman's HGV tax class.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action is being taken to avoid potential danger to the public through usage of under-strength bridges by coaches which exceed the current United Kingdom weight limit.

Mr. Key: The Department has a clear enforcement policy in respect of coaches and other vehicles which do not comply with current weight restrictions in the United Kingdom. The safety and protection of the public is fundamental to this policy.

Railway Rolling Stock (Brakes)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has received from British Rail on the safety of freight wagon brakes.

Mr. Freeman: I understand from the Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate that freight wagon brakes are subject to planned preventative maintenance, visually examined at regular intervals, and tested at each change in the make-up of a train.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the safety of brakes on BR rolling stock;

(2) if he will discuss with the chairman of British Rail the safety of simplified braking systems on freight wagons.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular meetings with the chairman during which various railway safety matters are discussed. I understand from the Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate that it is continuing its discussions with British rail on these matters.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will forbid the introduction of European braking systems on British Rail rolling stock until they have received clearance from the Chief Inspecting Office of Railways.

Mr. Freeman: The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate advise me on matters of railway safety. The inspectorate is continuing its inquiries into the proposed changes to a simplified brake testing system on certain freight wagons. It has requested both statistical and technical information from British Rail—Trainload Freight, in order to give detailed consideration to the proposal.

Traffic Cones Hotline

Mr. Stevenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many complaints have been received by the traffic cones hotline; how many have been followed up; how many have resulted in the removal of cones; and what publicity the hotline has been given.

Mr. Key: Some 2,500 calls have been answered by the cones hotline between its introduction in June 1992 and 9 March 1994. Of these, some 1,200 have been followed up as formal complaints or observations. In three cases inquiries have led directly to the removal of cones. The cones hotline telephone number is displayed at the end of each set of major roadworks on the motorway and trunk road network. It has also been registered with directory enquiries. A press notice about the hotline was issued by the Department on 1 March 1994.

A1

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with representatives of public transport groups in Gateshead prior to his decision on the preferred route for the A1 western bypass through Gateshead.

Mr. Key: The Department met Tyne and Wear passenger transport executive and the local highway

authority Gateshead metropolitan borough council to discuss public transport issues as part of the consultation on the A1 Gateshead western bypass scheme.

Specialist sub-consultants in transportation were appointed to carry out an appraisal of the public transport issues involved and their report was fully considered before a decision was made on the preferred route.

A review of existing information regarding current public transport services and future proposals in Tyne and Wear was carried out. Consultations were held with the local authorities in the area including Gateshead MBC.

The final report concluded that

"the impact of public transport improvements on the A1 corridor is likely to be small, even with the best possible system".

Further, the final conclusion indicated that

"they (public transport improvements) are not an alternative to improving the road network at this particular location".

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made in the programme to dual carriageway the A1 between Newcastle and Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Two sections of dual carriageway have been completed and opened to traffic at Marshall Meadows and Browneside. Two schemes to complete the dualling of the Alnwick bypass are in preparation. A scheme to complete the continuous dualling between Newcastle and north of Alnwick is in the road programme currently under review. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport expects to announce the results of the review shortly.

In Scotland proposals have been published for dualling between Tranent and Haddington and two small schemes south of Dunbar. A further five dualling schemes are in preparation.

Further progress on the upgrading of the A1 will depend upon potential schemes meeting environmental, economic and safety objectives, the overall availability of resources and the relative claims of potential schemes elsewhere in the country.

Traffic, Hastings

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what weighting has been given in his Department's traffic projections for the bypasses along the A259 through Hastings and Rye, to the full and successful completion and operation of the Hastings shopping centre;

(2) what weighting has been given in his Department's traffic projections for the bypasses along the A259 through Hastings and Rye, to the full production by current industry along the Rye Harbour road and to the successful and operating development of the industrial area along that road;

(3) what weighting has been given in his Department's studies of the traffic along the A21 to the full and successful completion and operation of the Hastings shopping centre.

Mr. Key: The effects of existing and projected development and of a range of assumptions about economic growth have been fully taken into account in the forecasts of traffic which have been used for the A21 and A259 scheme appraisals.

Entrance Project, Southampton

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reconsider his refusal to fund the Entrance project in Southampton.

Mr. Key: Not at this stage. We are considering the issues raised by this project with Hampshire county council.

British Rail Pension Fund

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the future of the British Rail pension fund.

Mr. Freeman: There have been frequent detailed discussions on the future pension arrangements between officials from the Department, the BR board and the BR pension trustees. In addition, since the beginning of the year, I have met representatives from the three main railway trade unions and the British Transport Pensioners Federation.

We expect to bring forward proposals shortly for the future of BR pensions funds.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by address all properties acquired by his Department along the line of the proposed east London river crossing and which are *(a)* occupied by tenants of his Department, *(b)* vacant but available for letting, *(c)* vacant but awaiting repair and renovation prior to letting, *(d)* vacant but unsuitable for letting and which could not be renovated at reasonable expense, *(e)* let or leased to the London borough of Greenwich and *(f)* let or leased to housing associations.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* I will write to the hon. Member to supply him with the addresses of the 158 properties along the original route of the east London river crossing acquired by the Department.

The bare facts are that, of those, 133 are currently let, four are vacant but available for letting and 21 are vacant awaiting assessment for repairs and renovations. It is probable that some properties could not be renovated at reasonable expense and in such cases letting will not be possible.

Of the 133 properties currently let, 49 are let to the London borough of Greenwich and 30 to housing associations.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Commercial Organisations

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will list all commercial organisations that have been allocated space in the Palace of Westminster, giving in each case details of space allocated, rent and other charges paid per annum, the procedures that govern such arrangements and the dates on which they started.

Mr. Ray Powell: Accommodation in the Palace has been allocated to commercial organisations as follows:

	m^2
Press Gallery	350
Post Office	150
British Telecom/TRG Telecom	150
BBC	130
Press Association	80
Transport Office	35
Susan Hamilton Agency	20
Reuters	20
Rediffusion	10
Florist	7·5

The accommodation of these organisations within the Palace derives from long-standing agreements and decisions reached by the relevant authorities and Committees of both Houses. It is not possible to identify in any meaningful way the dates on which the respective agreements began. No revenue is received in respect of the provision of this accommodation.

Divisions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hours were spent on Divisions in each of the last five Sessions.

Mr. Newton: Because precise timings are not available for individual divisions, any figure must be an approximation. It may be assumed that divisions take, on average, 14 minutes each. On that assumption, the following shows, by Session, the number of divisions; the total hours taken; and, since the length of the Sessions veries widely, the average time per day in each Session.

	Number of Divisions	*Hours taken*	*Per day*
1988-89	409	95·26	0·33
1989-90	345	80·30	0·29
1990-91	233	54·22	0·20
1991-92	114	26·36	0·19
1992-93	402	93·48	0·23

Register of Members' Interests

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Lord President of the Council what are the percentage changes between the most recent and the previous HMSO published editions of the Register of Members' Interests in respect of *(a)* number of pages, *(b)* cover price and *(c)* costs of printing and publishing.

Mr. Newton: The percentage increase between the most recent and the previous edition of the Register of Members' Interests, HC 205 (93-94) and HC 325 (92-93) respectively are:

	Percentage
Page content	[1]+47
Price	+30·5
Estimated printing and publishing costs	[2]1·4

[1] Calculated on printed pages.
[2] Calculated per printed page.

HMSO regrets that the estimate of printing and publishing costs included in HC 325 (92-93) was incorrect. The figure should be £15,009.

EMPLOYMENT

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no agency chief executive in this Department who is currently paid more than £82,925.

Mines (Accidents)

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of serious accidents and fatalities in *(a)* British Coal pits and *(b)* private licensed mines for each year since 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The table shows the number of fatal and major injuries from that date:

	British Coal		*Licensed mines*	
Year	*Fatal injuries*	*Major injuries*	*Fatal injuries*	*Major injuries*
1986-87	15	952	3	30
1987-88	9	729	3	27
1988-89	18	685	2	25
1989-90	18	587	1	23
1990-91	11	501	1	13
1991-92	10	469	2	17
1992-93	3	326	3	7

Note: The introduction of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurences Regulations on 1 April 1986 further widened the coverage of the major accident category and therefore figures from 1986 onwards are not directly comparable with earlier years.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of serious accidents and fatalities per 100 miners employed in *(a)* British Coal pits and *(b)* private licensed mines for each year since 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member for to the answer I gave him on Monday 24 January, *Official Report*, column *13*.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the cost of administering unemployment benefit in the Doncaster area in each of the past four years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 14 March 1994.

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question concerning the cost of administering unemployment benefit in the Doncaster area over the last four years.

It may be helpful if I explain that the Employment Service (ES) has responsibility for delivering a number of benefits in

addition to unemployment benefit, as well as a range of other services to people seeking employment and training opportunities. Since 1990 the ES has been pursuing a policy of bringing together Unemployment Benefit offices and Jobcentres, with the aim of providing a more efficient and effective service to our clients. Individual ES staff are responsible for all aspects of ES work and it is not possible to provide accurate or meaningful breakdowns of the costs of specific activities after 1990. Therefore, I have provided figures, for the most recent years, relating to the costs of delivering the full range of our services in Doncaster. But I have additionally provided an estimated breakdown of the cost of administering unemployment benefit for you, but I must stress this is an estimate and can only be used as a guide. The figures for 1990-91 are before the Doncaster Unemployment Benefit Offices and Jobcentre costs were merged, and are actual data.

The figures also exclude fixed premises costs, ie the costs of leasing and purchasing premises and the associated running costs. The various methods of collecting this information over the years makes it time consuming and costly to trace those costs relating to the Doncaster offices.

Given these provisions, the relevant costs, which include staff salary and other running costs, such as fuel and telecommunications, are in the attached table.

I hope this is helpful.

Year	*Total cost (£)*	*Administering unemployment benefit (£)*
1990-91	1,596,296	[1]1,291,148
1991-92	2,226,527	[2]1,424,977
1992-93	2,543,453	[2]1,627,810
1993-94[3]	2,754,376	[2]1,707,713

[1] Actual.
[2] Estimate.
[3] Projected.

Job Club Contracts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the training companies which currently have job club contracts in the Doncaster area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 14 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about Jobclub contracts in the Doncaster area.

The attached table lists those organisations operating Jobclubs on behalf of the Employment Service as of 10 March 1994.

I hope this is helpful.

Organisations holding jobclub contracts in the Doncaster area March 1994

Name of organisation	*Type*	*Number of contracts*
Doncaster:		
Prospect Training (Yorkshire) Ltd.	PR	2
Instant Muscle Ltd.	CH	2
Roger Worth Training	PR	1
Microcom	PR	1
Thorne:[1]		
Prospect Training	PR	1

Key PR—Private Provider.
CH—Charity.
[1]The Doncaster area information includes Thorne as this forms part of Doncaster's travel to work area.

Employment Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many females occupy senior officer positions in the Employment Service in Wales *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of all such posts.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Barry Jones, dated 14 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the numbers of women occupying senior officer positions in the Employment Service in Wales.

There are nine posts at Grade 7 level and above in the Employment Service in Wales, one of which is filled by a woman. This represents 11 per cent of the total.

You will wish to know the Employment Service in Wales, along with Employment Service nationally, aims to be an Equal Opportunities employer.

We have produced an Equal Opportunities Policy, signed by my Director in Wales and the Trade Union Side, which has been copied to all my people in the Principality.

There is, too, a five year equal opportunities action plan which sets out targets for disabled, ethnic minority and women representation at various grades.

Particular attention is paid to the development of those who work part-time, the majority of whom are women, as it has been recognised that alternative working patterns are a key element in the retention and development of a valuable, fully trained workforce.

I hope this is helpful.

DEFENCE

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Hanley: The cost of such receptions is included in the entertainment expenditure for my Department which is published in the supply estimates.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Hanley: Entertainment expenditure for my Department is published annually in the supply estimates.

Jet Provost Aircraft

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Jet Provost aircraft have been sold in the current financial year; and if he will list the associated equipment sold with the quantity and the price received for each item.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has contracted to sell 62 Jet Provost aircraft in the current financial year. In the same period 87 engines, six tip tanks and 10 trollyaccs have been sold. Prices are commercial in confidence.

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the marks or categories of the Jet Provost

aircraft sold in the current financial year; what flying time was left to each aircraft under existing operational rules; and what price was received for each aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: Type 3A, type 4 and type 5A Jet Provost aircraft have been sold in the current year. Jet Provost aircraft are not lifed in hours but by a fatigue index factor which is based upon the operational conditions under which the aircraft are flown; and these will determine further flying life. The prices are commercial in confidence.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what *(a)* financial and *(b)* personnel contribution is made by the Federal Republic of Germany towards international activities in Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

Germany pays 8·977 per cent. of costs, on the UN scale of assessment, towards peacekeeping operations. In 1993 its assessment for UNPROFOR was $489·8 million. Total humanitarian aid to the former Yugoslavia for the period January 1993 to 16 February 1994 donated by Germany to UN agencies, according to the latest UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs figures, is $25,318,046. There are no German military personnel serving in the former Yugoslavia. We do not have details of German civilian personnel.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annualised cost of British military operations associated with Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 4 March, *Official Report*, columns *942-43*.

DEFENCE

NATO

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current level of direct financial contributions to the NATO organisation by each of the member countries; and what is proposed for future years.

Mr. Hanley: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Air Training Corps

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the nearest available alternative to RAF Halton as a flying base for the Air Training Corps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The nearest available airfield which could be used as a flying base for the ATC is RAF Henlow. However, this would not necessarily be a practical alternative since the volunteer gliding schools are regional in character, and RAF Henlow is well outside the catchment area for the local ATC and combined cadet force units.

RAF Halton

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) How many years RAF Halton has been used as an operational airfield; and if he will make a statement; (2) for how many years the ATC has flown aircraft from RAF Halton.

Mr. Hanley: Military flying has taken place at Halton for 82 years. It was first used by the Army between 1912 and 1981; since then, it has been used for RAF operational flying. The ATC has flown aircraft from RAF Halton for 46 years.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give his Department's estimate in decibels of the noise nuisance caused to local residents of aircraft flying from RAF Halton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Over a two-week period last year, monitoring equipment positioned on the property of those complainants most affected by noise from flying at RAF Halton revealed that aircraft operations increased the average background noise by up to 8dB(A).

HIV/AIDS

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many armed forces personnel were tested for HIV/AIDS in each of the last four years; what factors he has taken into consideration for deciding whether such tests should be made compulsory and regular; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Information on the number of service personnel tested for HIV is not recorded centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. In accordance with stated Government policy, there is no compulsory HIV/AIDS testing of service personnel, but those who consider themselves to be at risk are encouraged to undergo voluntary testing.

Drug Testing

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Government policy on drug testing for military personnel.

Mr. Hanley: My Department is at present considering the introduction of compulsory random drug testing to supplement existing measures to deter service personnel from drug abuse; the Army conducted trials last year to examine the procedures involved.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Hanley: Freephone facilities are not at present operated by my Department.

A freepost address is used by the armed forces to enable potential recruits to respond to regular and reservist recruitment campaigns. The cost of this service could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The forces aerogramme can be posted free of charge to and from service personnel serving in designated operational areas and their next of kin. Since 1986, the

annual cost of this facility has been some £220,000. Earlier financial information is not available. During the Gulf crisis, this figure rose to £1,400,000. The most recent figure available, for the financial year 1992-93, is £262,000 reflecting increased usage as a result of operations in the former Yugoslavia.

Pregnant Service Women

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many women who formerly served with *(a)* the Royal Navy, *(b)* the Army and *(c)* the Royal Air Force and who were dismissed from the service because they were pregnant have received compensation by way of industrial tribunals finding for them; what were the individual sums paid; what is the total sum paid so far to claimants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: As at 8 March 1994, 1,790 women—350 Royal Navy, 686 Army, 754 RAF—who were dismissed from the services on the grounds of pregnancy had received compensation from the Ministry of Defence to the value of £7,575,912. Such payments have resulted from industrial tribunal awards but most payments followed acceptances by claimants of MOD offers of compensation. To identify individual sums paid could be done only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the number of outstanding cases due to be heard by the industrial tribunals concerning claims for compensation by women who were dismissed from the service because they were pregnant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Some 2,000 cases concerning claims for compensation by women who were dismissed from the services on the grounds of pregnancy remain to be settled and some 1,200 of these are currently listed for hearing at industrial tribunals.

Hunting

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on how many occasions personnel from the Britannia royal naval college in Dartmouth have hunted with the Britannia Beagles Association during duty hours for each year since 1989;

(2) if he will make a statement about the benefits to officers' training of hunting with dogs;

(3) if he will list the number of officers of each rank who have hunted with the Britannia Beagles Association during duty hours, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hanley: Hunting with dogs, either on foot or on horseback, promotes physical fitness and good tactical ground appreciation, both of which are of great value to military training.

Although beagling, like all other recreational activities, is not part of the BRNC Dartmouth training curriculum, and is not therefore undertaken by personnel while on normal duty, members of the Britannia Beagle Association may, if they wish, run with the beagles during compulsory sports afternoons, which are aimed at developing character and promoting fitness, or during off-duty hours.

Records are not maintained by my Department of the number of officers who have hunted with the Britannia Beagles Association, whether during compulsory sports afternoons or during off-duty hours.

Beauforts Dyke Sea Dump

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the Beauforts Dyke sea dump situated between Larne and Stranraer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has received a number of inquiries about phosphorus objects which have been washed ashore in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man in recent years. Some of these suggested that the objects may originate from the former Beauforts Dyke explosives dumping site. Subsequent Ministry of Defence investigations have been unable to identify the origin or purpose of these objects except that our records show that no phosphorus objects were ever stored at Beauforts Dyke.

Civilian Establishments

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *202*, if he will list, from information publicly available, his Department's civilian establishments, their locations and the number of people they each employ.

Mr. Hanley: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave on 8 March, *Official Report*, column *202*.

Military Bases

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *202*, if he will list, from information publicly available, the United Kingdom's home military bases, their locations and the number of service personnel based and civilians employed at each of them.

Mr. Hanley: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 8 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *202*.

WALES

European Structural Funds

14. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the failure of parts of Colwyn borough to get approval for objective 5(b) status under the EU structural funds.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am disappointed that we secured a smaller than hoped for objective 5(b) coverage for Clwyd in spite of a long and hard struggle with the Commission. At a very late stage the Commission insisted on changes to the population basis on which the discussions were being conducted. As a result, reductions had to be made to the United Kingdom's proposals. Within Wales, Colwyn was considered by the Commission to present the weakest case for objective 5(b) status.

Incomes

15. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the extent to which the average income of workers in Wales is compatible with his economic strategy.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend's strategy is based on improving standards of education and training;

improving access to markets; and ensuring a good supply of development land and facilities for industry and commerce. The continuing success of this strategy should enable average earnings in Wales to increase still further.

Government Reorganisation

16. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given since April 1992 together with the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to ways of improving the system of government of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government keep under review ways of improving the system of government in the United Kingdom.

Industry and Agriculture

17. **Mr. Alnger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next plans to meet German Government Ministers to discuss common concerns in industry and agriculture.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans to meet German Federal Government Ministers.

Gross Domestic Product

18. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the most recent estimates of gross domestic product per capita for the people of *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Britain.

Mr. Redwood: In 1992, the latest available, GDP per head was estimated at £7,515 in Wales and £8,813 in Great Britain in 1992.

Satellite Communications

19. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he has taken to encourage high technology firms in the area of satellite communications to set up manufacturing plant in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Inward investment in this and other areas of the information technology sector is promoted actively through IT Wales, with encouraging results.

Public Bodies

20. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new measures he will introduce to make quangos accountable to the people of Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Non-departmental public bodies in Wales are accountable to Parliament—as we have seen in recent months.

I report to the House on money and policy, and the accounting officer on regularity.

Civil Service

21. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has to increase the total of civil service jobs in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Responsibility for assessing the advantages of relocating Government work rests with departmental Ministers. Within the framework of the guidelines covering relocations, every effort is made to attract civil service jobs to Wales.

St. Dogmaels Landslip

22. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to take in relation to the St. Dogmaels landslip.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My officials visited the site last week and have provided me with a full report on the situation. My officials and I stand ready to offer advice and assistance where possible.

Gross National Product

23. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the gross national product per capita currently in Mid Glamorgan and in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Figures on GNP are not available below United Kingdom level. GDP however is available for 1991, which showed Mid Glamorgan at £5,883 compared with Wales £7,218. The estimates tend to understate output in areas where people commute elsewhere for their work.

Unemployment

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the level of male unemployment in Wales at the latest available date; and what was the percentage unemployment rate.

Mr. Redwood: In January 1994, there were 100,500 male unemployed claimants in Wales, representing 13·7 per cent. of the work force.

Rural Railways

25. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received during the last 12 months on the future of rural railway services.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I have received a total of 36 representations.

Pigmeat

26. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to relieve the effects of pigmeat overproduction upon producers in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The problem in the pigmeat market is one of oversupply, largely from elsewhere in the European Union. Prices should recover once production has declined.

Disabled Facilities Grant

27. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he transferred the funding of the disabled facilities grant from the supplementary credit allowance to the basic credit allowance.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Disabled facilities grants have been funded from local authorities' basic credit approvals since April 1992.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his

Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: A total of £31,465 is expected to be spent on freephone and freepost facilities in 1993-94. This expenditure is related to citizens charter activities and the provision of information on the council tax and on agriculture grant applications. Information on such expenditure in previous years is not readily available.

Pupils (Costs)

Sir Harold Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the unit cost per pupil in each local education authority in Wales in 1992-93 for *(a)* nursery/primary and *(b)* secondary pupils.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Provisional data on the net expenditure per pupil in maintained schools in each local education authority area in Wales for 1992-93 are given in the table.

	£ per pupil Nursery/Primary[1]	*£ per pupil Secondary*[1]
Clwyd	1,486	2,243
Dyfed	1,807	2,164
Gwent	1,479	2,226
Gwynedd	1,673	2,430
Mid Glamorgan	1,476	2,300
Powys	1,911	2,088
South Glamorgan	1,494	2,144
West Glamorgan	1,794	2,403
Wales	1,590	2,256

[1] LEA and grant-maintained schools.

Schoolchildren (Vaccinations)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information is held by his Department on the number of schoolchildren who have been vaccinated in schools as part of the school health service.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Complete information on the number of school children vaccinated as part of the school health service is not available centrally. However information on the number of children aged five to 15 vaccinated in any setting in Wales is given in the table. All information relates to the financial year 1992-93.

Number of children aged five to 15 who:

Vaccinated against	*Completed a primary course*	*Received a booster/ reinforcing dose*
Diphtheria	369	5,591
Tetanus	455	16,106
Pertussis	98	[1]—
Polio	471	16,622
MMR[2]	1,221	[1]—
BCG (tuberculosis)	[3]15,442	[1]—
Single antigen rubella[4]	11,122	[1]—

[1] Denotes not applicable.
[2] Measles, mumps and rubella.
[3] Includes children aged one to four.
[4] Females only, aged 15 and under.

Tesco (Grant Aid)

Mr. Faber: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the total sum of grant aid to be made available to Tesco plc by his Department to assist with the building of its new distribution depot at Magor, Gwent; over what period the grant will be paid; and in how many instalments of what value;

(2) what job creation or other criteria need to be met by Tesco plc at its new distribution depot at Magor, Gwent, in order to receive the grant offered to it by his Department.

Mr. Redwood: For reasons of commercial confidentiality, I am unable to comment on the details of any specific application for grant assistance.

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Redwood: No agency chief executives in the Welsh Office are currently paid more than £82,925.

Motorways

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many miles of motorway are currently *(a)* open, *(b)* under construction and *(c)* planned in Wales either (i) as new motorway or (ii) as existing motorway being widened.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The mileages are:

(a) Open—77 miles
(b) Under construction—7½ miles
(c) Planned—15 miles (new)
12 miles (widening of existing).

Wages Councils

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the Trades Union Congress to discuss the consequences of the abolition of wages councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans to meet the TUC to discuss this issue. The abolition of wages councils is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress made in Welsh local authorities towards the recycling of 25 per cent. of household waste.

Mr. Redwood: Information relating to the numbers of bottle banks and amounts of glass collected by local authorities has been published in the 1992 series of the "Environmental Digest for Wales". Definitive information on other aspects of recycling will not be available until all authorities finalise their recycling plans under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to allow supplementary credit approvals to be used for recycling investment.

Mr. Redwood: Local authorities may apply for grant and supplementary credit approvals for waste recycling facilities under the strategic development scheme.

Head Injuries

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which hospitals in Wales employ multidisciplinary rehabilitation teams for treating local patients who have suffered severe head injuries.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Details of the information requested are not held centrally. However, the major neurosurgical units at Morriston hospital and the University hospital of Wales, Cardiff, have multidisciplinary rehabilitation teams for neurosurgical conditions, including brain injury. These regional centres also treat local patients. Neurosurgical patients from north Wales go to Walton hospital, Liverpool. Post-acute rehabilitation may take place closer to patient's homes, in local hospitals or in the community, but information on local provision is not held centrally.

M4

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to introduce variable text signs to warn motorists of problems on the M4 on the approaches to the motorway in south Wales sited at places that would allow drivers to take alternative non-motorway routes.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The motorway network in south Wales has a system of variable message signs providing advanced warning for the Severn bridge. These signs will be upgraded in preparation for the completion of the second Severn crossing and additional variable message signs will be installed on the immediate approaches to the crossings. At present, the Welsh Office has no plans to extend this network.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to *(a)* appoint a road manager for the M4 and *(b)* introduce active traffic management measures to reduce congestion arising from accidents on the M4.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have no plans to appoint a road manager for the M4. The Welsh Office manages the M4 in conjunction with the county highway authorities as its agents.

Traffic management measures already exist. These will be added to should circumstances indicate the need.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to section B, subhead B1 of vote 7 of his Department's spring supplementary estimates, if he will list each additional loan to NHS trusts, and the principal capital items for which they are required; and if he will list those trusts which have interest bearing loans outstanding.

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

	Amount £
Bridgend and District NHS trust Princess of Wales hospital, psychiatric unit	4,703,000
Carmarthen and District NHS trust West Wales hospital ward blocks	2,345,000
Ceredigion and Mid Wales NHS trust North Road Development	432,000
Clwydian Community Care NHS trust Psychiatric unit, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd	2,013,000
Glan Clwyd district general hospital NHS trust Upgrading of wards, paediatric unit	1,515,000
Glan Hafren NHS trust Reorganisation of acute service	3,306,000
Gwent Community Health NHS Trust Community hospital developments	3,000,000
Llandough hospital NHS trust Barry neighbourhood hospital	3,615,000
Llanelli Dinefwr NHS trust Minor capital schemes	341,000
Pembrokeshire NHS trust Minor capital schemes	670,000
Powys health care NHS trust Brecon war memorial	2,545,000
South and East Wales ambulance NHS trust Vehicle replacement	600,000
Swansea NHS trust Operating theatres	1,097,000
Wrexham Maelor hospital NHS trust Wrexham Maelor phase IIA	3,723,000
Total	29,905,000

All NHS trusts have a long-term loan established via their originating capital debt or new long-term loans agreed with the Welsh Office.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to issue guidelines to trusts in the NHS in Wales on the refinement of the estimating procedure for the level of interest-bearing loans they will require.

Mr. Redwood: Through the process of setting, on an annual basis, the external financing limit for each trust, the element for new loans to fund capital developments is determined. Currently, there are no plans to issue further guidance but the position is kept under constant review via the monitoring regime applicable to trusts in Wales.

Milk Marque

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to establish a regional office of Milk Marque in Wales, to cover the whole of Wales as a single region.

Mr. Redwood: Decisions on where Milk Marque should locate its area offices is an operational matter for the Milk Marketing Board initially and for Milk Marque after vesting day.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much his Department spends on child care provision for the under-fives and out-of school provision for children aged over five either directly, excluding provision for departmental staff, or indirectly through resources made available to local authorities or other organisations; what form of provision is thereby provided; how many places are thereby provided; and if he will make a statement on child care.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Welsh Office circular 13/93 stated that the Government see a continuing need for expansion in the range and scale of day care services available to parents and children. It referred to the duty on local authorities under the Children Act 1989 to review the level and pattern of such services, including those available through the medium of Welsh, and to the basis this would provide for planning future provision for their area.

Tables 11.1 and 11.2 of "Activities of Social Services Departments: Year Ended 31 March 1992" show, for example, that numbers of places with registered childminders and in day nurseries have increased by 71 per cent. and 207 per cent. respectively since 1988. Nearly 70 per cent. of children aged three and four attend a maintained school. Detailed figures are contained in "Statistics of Education and Training in Wales: Schools No. 2 1994".

Local authority resources provided under the local government revenue settlement are unhypothecated. It is for each local authority to decide in line with its statutory duties and local needs and priorities how much they provide for these services.

No information is held centrally about expenditure on child care provision by the national health service in Wales.

The Welsh Office has made available £153,000 in 1993-94 for after school and holiday care through the out-of-school grant initiative which the Chwarae Teg consortium is co-ordinating on behalf of the training and enterprise councils. No information is yet available on numbers of places provided. Grants in support of child and family services and for the promotion of the Welsh language, together amounting to some £1,180,000, have gone to voluntary organisations whose members provide day care service for children under eight.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those capital expenditure items that have given rise to the supplementary amount of £263,000 required by his Department under subhead A3 of vote 9 of the Welsh Office spring supplementary estimates.

Mr. Redwood: The increase for capital expenditure obtained under subhead A3 of class XV, vote 9 of the Welsh Office spring supplementary estimate was £283,000. This was covered by unspent resources within my Department's planned total of public expenditure, which was not therefore increased. The bulk of the expenditure is towards the costs, of relocating the training, education and enterprise department from Companies house, Cardiff to the Welsh Office's main building at Cathays park. This follows the release of floor space by the Export Credits Guarantee Department, it will lead to a substantial annual savings in accommodation costs, of around £250,000 per annum. The balance is being spent on (i) capital requirements—furniture and information technology—of the Advisory Committee on Staffing Matters in connection with local government reorganisation, £38,000, and (ii) Welsh Office information technology, £33,000, which represents take-up of entitlement to end-year flexibility following an underspend in 1992-93.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development agency in relation to the motions of no confidence in the board and in the executive directors passed by the UNISON WDA staff branch.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 11 March]:* None.

GPs (Gymnasiums)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to family health service authorities concerning the prescribing by general practitioners of sessions in a gymnasium for NHS patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* I understand that a growing number of GPs are making arrangements with their local leisure centres for vouchers which the doctors can give to patients whom they have assessed as likely to benefit from a suitable course of exercise. This is a matter for GPs' clinical judgment: these are local initiatives, I have no current plans to issue guidance on the subject.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will approve a proposed development, which he has rejected, for a local authority or voluntary-aided school upon educational grounds should the school become grant maintained.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend considers all statutory proposals relating to a significant change of character in grant-maintained and local education authority schools on their merits, and takes full account of all the circumstances.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his estimate of the expenditure upon capital works which will be undertaken by grant-maintained schools in the current year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Robin Squire: Capital grant of £85·7 million was set aside for 1993-94 and £114·9 million is available for 1994-95 to grant maintained schools for expenditure on capital work, reflecting their increased numbers.

Grant-maintained schools are also free to use annual maintenance grant and other funds available to them for capital expenditure.

Cornish Language and Culture

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to restore the education and support training funding in Cornwall to assist the teaching of the Cornish language, Cornish history and culture.

Mr. Robin Squire: None. The Department funded this work for five years as a pilot project which the education support grant programme related to educational needs in a multi-ethnic society. It is for the local education authority to determine whether or not to continue the work as part of its mainstream provision.

City Technology Colleges

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his estimate of the number of surplus places in each city technology college.

Mr. Robin Squire: Some city technology colleges are still building up to full capacity. Total numbers will rise from about 12,000 pupils now to about 15,000 pupils in steady state. Recruitment at age 11, however, is in all cases oversubscribed; there are typically around three applications for every place.

Schools (Surplus Places)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give, for each local education authority for which figures are available, the number of surplus places in *(a)* maintained primary schools and *(b)* maintained secondary schools in January 1992 and January 1993; and what percentage each is of the capacity of school places in each category.

Mr. Forth: The Department collected comprehensive information on surplus school places through a detailed survey in 1991. For the figures derived from that survey, I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) on 31 January 1994, *Official Report*, columns *517-21*.

We intend to make regulations later this year under section 21 of the Education Act 1993 requiring all LEAs and, where it has relevant responsibilities, the new Funding Agency for Schools, to submit information to the Secretary of State annually, beginning in 1994, on the numbers of surplus places in LEA-maintained and grant-maintained schools respectively.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much his Department spends on child care provision for the under-fives and out-of-school provision for children aged over five either directly, excluding provision for departmental staff, or indirectly through resources made available to local authorities or other organisations; what form of provision is thereby provided; how many places are thereby provided; and if he will make a statement on child care.

Mr. Robin Squire: In 1993-94, my Department has made grants totalling £1,004,000 to national organisations —including the Pre-School Playgroups Association, the British Association for Early Childhood Education and the National Children's Bureau—concerned with promoting good practice in educational provision for the under-fives. This Department does not currently fund out-of-school provision for children aged over five. Information on local education authority expenditure on under-fives is not held centrally. In 1992-93, local education authorities in England spent some £6,954 million on provision for all pupils in maintained nursery and primary schools. In 1993, 656,000 children aged under five attended maintained nursery and primary schools, and nearly 700,000 attended pre-school playgroups. Other forms of provision for children under five are matters primarily for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the projected total cost, as identified by the 1993 Hunter building conditions survey, of repairing and restoring the colleges which are the responsibility of the Further Education Funding Council to maintain.

Mr. Boswell: The survey commissioned from Hunter and Partners by the Further Education Funding Council estimated that the total cost of remedial works at colleges entering the further education sector was £839 million, of which £359 million was needed for urgent health and safety work. The maintenance of college premises is the responsibility of the colleges themselves; but the Further Education Funding Council is assisting them through capital grant with the costs of the necessary work.

St. Patrick's School, Birkby

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what consultation processs occurred with the head teacher of St. Patrick's Catholic primary school, Birkby, Huddersfield, before his Department issued an instruction to the governors of the school to conduct a ballot on the question of grant-maintained status;

(2) what consultation he had with the Bishop of Leeds before issuing instructions to the governors of St. Patrick's Catholic school, Birkby, Huddersfield with regard to grant-maintained status;

(3) what reason he had for issuing a directive to the governors of St. Patrick's Catholic primary school, Birkby, Huddersfield, to carry out a ballot of parents on the issue of grant-maintained status;

(4) what consultation he had with the chairman of governors of St. Patrick's Catholic school, Birkby, Huddersfield, before issuing instructions to the governors in relation to grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: On 31 August 1993, the governing body of St. Patrick's Catholic primary school received a parents petition in favour of the school holding a ballot on grant-maintained status. As that petition met the requirements of section 60(2) of the Education Reform Act 1988, the governing body were placed under a duty to hold a ballot.

The Department wrote to the chairman of governors of the school on four occasions during October 1993 about this. The governing body having failed to initiate a ballot within the period required by the Act, the Department informed the chairman of governors on 2 December 1993 that the Secretary of State was minded to direct the governing body to hold a ballot.

In the light of the chairman of governors' response to that letter, the Secretary of State directed the governing body to hold a ballot and to give notice in writing of that ballot to the local education authority and to the trustees of the school.

Neither my right hon. Friend nor the Department has consulted the head teacher of the school or the Bishop of Leeds about this matter.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Patten: Nil.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Patten: Information at this level of distillation is not readily available.

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Patten: The cost of such receptions is included in the administration expenditure for my Department, which is published in the annual report.

Schools, London

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary local authority controlled schools in (i) London and (ii) Lewisham he has visited in the last 12 months.

Mr. Patten: I have visited four local authority secondary schools in London in the last 12 months. None of these schools is in Lewisham.

School Discipline

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the implications of the Children Act 1989 for discipline in schools.

Mr. Forth: None.

Schools, Gloucestershire

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the date on which all schools in Gloucestershire that have been transferred from grammar to comprehensive status in the last 20 years changed status.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member on 8 March, *Official Report*, column *288*.

Undergraduates (Subjects)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table giving for every year since 1979 the total number of undergraduates in *(a)* mathematics, *(b)* physics, *(c)* chemistry, *(d)* all science subjects and *(e)* all subjects.

Mr. Boswell: This information is shown in the table. All figures relate to England only.

Numbers of school leavers and students in further education attempting A levels

(Thousands)

	Maths	*Physics*	*Chemistry*	*All science subjects*[1]	*Any subject*
1980	64·11	46·67	39·48	196·37	206·02
1981	65·69	47·98	41·51	202·22	206·75
1982	71·08	51·77	44·48	216·89	219·21
1983	72·49	50·10	43·95	218·54	216·15
1984	73·46	50·49	43·86	219·09	227·67
1985	73·64	48·21	43·56	215·13	223·86
1986	72·40	45·70	42·58	208·41	221·87
1987	70·16	42·56	39·79	201·53	225·11
1988	69·42	41·26	39·47	194·03	220·50
1989	65·27	40·14	37·41	183·09	221·90
1990	64·02	40·14	40·25	188·39	238·54
1991	60·07	36·86	37·80	176·37	240·39
1992	60·44	36·74	37·86	184·05	244·18
1993	59·37	36·76	38·12	184·93	283·64

Notes:

[1]The "all science subjects" category contains the total number of students attempting mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology or other science. Students taking more than one science subject will therefore be counted more than once.

Sources:

From 1980 to 1991, figures come from the DFE School Examinations Survey and the FE113 survey. They relate to school leavers and students in FE instutions, of any age.

From 1992, the figures come from the DFE database of information for the school performance tables. They relate to pupils of any age, and students in FE of any age.

Grant-maintained Technology Colleges

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools, other than those 12 announced on 28 February, are at each stage of preparing an application to become grant-maintained technology colleges; and if he will name them.

Mr. Robin Squire: There are no separate formal stages in preparing an application to become a technology college. Over 200 secondary schools have asked for information on the technology colleges initiative. We know that many of these are actively seeking to prepare applications, but we are not collecting centrally information on precisely which schools are doing so. Technology colleges will be either grant-maintained or voluntary-aided secondary schools.

Departmental Property

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what property, leased or owned for the purposes of his Department, is not in current use.

Mr. Boswell: All property currently leased to the Department for its central purposes is part of the Government's common user estate. The Department of the Environment—Property Holdings—will be replying for the common user estate.

HEALTH

NHS (Fraud)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the secretary of State for Health (1) pursuant to her answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *37*, for what reasons her Department does not monitor the progress of fraud investigation in the national health service;

(2) what conditions she considers need to change before she will institute routine monitoring of fraud in the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: Responsibility for taking action on suspected fraud lies with the health body concerned. Standing financial instructions of each body should set out responsibilities if fraud is suspected. The Department collects information on completed fraud investigations but it is not necessary or practicable continuously to monitor the status of each inquiry.

Vacant Accommodation

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many rooms, previously occupied as living accommodation by hospital and ancillary staff are currently vacant in each regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville: The results of a survey carried out in December 1992 estimated that there were 1,800 empty residential houses and flats and 11,400 vacant places in staff hostels; of these 150 and 1,019 respectively were identified as surplus, the balance were vacant between lettings. Separate figures for regional health authorities are not available.

Guy's Hospital

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health where each department of Guy's hospital will physically go if the hospital is closed; and how many of the jobs in each department will remain.

Dr. Mawhinney: Following my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's announcement on 10 February, the Guy's and St. Thomas's hospital trust is working with the London implementation group and other key parties to work up detailed proposals for developing Guy's as a centre for local health services and for teaching and research. The future location of departments and staffing implications will depend on the outcome of this work, which will be subject to public consultation.

Maternity Units

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the most recent average length of stay in maternity units in London hospitals is; and what it was in 1984.

Mr. Sackville: Figures for London could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Figures available for the average length of stay, ordinary admissions, non-psychiatric hospitals, by sector, national health service hospitals, England for 1984 and 1991-92 are:

Maternity	*1984*	*1991-92*[1]
Number of days	4·8	3·3

[1](Provisional data for 1991-92).

Source:

Table 14 Department of Health statistical bulletin on hospital activity statistics 10/93, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any London hospitals require patients in maternity units to provide their own bedding for themselves and their new-born babies.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the hospitals themselves, although we are not aware of any such requirements.

Primary Health Care Funding

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of her recently announced package of £85 million funding for primary health care is new money which has not hitherto been set aside for any health programme.

Dr. Mawhinney: The £85 million funding for primary health care in the London initiative zone in 1994-95 comprises £57 million from central funds and £28 million from funds specifically set aside for this purpose by health authorities in LIZ.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each primary care project within the London implementation zone, giving the amount of money already expended and the proposed date of completion of the project.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 18 January *Official Report*, column *525*, for much of this information. This stated that detailed management and monitoring of development programmes is carried out by local health authorities. Expenditure details and proposed completion dates of individual projects are not held centrally.

Financial Information Project Ltd.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who decided upon the rate of interest to be payable by FIP Ltd. on the unauthorised unsecured loan from West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: West Midlands regional health authority was responsible for calculating the interest payable on the loan to FIP Ltd.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action was taken about the unauthorised transfer of £300,000 to FIP Ltd. with a view to investigation of whether a criminal offence had been committed.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she has taken to establish whether directors of FIP Ltd. have personally benefited from the £300,000 loaned to it.

Dr. Mawhinney: Financial Information Project Ltd. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Health Management Trust, a registered charity, and has no directors.

Birth Defects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children have been born with missing or defective limbs in *(a)* the Trent regional health authority and *(b)* the Yorkshire regional health authority in each year for the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Number of children born with missing or deformed limbs (ICDs 755.0-755.9)[1] notified to Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in each year 1983-1992 for the Trent and Yorkshire regional helth authorities

Year	Yorkshire RHA	Trent RHA
1983	137	209
1984	139	177
1985	154	183
1986	110	200
1987	120	189
1988	126	184
1989	127	206
1990	88	166
1991	115	164
1992	89	127

[1]International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

Note:

Prior to 1990 all malformations, however minor, were reportable to OPCS. In January 1990 an exclusion list was introduced. As a result, minor malformations of the toe, coded to ICD 755.6 were no longer notifiable.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to require all NHS health trusts to use NHS in their title.

Dr. Mawhinney: The words "National Health Service" already appear in the full titles of all NHS trusts as recorded in their establishment orders.

South Yorkshire Ambulance Trust

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many people were employed by South Yorkshire ambulance trust to work in the stations in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993-94;

(2) how many paramedics are employed by South Yorkshire ambulance trust; and how many have been transferred to work in the station.

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Dr. B. M. Kingston, for details.

Dog Faeces

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has commissioned on the health hazards posed by dog faeces in public places; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has not commissioned any recent research in this area.

The Public Health Laboratory Service communicable disease surveillance centre monitors human infections including those which may be transmitted from dog to man through the inadvertent ingestion of faeces from infected dogs or soil, environment, food or water contaminated by the source. The CDSC and Central Veterinary Laboratory are currently undertaking a study into the transmission of campylobacter from puppies to humans. Also, a multidisciplinary group on human toxocara infections, initiated by CDSC, has been convened within the United Kingdom, the primary aim of which is to investigate cases of childhood toxocariasis.

The Department takes the health risks posed by dog mess very seriously and strongly encourages adherence to basic hygiene procedures, such as wearing gloves when gardening and washing hands after gardening or, with children, when they have been playing in the garden or parks, et cetera, as well as responsible dog ownership.

Medical Negligence

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many medical negligence claims involving the NHS were brought in each year since 1987-88 in each region.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many medical negligence claims involving the NHS were settled in each year since 1987-88; and what were the costs involved in each region.

Dr. Mawhinney: Before the introduction of the national health service indemnity scheme in January 1990, no information was collected on the number of costs of medical negligence claims. For the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92, the information obtained from NHS bodies on the number of cases settled and the total costs of damages awarded and legal costs is shown in the table, though for the latter the returns are incomplete. For 1992-93, the information is not yet available.

Region	1990-91 cases	Cost £	1991-92 cases	Cost £
Northern	109	1,612,542	207	3,310,101
Yorkshire	152	4,604,209	111	3,302,305
Trent	73	2,611,419	119	2,068,685
East Anglian	38	1,359,416	88	1,736,907
North West Thames	89	8,550,981	221	6,953,648
North East Thames	136	8,463,955	108	5,888,020
South East Thames	n/k	6,117,511	106	7,113,075
South West Thames	104	3,233,021	90	4,663,394
Wessex	52	1,525,320	51	918,639
Oxford	231	2,257,063	131	3,338,657
South Western	56	2,104,301	83	2,872,417
West Midlands	154	3,157,255	145	2,572,646
Mersey	218	1,420,924	108	1,002,181
North Western	183	2,580,467	145	4,729,832
SHAs	23	3,638,822	38	876,858

n/k = Not known.

Consultants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what has been the total expenditure within the NHS on independent private management consultants in the last 12 months; and how many have been employed;

(2) what has been the total expenditure within the NHS on independent financial consultants in the last year; and how many have been employed.

Mr. Sackville: Expenditure on financial and management consultants is included on the annual financial return under the category "external contract staffing and consultancy services", and cannot be separately identified. The figures could include non-clinical services provided by outside bodies in areas such as cleaning, accountancy and computer services.

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fundholders overspent their budget in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1991-92, 49 of the 294 general practitioner fundholders overspent their budgets. Final audited information is not yet available for 1992-93.

Public Relations

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total expenditure within the NHS on independent public relations companies in the last 12 months; and how many have been employed.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 16 February, *Official Report*, column *866*.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much her Department spends on child care provision for the under-fives and out-of-school provision for children aged over five either directly, excluding provision for departmental staff, or indirectly through resources made available to local authorities or other organisations; what form of provision is thereby provided; how many places are thereby provided; and if she will make a statement on child care;

(2) if she will make a statement about child care.

Mr. Bowis: The Government are committed to encouraging expansion of independent day care services. The pattern and levels should be determined at local level by local authorities, voluntary bodies, the private sector, employers and individuals—including parents, working together. The Children Act 1989 gives local authorities a strategic duty for day care, which ensures coherent and sensible expansion, building on the recent growth in day nurseries, numbers of childminders and other types of service.

Information on local authority expenditure on child care is not available centrally by separate age group. Standard spending for children's services generally in 1993-94 is £1,723 million, 16 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1990-91.

The latest statistics on day care provision are in "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March 1992—England", a copy of which is in the Library.

Detailed information about the cost and level of nursery provision in the national health service is not available centrally. It is for individual NHS employers to provide for the child care needs of their staff in the light of local recruitment and retention needs.

The Department has an active programme of grant aid to voluntary organisations to support the development of innovative services. During 1993-94 over £2·3 million has been made available to support 13 national voluntary organisations, including the National Childminding Association, the Pre-School Playgroups Association and the Kids' Club Network. The Department's out-of-school initiative, which involves national and local voluntary organisations in the management of projects, is pump priming expansion of day care for school age children. It complements the Department of Employment's child care grant to training and enterprise councils.

Skin Cancer

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in the last two years have *(a)* been diagnosed as having skin cancer and *(b)* have died from skin cancer; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the tables:

Number of newly diagnosed cases of skin cancer [1](ICDs 172 and 173) in England and Wales 1987-88

ICD	172 (Malignant melanoma of skin)	173 (Other malignant neoplasm of skin)
Year		
1987	3,139	26,246
1988	3,882	31,998

Number of people who have died from skin cancer [1](ICDs 172 and 173) in England and Wales 1987-92

ICD	172 (Malignant melanoma of skin)	173 (Other malignant neoplasm of skin)
Year		
1987	1,030	441
1988	1,078	430
1989	1,099	447
1990	1,170	436
1991	1,169	465
1992	1,142	486

[1]International Classification of Diseases, ninth revision.

Multiple Sclerosis

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is currently being undertaken in the United Kingdom on the causes of, and cure for, multiple sclerosis; and by how much the Government have grant aided the research institutions in each year since 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

The main agency through which the Government support medical and related biological research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from my Department. The MRC is an independent body

deciding what research to support in the light of its own judgment of priorities and the quality of research applications it receives. The council is always willing to consider soundly based scientific proposals in competition with other applications for research funding.

The MRC supports a wide range of neurological research relevant to multiple sclerosis, in particular studies of the neuromuscular system. The 1992-93 funding in this area was a total of £13·3 million. The council's specific expenditure on multiple sclerosis in the period 1987-88 to 1992-93 was as follows:

Financial year	£
1987-88	297,000
1988-89	216,000
1989-90	181,000
1990-91	181,000
1991-92	80,000
1992-93	64,000

In addition, the MRC's new initiative on the neurosciences approach to human health will help to promote several approaches which may be relevant to the disease.

Besides MRC-funded work, there is also research being undertaken in various universities and NHS hospitals with public funding. However, information is not collected centrally on other Government-funded research on multiple sclerosis.

Doctors (Management of Services)

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she is currently taking to encourage the involvement of doctors and other medical staff in the management of services.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* Ensuring effective collaboration between clinicians and managers has been central to the reforms in national health service management.

One of the basic elements of the resource management programme in the hospital and community health services was the encouragement of clinical staff to become involved in management. This led in many cases to the appointment of doctors and other health professionals as clinical directors. Most NHS trusts now have a medical director on their board, contributing to their strategic and operational management.

The need for managers and clinicians to work closely together is essential to the success of contracting. Guidance has been issued to purchasers and providers requiring them to involve clinicians and other professionals in the contracting process. The need to involve doctors and nurses in the contracting process was also stressed in the second of my speeches on "Purchasing for Health" last year.

Encouraging general practitioners to join the GP fundholding scheme brings them in to the heart of NHS management and patients have clearly benefited from the more sensitive management of NHS resources which this brings.

Opportunities for specific training in aspects of management are available to doctors during their postgraduate training and are included in continuing education programmes.

The National Health Service Management Executive also supports, and partly funds, the British Association of Medical Managers, whose overall aim is to achieve the highest quality in health care management.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Clergy Numbers

31. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what projections the Church Commissioners are using of future numbers of clergy and their pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answers I have just given to the hon. Members for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Stipends

32. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what advice the Church Commissioners have given to the diocese about the contribution to be made by the diocese towards stipends and pensions in each of the next five years.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners have recently discussed with dioceses their projected support for stipends and expenditure on pensions up to 1997. In 1993, the commissioners met 37 per cent. of the total stipends bill, with the remaining 63 per cent. provided from parishes, fees and diocesan income. By 1997, that figure is likely to rise to 80 per cent. as a consequence of cuts in the commissioners support. The longer-term funding of pensions, which currently take up 44 per cent. of the commissioners' income, is being considered by the commissioners and pensions board in the light of actuarial advice and a range of possible options will be discussed with dioceses and others later this year.

33. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what changes have occurred in the past three years in the funds available to the Church Commissioners.

Mr. Alison: The Church Commissioners manage the Church's centralised historic assets; it is a "closed fund" with no new contributions coming in. The commissioners' assets were valued at £2·4 billion at 31 December 1990, £2·3 billion in 1991 and £2·2 billion in 1992; their investment income was £164·5 million, £169·5 million and £168 million respectively. 1993 figures are not yet available.

Assets Committee (Investments)

34. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners what procedural changes have been made in the reporting mechanism from the assets committee to the Church Commissioners on investment performance.

Mr. Alison: The Church Commissioners' board of governors has recently taken a number of steps to strengthen the commissioners' financial management and accountability. The board's actions come as a direct result of the recommendations of the Lambeth report and are part of an ongoing process to address all the issues raised in it.

The board has strengthened its relationship with the commissioners' assets committee through general rules under which the assets committee is to work. These provide for the assets committee:

To review, at least annually with external professional advice, asset allocation and investment performance.

To manage the Commissioners' assets with full regard to the commissioners' ethical policy approved by the Board on the recommendation of the assets committee.

To seek the express approval of the board before any new borrowing.

To report quarterly to the board.

The rules are designed to offer direction and guidance to the assets committee and to reinforce the link between the two bodies.

Theological Colleges

35. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church Commissioners are taking to ensure that theological colleges which receive their financial support comply with the law in respect of canon C7.

Mr. Alison: This is not a matter for the Church Commissioners. The cost of training is met from General Synod and other funds, not from the commissioners. The training of candidates for ordination is carried out under the direction of the House of Bishops, which is advised by the Advisory Board of Ministry.

Pensions Board (Discretionary Help)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners what instructions the pensions board has been given for those applying for discretionary help under the Ordination of Women (Financial Provisions) Measure 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: The pensions board has formulated internal guidelines, in consultation with the commissioners, for handling applications for discretionary provision. The board will consider each case on an individual basis, having regard to those guidelines.

SCOTLAND

Contracts

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the practice of United Kingdom companies imposing contracts on domestic consumers in Scotland which state that the governing law of the contract shall be English law.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: An examination of records held by the Scottish Office has revealed no such representations.

Health Boards

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what procedures are used by Ayrshire and Arran health board to verify the credentials of individuals seeking employment with the health board.

Mr. Stewart: The procedures used by Ayrshire and Arran health board to verify the credentials of a potential candidate will depend on the qualifications requirement for the post in question. References are taken up in respect of all potential employees.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the parliamentary constituencies covered by each of Scotland's health boards; and if he will list the names of the general managers and chief executives and the correspondence addresses of each of the boards.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is contained in the table.

Health Board	*General Manager*	*Address*	*Constituencies covered*
Argyll and Clyde	Mr. I. C. Smith	Gilmour House Paisley PA1 1DU	Argyll and Bute Paisley North, Paisley South, Dumbarton, Greenock and Port Glasgow Renfrew West and Inverclyde
Ayrshire and Arran	Mr. J. M. Eckford OBE	PO Box 13 Seafield House Doonfoot Road Ayr KA7 4DW	Cunninghame North Cunninghame South Ayr Kilmarnock and Loudoun Carrick Cumnock and Doon Valley
Borders	Mr. D. A. Peters OBE	Huntleyburn Melrose Roxburghshire TD6 9BP	Tweeddale Ettrick and Lauderdale Roxburgh and Berwickshire
Dumfries and Galloway	Mr. D. Banks	Nithbank Dumfries DG1 2SD	Dumfries Galloway and Upper Nithsdale
Fife	Miss P. Frost	Springfield House Cupar Fife KY15 5UP	Dunfermline West Dunfermline East Kirkcaldy Central Fife North East Fife

Health Board	General Manager	Address	Constituencies covered
Forth Valley	Mr. D. Hird	33 Spittal Street Stirling FK8 1DX	Clackmannan Stirling Falkirk East Falkirk West
Grampian	Mr. F. Hartnett OBE	Summerfield House 2 Eday Road Aberdeen AB9 1RE	Aberdeen North Aberdeen South Kincardine and Deeside Gordon Moray Banff and Buchan
Greater Glasgow	Mr. T. A. Divers (Acting)	112 Ingram Street Glasgow G1 1ET	Clydebank and Milngavie Strathkelvin and Bearsden Garscadden Maryhill Springburn Provan Shettleston Rutherglen Central Cathcart Eastwood Pollock Govan Hillhead
Highland	Dr. G. Stone	Reay House 17 Old Edinburgh Road Inverness IV2 3HG	Caithness and Sutherland Ross Cromarty and Skye Inverness Nairn and Lochaber
Lanarkshire	Prof. F. Clark CBE	14 Beckford Street Hamilton ML3 OTA	Cumbernauld and Kilsyth Monklands West Monklands East Motherwell North Motherwell South Hamilton Clydesdale East Kilbride
Lothian	Mr. J. Lusby	148 The Pleasance Edinburgh EH8 9RR	Edinburgh Central Edinburgh East Edinburgh West Edinburgh South Edinburgh Pentlands Leith Linlithgow Livingston East Lothian Mid Lothian
Orkney	Mr. G. Jackson	Balfour Hospital New Scapa Road Kirkwall Orkney KW15 1BQ	Orkney and Shetland
Shetland	Mr. B. J. Atherton	Brevik House South Road Lerwick Shetland ZE1 ORB	Orkney and Shetland
Tayside	Miss L. Barrie	PO Box 75 Vernonholme Riverside Drive Dundee DD1 9NL	Dundee East Dundee West Perth and Kinross North Tayside Angus East
Western Isles	Mr. R. Mullen	37 South Beach Street Stornoway Isle of Lewis PA87 2BN	Western Isles

NHS Trusts

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the parliamentary constituencies and health board areas within which each of Scotland's NHS trusts lies; and if he will list the names of the general managers and chief executives and the correspondence addresses of each of the NHS trusts in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is contained in the following table.

NHS Trust	*Health Board Area*	*Chief Executive*	*Trust Address*	*Parliamentary constituency*
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals	Grampian	Mr. J. Barbour OBE	Foresterhill House Ashgrove Road West Aberdeen AB9 1ZB	Aberdeen North
Ayrshire and Arran Community Healthcare	Ayrshire and Arran	Mr. H. Sutherland	1A Hunters Avenue Ayr KA8 9DW	Ayr
Caithness and Sutherland	Highland	Mr. G. Buchanan	Caithness General Hospital Wick Caithness KW1 5LA	Caithness and Sutherland
Dundee Teaching Hospitals	Tayside	Mr. T. E. W. Brett	Ninewells Hospital Dundee DD1 9SY	Dundee West
Grampian Healthcare	Grampian	Mr. J. Taylor	Westholme Woodend General Hospital Eday Road Aberdeen AB2 6LR	Aberdeen North
Monklands and Bellshill Hospitals	Lanarkshire	Mr. J. Currie	Monklands District General Hospital Monks Court Avenue Airdrie ML6 0JS	Monklands East
Moray Health Services	Grampian	Mrs. E. Hogg	Maryhill House 317 High Street Elgin Moray IV30 1AJ	Moray
North Ayrshire and Arran	Ayrshire and Arran	Mr. D. J. Fraser	Crosshouse Hospital Kilmarnock KA2 0BE	Kilmarnock and Loudoun
Raigmore Hospital	Highland	Mr. K. G. Mackie	Raigmore Hospital Perth Road Inverness IV2 3UJ	Inverness Nairn and Lochaber
Royal Alexandra Hospital	Argyll and Clyde	Mr. M. F. Hill	Corsebar Road Paisley PA2 9PN	Paisley South
Royal Scottish National and Community	Forth Valley	Mr. D. Pollacchi	Old Denny Road Larbert FK5 4SD	Falkirk West
South Ayrshire Hospitals	Ayrshire and Arran	Mr. D. McNeil	The Ayr Hospital Dalmellington Road Ayr KA6 6DX	Ayr
Southern General Hospital	Greater Glasgow	Mr. R. Calderwood	Southern General Hospital 1345 Govan Road Glasgow G51 4TF	Govan

NHS Trust	Health Board Area	Chief Executive	Trust Address	Parliamentary constituency
Stirling Royal Infirmary	Forth Valley	Mr. K. W. O. Thomson	Stirling Royal Infirmary Livilands Stirling FK8 2AU	Stirling
Victoria Infirmary	Greater Glasgow	Mr. J. G. Connaghan	Queens Park House Langside Road Glasgow G42 9TT	Glasgow Central
West Lothian	Lothian	Mr. P. B. Taylor	St. John's Hospital at Howden Livingston West Lothian EH54 6PP	Livingston
Yorkhill	Greater Glasgow	Mr. G. Marr	Royal Hospital for Sick Children Yorkhill Glasgow G3 8SJ	Hillhead

Management Systems

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department's computer-aided facilities management systems cost; from whom they were purchased; how many person hours were required to commission them; what the estimated and actual saving has been from their operation; and to what extent the use of such systems accounts for the apparent rise in theft noted in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 17 February, *Official Report,* column *961.*

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Office does not have an integrated computer-aided facilities management system. Computers which also perform other functions provide some elements of such a system. Sun Hardware is used, which was acquired from Design Computer-Aids Ltd. Information about the cost of the facilities management elements, the time required to commission them and the savings resulting from their operation cannot be separately identified. No part of the system has been stolen.

Forestry

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if Forest Enterprise will co-operate with customers who wish to conduct inspections of its operations in order to satisfy consumer demands for independently certified timber.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* Forest Enterprise is always willing to show its customers, and the general public, how it manages Forestry Commission woodland. However, there is no need to duplicate the inspections already carried out by the Forestry Authority arm of the Commission. Forest Enterprise is required to follow the environmental guidelines published by the authority and prepared in consultation with forestry industry and environmental organisations.

Blood Supplies

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the price per unit of supplies of blood and plasma to Health Care International; and on what date this price was set;

(2) if the price per unit of supplies of blood and plasma to private hospitals is the same for all; and how frequently the price per unit is reviewed;

(3) what is the current minimum cost at which blood and plasma can be supplied to private hospitals.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* The charges for the supply of blood or blood products made by the Scottish Blood Transfusion Service are the same to all private hospitals including Health Care International. The current charges were fixed in October 1993 to come into effect from 1 April 1994 and are reviewed annually. There is no minimum as the charges reflect actual costs and are as follows:

	£
Whole Blood	64·00
Red Cell Concentrate	36·75
Specialised (Washed) RCC	66·75
Specialised (Filtered) RCC	61·75
Specialised (Frozen) RCC	166·75
Platelet Concentrate (random donation)	30·25
Platelet Concentrate (apheresis donation)	150·00
Fresh Frozen Plasma (220 ml)	29·50
Cryoprecipitate	27·50
Stable Plasma Protein Solution (4·5 per cent.) (18g)	30·00

There are a number of other blood products which are derived from blood donations. These are not usually required by private hospitals but if they were and there was a surplus to NHS needs, the price would be calculated on application.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what percentage of total blood supplies was supplied to private hospitals over the last five years;

(2) what percentage of total plasma supplies was supplied to private hospitals over the last five years;

(3) what are the projected levels of demand for blood and plasma from private hospitals over the next five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* The information is as follows:

Percentage

Year	*Total blood supplied*	*Total plasma supplied*
1988-89	0·97	0·42
1989-90	0·94	0·48
1990-91	0·90	0·53
1991-92	0·79	0·46
1992-93	0·89	0·57

No estimate of projected levels of demand from private hospitals has been made since the priority is to meet NHS demands and only surplus over-needs will be available to the private hospitals.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was *(a)* the number of blood donors, *(b)* the quantity of blood donated and *(c)* the amount of blood required for each health board for each month since April 1993;

(2) in how many of the Scottish health board areas there is a surplus of donated blood; and in which areas blood plasma is in short supply.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* Monthly figures for the regional centres could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The available information is as follows:

Blood Transfusion Region	*Number of registered donors*	*Number of donations of blood from 1 April 1993 to January 1994*	*Number of issues of whole blood 1 March 1993 to 30 June 1993*
North of Scotland	21,988	13,067	126
Aberdeen and North East of Scotland	35,762	23,243	294
East of Scotland	29,356	22,309	195
Edinburgh and South East Scotland	86,368	60,332	243
Glasgow and West of Scotland	219,264	116,212	15
Total	392,738	235,163	873

Note 1

The number of issues of blood to health bodies within Health Board areas is equal to their requirements. Regional Centres extract fresh blood components from donations and send the remaining plasma to the Protein Fractionation Centre for processing into blood products and which are then issued to hospital and other NHS users.

The Regional Centres are self sufficient in whole blood and all fresh blood and plasma products. Blood plasma is not in short supply in any area in Scotland.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many units of blood and plasma are to be supplied annually by the Scottish blood transfusion service to Health Care International; and what percentages these amounts will form of total blood and plasma supplies;

(2) if there is an upper limit contained within the Transfusion Service's supply contract for the supply of blood to Health Care International;

(3) what are the projected levels of demand for blood and plasma from Health Care International over the next five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* Under the contract, the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service will supply the undernoted maximum number of units of fresh blood components and plasma annually, subject to NHS needs in Scotland being met first. The contract will be kept under continuous review and the level of demand over the next five years placed on the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service will relate to availability of supplies.

	Unit	*Quantity*
Red cell concentrate	donation	5,000
Platelets—single donor	procedure	600
—random	donation × 5	100
Fresh frozen plasma	donation	800
Cryoprecipitate	donation	56

The SNBTS will also supply to Health Care International processed stable plasma protein solution made from plasma after other components have been removed and made into pharmaceutical products for use within the NHS. The maximum amount of SPPS to be supplied is as follows:

	Unit	*Quantity*
SSPS (18 gram)	400 mls	Up to a maximum of 4,000 units (if available)

If the maximum units specified in the contract are supplied in response to clinical needs this will represent 2 per cent. of the total number of units supplied in Scotland.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the statutory safeguards which ensure blood and plasma supplies will only go to private hospitals if national health service needs are satisfied;

(2) if he will publish the supply contract for blood and plasma between the Scottish blood transfusion service and Health Care International;

(3) what powers the transfusion service has to recover supplies from Health Care International if faced with shortages of blood for the national health service in any part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has power under section 44 of the NHS (Scotland) Act 1978 where he has acquired supplies of human blood for the purpose of carrying out blood transfusion or supplies of other substances or preparations for the purposes of providing services under the 1978 Act, to make arrangements for making such supplies available to medical practitioners and other persons who require

them and he may make those available on such terms including terms as to payment of charges and on such conditions as he may determine.

Under section 54 of the 1978 Act he is required to exercise the powers conferred on him under section 44 only to the extent that he is satisfied that anything which he purported to do or allow under that power—

(a) will not to a significant extent interfere with the performance by him of any duty imposed on him by the 1978 Act to provide services of any kind, and

(b) will not to a significant extent operate to the disadvantage of persons having access to services at Health Service hospitals otherwise than as private patients.

My right hon. Friend has delegated his powers in relation to section 44 of the Common Services Agency of which the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service is a division. The supply of blood and blood products to private hospitals is therefore subject to the obligation under section 54.

Arrangements are being made for a copy of the contract with the Health Care International to be placed in the Library. The contract stipulates that in situations of extreme shortage the regional director or depute will have the right to retrieve products from the hospital in order to maintain supplies essential for the immediate and pressing requirements of NHS-funded patients. Responsibility for blood supplies in other parts of the United Kingdom is a matter for the appropriate Secretary of State.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 15 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what improvements are planned for the system of selecting solicitors and counsel to act for the Legal Aid Board in the future; and what consideration has been given to providing an opportunity for all suitably qualified firms of solicitors and counsel to benefit from the available work which the Legal Aid Board is able to provide.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No changes are planned. Suitably qualified solicitors and counsel are instructed by the board as required. Any suitably qualified firm of solicitors or counsel have the opportunity to be instructed just as they have the opportunity to be instructed by any other client choosing a legal representative.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what directions and other guidance are given to solicitors and counsel acting for the legal aid fund to ensure that costs from unsuccessful non-legally aided litigants are recovered for the benefit of the legal aid fund.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The instructions given by the board will depend on the nature of the particular case. In general terms, the board will seek to recover costs wherever possible.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many cases have been decided or settled against the Legal Aid Board.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what rates of remuneration have been claimed since the creation of the Legal Aid Board by firms of solicitors acting for the Legal Aid Board in litigation; if he will specify the expense rates and mark-up claimed by such firms of solicitors in their bills and the period or periods to which such charges relate; and what are the comparable rates allowed upon taxation and the proposed civil legal aid rates.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Information on the rates of remuneration since the creation of the board claimed by firms of solicitors acting for the board and on the expense rates and mark-up rates claimed by those firms is not available. A prescribed hourly rate for civil non-matrimonial cases came into force on 25 February 1994. Details of the rates and their application are given in the following statutory instruments which are available from HMSO:

SI 1994/228 Legal Aid in Civil Proceedings (Remuneration) Regulations 1994

SI 1994/229 Civil Legal Aid (General) (Amendment) Regulations 1994

SI 1994/230 Legal Aid in Family Proceedings (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 1994

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many bills submitted by firms of solicitors acting for the Legal Aid Board have been reduced by negotiation or taxation; and what amounts have been saved in real and percentage terms.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many firms of solicitors have been instructed by the Legal Aid Board's head office legal department to conduct litigation on behalf of the Legal Aid Board.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much has been paid by the Legal Aid Board since its creation to *(a)* firms of solicitors instructed by the Legal Aid Board to represent the Legal Aid Board in litigation, *(b)* the firm of Messrs. Collyer-Bristow when instructed to act for the Legal Aid Board in litigation and *(c)* counsel instructed to act for the Legal Aid Board in litigation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: *(a)* The information requested is not available. *(b)* It is not the Legal Aid Board's policy to disclose details of a commercially confidential nature between itself and its suppliers. *(c)* The information requested is not available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what redundancies are being made at the Liverpool area office of the Legal Aid Board; who is being made redundant; what are their qualifications and experience; how many years service they have had in being employed in dealing with legal aid matters by *(a)* the Legal Aid Board and *(b)* the Law Society when it was responsible for administering legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A voluntary redundancy scheme has been introduced and 17 volunteers are being sought. The Legal Aid Board cannot predict with certainty which staff will volunteer.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many staff have been, are and will be engaged in the Liverpool area office of the Legal Aid Board on franchising; and how much time has been, is being and will be spent on franchising.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Up to now, three senior staff at the Liverpool area office have been engaged on a part-time basis carrying out preliminary audits. Over the next four to six months an additional six quality auditors will be engaged at that office on a part-time basis on the pre-contract audits. Excluding training in the current financial year, the equivalent of one full-time member of staff has been engaged on franchising. In the next financial year, with the commencement of pre-contract audits this figure will increase to approximately four full-time equivalents. This figure will increase if a higher than predicted number of applications is received in this office.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what the staff levels, taking account of qualifications and experience to be employed by the Liverpool area office of the Legal Aid Board will be after the redundancies which are to take place; and what were the comparable staff levels employed prior to *(a)* the creation of the Legal Aid Board and *(b)* the redundancies.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Seventy-three staff will be employed in the Liverpool area office post the redundancy programme; 80 staff were employed in the office in 1988 prior to the board's creation. The number of staff employed in March 1994 prior to any staff leaving under the voluntary redundancy programme is 90.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what criteria are used to select solicitors firms and counsel to be instructed by the Legal Aid Board; what are the costs considerations involved; and who is responsible for the selection.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The criteria used for these purposes are value for money, fitness for purpose and delivery against price. The costs considerations are value for money given the nature, complexity and importance of the matter. A number of individual staff are responsible for the selection of solicitors' firms and counsel, depending on the nature of the particular matter.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many court actions have been brought by and against the Legal Aid Board since its creation; in how many cases the Legal Aid Board has conducted such litigation by solicitors *(a)* employed at the Legal Aid Board area offices, *(b)* employed by at the legal aid head office and *(c)* in private practice.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what volumes of work have been received by the legal aid area office in Liverpool immediately prior to its creation and in each year thereafter; and how the volume of work is calculated and recorded.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In 1988-89, immediately prior to the Legal Aid Board's creation, the Liverpool area office handled 51,041·9 units of work. The table shows work volumes for each full year since then.

	Units
1989-90	53,199·2
1990-91	51,975·4
1991-92	57,485·8
1992-93	65,706·2

Units of work are calculated using a series of weighted calculations derived from the standard times necessary to complete specific transactions. The volume of work is calculated and recorded by computer.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much the Legal Aid Board's administration and the legal aid fund, respectively, has had to pay by way of *(a)* damages and *(b)* costs in respect of litigation in which the Legal Aid Board has been unsuccessful.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how quickly bills submitted to the Legal Aid Board by firms of solicitors acting on its behalf have been paid; and what scrutiny, including referring the matter for taxation, takes place before such bills are paid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested on the speed with which the board pays firms of solicitors which have acted for it is not available. Bills received from solicitors instructed to act for the board are scrutinised by the Department which has been responsible for issuing the instructions. If necessary, the board would apply for a solicitor and own client taxation in respect of a bill submitted by a solicitor instructed to act for it.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many cases have been brought by or against the Legal Aid Board since its creation by a party who is legally aided.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many sets of counsels' chambers and individual counsel have been instructed to represent the Legal Aid Board in litigation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what fees have been paid directly by the Legal Aid Board to counsel who have been instructed by firms of solicitors acting for the Legal Aid Board.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what staff will be left in the Liverpool legal aid area office following the redundancies; and what are the qualifications and experience of the remaining staff.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Seventy-three staff will be employed in the Liverpool area office after the redundancy programme. It is not possible to say what the mix of staff will be after the redundancy exercise. The redundancy exercise is a voluntary arrangement and the Legal Aid Board cannot predict with any certainty which staff will volunteer.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what cost has been involved in franchising at the Liverpool area office of the Legal Aid Board to date; what further costs are envisaged; what savings have been made as a result of franchising in real terms; and how such savings have been calculated.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The cost of establishing franchising in the Liverpool area office has been the cost of training four existing staff and of recruiting and training five additional staff. Excluding salaries this is estimated to be £42,500. The cost of running franchising in the Liverpool office on an on-going basis is £100,000 per annum.

Franchising has been introduced to ensure the delivery of a quality assured, value for money legal aid service from the board's suppliers, mainly solicitors. Franchising has not been introduced to achieve savings in the administration costs of legal aid.

Judges

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on how many occasions in each year since 1987 his Department has written to individual judges regarding their interpretation of the workings of the legal system; if he will list each such occasion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department conducts a great deal of correspondence with the judiciary on a wide variety of topics which is usually conducted on a confidential basis. Information on the precise volume and nature of correspondence is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HEALTH

Life Expectancy and Infant Mortality

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the contribution of prescribing practice and limitation to the change of life expectancy and infant mortality.

Dr. Mawhinney: Life expectancy has improved steadily and the rate of infant mortality has improved markedly over the past 10 years. Prescribing is only one part of clinical care; increased health screening, promotion and vaccination and the availability of new medicines will all have contributed to these improvements.

Toxoplasmosis

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to publish information from the Public Health Laboratory Service showing the number with toxoplasmosis in pregnancy; and if she will give the results why testing for toxoplasmosis is not a standard procedure in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: The Public Health Laboratory Service communicable disease surveillance centre is currently reviewing laboratory reports of human toxoplasma infections in England and Wales from 1981 to 1992. Submission for scientific publication of this analysis is expected later this year. This review will contain information on laboratory reported human infections in pregnant women, although the incidence of toxoplasmosis in pregnant women is unknown due to unrecognised or undiagnosed asymptomatic infections or individuals with non-specific symptoms that may go undetected.

Screening for toxoplasmosis in pregnancy is not a standard procedure in the United Kingdom because the significance of the test, the natural history of the disease and the efficacy of the treatment are all surrounded by uncertainty. For any screening programme, the benefits conferred by screening must clearly outweigh the risks.

Health Care Staff, London

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the numbers of (i) health visitors, (ii) school nurses, (iii) district nurses and (iv) community psychiatric nurses should be in London.

Mr. Sackville: The Department makes no recommendations as to local staffing levels in the groups listed. Decisions concerning staffing are the responsibility of local managers who, with advice from professional colleagues, are in the best position to consider the amount and type of work to be done, and therefore the work force they require.

Private Practice Consultations

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of the charges made to consultants for the use of NHS premises, staff and facilities for private practice consultations.

Mr. Sackville: Charges which are intended to cover the cost to the hospital of providing facilities for consultation purposes are made direct by the hospital to the patient.

Health Care Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the system of inspection in respect of the suitability and adequacy of premises from which NHS services are provided by *(a)* medical general practitioners, *(b)* dental general practitioners, *(c)* pharmacists and *(d)* opticians.

Dr. Mawhinney: Through their management responsibility for primary health care services, family health services authorities are required to be satisfied that premises used by doctors, dentists and opticians are suitable and adequate. In the case of pharmacists, responsibility rests with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society inspectorate. On-site inspection of the premises used by each type of practitioner can be made to ensure that the appropriate standards are met.

John Radcliffe Hospital

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times the hospital complaints procedure for the John Radcliffe hospital, Headington, Oxfordshire, has been invoked in the last two years.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for Oxfordshire health authority. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Dr. Peter Iredale, the chairman, for details.

Surrogacy

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to review surrogacy arrangements; what inquiries she makes as to the expenses paid for surrogate pregnancies; how many children were born to surrogate parents in 1993; what counselling and information is given to surrogate and natural parents prior to insemination; whether the surrogacy parenting centre was approved by her Department; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985 prohibits the negotiation of surrogacy arrangements on a

commercial basis and advertising of or for surrogacy services. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 amended the Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985 so as to make clear that surrogacy arrangements are unenforceable by or against any persons making them.

There is no requirement for voluntary organisations concerned with surrogacy to be approved by the Department. Where treatment is being undertaken by a centre licensed under by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority surrogates and couples will be assessed and offered counselling in accordance with the HFEA's code of practice. Copies of the code of practice are available in the Library.

Information on the number of children born to surrogate parents in 1993 is not available.

Nursing and Residential Homes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to bring within the regulations governing inspection of nursing and residential homes with three or fewer residents *(a)* in all cases or *(b)* in all cases where the funding of a resident is from public funds.

Mr. Bowis: Health authorities are required to inspect all nursing homes, whatever their size, at least twice a year. Since April 1993 local authorities have had powers to inspect independent residential care homes for three or fewer residents.

Imported Medicines

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is her Department's policy to encourage the parallel importation of medicines in order to save money for the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Parallel imports are a consequence of substantial price differentials for pharmaceuticals created by a wide variety of national pricing mechanisms across the European Union within a single European market with common licensing criteria. We consider that the parallel importing scheme which has operated since 1984 neither encourages nor discourages parallel imports, but strikes the right balance between ensuring that imported medicines comply with EU standards of safety, quality and efficacy and avoiding placing undue obstacles in the way of importers.

Asthma

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will initiate a study in Hammersmith in respect of any correlation between heavy traffic use on major roads and asthma, eczema and other related diseases.

Mr. Sackville: No. A causal link between air pollutants from traffic and the induction of eczema, asthma and other diseases has not been proven. However, high levels of air pollutants may exacerbate pre-existing respiratory illness.

The Department is advised on these matters by the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants and by the Advisory Group on the Medical Aspects of Air Pollution Episodes. The latter's three reports are available in the Library; they are on ozone; on sulphur dioxide, acid aerosols and particulates; and on oxides of nitrogen. The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants has formed a sub-group specifically to consider the relationship between air pollution and asthma.

Advice and information for the public is provided on the freephone helpline: 0800 556677.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will require NHS health trusts to open their meetings to the public.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. In accordance with the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, NHS trusts are required to have one public meeting per year. Many NHS trusts have developed substantial programmes of public meetings and regular meetings with community health councils.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those English national health service trusts which in 1992-93 exceeded their external financing limit; and by how much in each case.

Mr. Sackville: The NHS trusts which exceeded their external financing limit in 1992-93, and the amount by which they did so, are shown in the table. These trusts have had their 1993-94 EFL reduced by the amount of the 1992-93 excess.

Trust	*Amount by which EFL exceeded £'000*
Airedale NHS Trust	4
Bath Mental Health Care NHS Trust	1
Central Manchester Healthcare NHS Trust	6
Dacorum and St. Albans Community NHS Trust	141
Devon Ambulance Service NHS Trust	4
Doncaster Healthcare NHS Trust	2
Eastbourne Hospitals NHS Trust	3
East Hertfordshire Health NHS Trust	2
Epsom Health Care NHS Trust	2
First Community NHS Trust	1
Guy's and Lewisham NHS Trust	37
Homewood NHS Trust	3
Milton Keynes Community Health NHS Trust	47
Mulberry NHS Trust	4
Northern General Hospital NHS Trust	4
North Hertfordshire NHS Trust	4
North Middlesex Hospital NHS Trust	1
Optimum Health Services NHS Trust	161
Ravensbourne Priority Health NHS Trust	30
Royal United Hospital, Bath NHS Trust	27
South Downs Health NHS Trust	35
The Cardiothoracic Centre Liverpool NHS Trust	1
The Walton Centre for Neurology and Neurosurgery NHS Trust	1
Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust	4
Walsgrave Hospital NHS Trust	5
Wellhouse NHS Trust	22
West Dorset General Hospitals NHS Trust	20
Weston Area Health NHS Trust	2
Weybourne Community NHS Trust	2

Source: NHS Trust Annual Accounts.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those English national health service trusts which in 1992-93 failed to achieve a 6 per cent. return on capital in *(a)* percentage terms and *(b)* cash terms.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is as follows.

Trust	Return on capital employed: Amount £ thousands	Return on capital employed: Percentage
Airedale NHS Trust	2,128	4·00
Allington NHS Trust	127	2·40
Anglian Harbours Health NHS Trust	979	5·90
Barnsley Community and Priority Services NHS Trust	1,512	5·70
Bedford Hospitals NHS Trust	1,633	5·80
Bradford Community Health NHS Trust	1,635	5·20
Bradford Hospitals NHS Trust	2,392	5·67
Broadgreen Hospital NHS Trust[1]	–3,783	–6·20
Central Manchester Healthcare NHS Trust	7,723	5·80
Chester and Halton Community NHS Trust	205	5·70
Christie Hospital NHS Trust	531	3·00
Devon Ambulance Service NHS Trust	77	1·50
Ealing Hospital NHS Trust	914	2·80
East Hertfordshire Health NHS Trust	2,319	5·10
Eastbourne Hospitals NHS Trust	3,025	4·80
Hinchingbrooke Health Care NHS Trust	1,601	5·85
Liverpool Obstetrics and Gynaecology Services NHS Trust	–925	–14·40
Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS Trust	482	3·30
Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust	881	2·80
Milton Keynes General Hospital NHS Trust	2,846	5·75
Mount Vernon Hospital NHS Trust	1,594	4·60
North East Essex Mental Health NHS Trust	1,059	5·60
Newcastle Mental Health Services NHS Trust	1,369	4·70
Norfolk Ambulance NHS Trust	224	4·50
Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust	1,817	5·00
North Hertfordshire NHS Trust	2,572	4·40
North Tees Health NHS Trust	2,493	5·60
Northumbria Ambulance Service NHS Trust	555	5·30
Nottingham City Hospital NHS Trust	4,620	4·80
Nottingham Community Health NHS Trust	563	4·40
Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital NHS Trust	630	5·10
Royal United Hospital, Bath NHS Trust	2,864	4·00
South Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust	333	5·00
Scarborough and North East Yorkshire Healthcare NHS Trust	1,641	3·70
South Bedfordshire Community Healthcare NHS Trust	46	0·50
Southend Health Care NHS Trust	2,744	5·10
Southport and Formby NHS Trust	2,107	4·60
St. Helen's and Knowsley Hospital NHS Trust	332	5·20
St. James's University Hospital NHS Trust	2,778	4·60
St. Peter's Hospital NHS Trust	2,053	4·80
The Poole Hospital NHS Trust	2,245	5·80
The Royal Cornwall Hospitals and West Cornwall Hospital NHS Trust	3,322	5·68
The Royal Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust	2,100	2·20
The Royal Surrey County and St. Luke's NHS Trust	806	1·78
The United Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust	5,870	5·50
United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust	6,673	4·40
Walsgrave Hospital NHS Trust	2,615	4·50
Wellhouse NHS Trust	2,089	2·47
West Dorset Community Health NHS Trust	691	4·60
West Dorset General Hospitals NHS Trust	2,042	5·60
West Dorset Mental Health NHS Trust	407	5·00

[1] I regret that this trust was omitted in error from the list supplied in the reply that I gave the hon. Member on 8 March at columns *163-64*.

Source: NHS trust annual accounts.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those NHS trusts which in 1992-93 failed to break even; and by how much in each case.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service trusts which had a deficit of income over expenditure in 1992-93 and the amounts of those deficits are:

£000

Trust	Amount of deficit
Airedale NHS Trust	577
Allington NHS Trust	82
Anglian Harbours Health NHS Trust	165
Bradford Hospitals NHS Trust	1,312
Broadgreen Hospital NHS Trust	3,783
Christie Hospital NHS Trust	321
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Mental Handicap NHS Trust	186
Cleveland Ambulance NHS Trust	141
Devon Ambulance Service NHS Trust	134
Ealing Hospital NHS Trust	594
Hillingdon Community Health NHS Trust	32
Liverpool Obstetrics and Gynaecology Services NHS Trust	1,006
Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS Trust	153
North East Essex Mental Health NHS Trust	264
Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital NHS Trust	113
Royal United Hospital, Bath NHS Trust	767
Scarborough and North East Yorkshire Healthcare NHS Trust	528
South Bedfordshire Community Healthcare NHS Trust	18
Southport and Formby NHS Trust	347
St. James's University Hospital NHS Trust	521
St. Peters Hospital NHS Trust	119
The Royal Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust	2,097
The Royal Surrey County and St. Lukes NHS Trust	1,215
Wellhouse NHS Trust	1,735
West Dorset Mental Health NHS Trust	22

Source:
NHS trust annual accounts.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS trusts were operating in the 1992-93 financial year.

Mr. Sackville: One hundred and fifty-six.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many trusts *(a)* met and *(b)* failed to achieve a 6 per cent. return on assets.

Dr. Mawhinney *[pursuant to his reply, 29 November 1993, c. 305]:* I regret that my previous reply contained an error. The number of trusts which have made a pre-interest rate of return of less than 6 per cent. is 51.

Laryngectomy

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what funding is available for health authorities to supply artificial larynx equipment to those who have undergone a laryngectomy operation; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if the supply of artificial larynx equipment is available free of charge under the NHS to all laryngectomy patients.

Mr. Sackville: Funding for health authorities to supply artificial larynx equipment to those who have undergone a laryngectomy operation is provided through resources made available to the national health service.

It is for individual health authorities to determine the level of service provision required to meet the needs of people needing these operations in their area. Priorities are determined in the light of local circumstances.

National health service consultants may prescribe artificial larynx equipment as part of NHS treatment and when they do so no charge is made. As for all other services, supply is dependent on resources, with decisions being made on the basis of clinical priorities and local needs.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if sterile tracheostomy dressings are available on prescription to patients who have undergone laryngectomy surgery, once discharged from hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Sterile tracheostomy dressings are not available on general practitioner prescription, but they continue to be available to discharged patients through the hospital service.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was her Department's response to the request from the Home Office to provide NHS hospital beds for nine Algerian and one Indian political asylum seekers who were on hunger strike at Campsfield detention centre in Oxfordshire in the first week in March; and for what reasons that response was given.

Dr. Mawhinney: Officials in the immigration department were advised that assessment of patient health care needs and appropriate hospital placement were matters for the local health authorities. Officials in the National Health Service Management Executive approached Oxford regional health authority to help identify suitable facilities in the region.

Medicines (Side-effects)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the incidence of side-effects on patients, as a result of allergies or other reasons, when taking more than one brand or form of a particular medicine for a specific ailment.

Mr. Sackville: A product licence in the United Kingdom for a generic medicine is granted on provision of evidence to demonstrate that the product is equivalent to the branded form. Since formulation and manufacturing methods may vary among all the different proprietary and generic forms of a particular medicine, it must be demonstrated that any differences do not produce untoward effects.

The yellow card system for monitoring adverse reactions to drugs is a voluntary system whereby doctors send reports of suspected adverse reactions to the Medicines Control Agency. There have been occasional reports of adverse reactions apparently associated with generic substitution. However, a report of an adverse reaction in association with a drug does not necessarily mean that the drug caused the reaction.

Leadership Award Scheme

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the NHS leadership award scheme was established; how many recipients there have been during each year; what criteria are used in deciding an award; who nominates candidates for the award; who determines each recipient; what an individual award comprises; what has been the budget for the award for each year; and who paid for the advertisement in the *South London Press* of 8 March concerning the receipt of such an award by the chief executive of Lewisham hospital trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: The scheme was introduced last autumn by Sir Duncan Nichol as part of his strategy for improving the quality of management within the national health service. Staff were invited to nominate their chief executives or general managers for awards if, as a result of their leadership, improvements in local services had been achieved. On 8 March Sir Duncan presented plaques to the nine awards recipients he had selected in the light of assessments made by senior executives from major public companies. There was no budget specifically for the scheme; costs were met from within existing management executive budgets for non-staff expenditure. The advertisement to which the hon. Member refers was paid for by private individuals who wanted to celebrate the fact that Mrs. Val Martin was one of the nine awards recipients.

King's Fund Health Policy Institute

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has made to the report published on 24 February by the King's Fund Health Policy Institute; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government welcome this contribution to the debate over the achievements and directions of the national health service reforms and in particular the report's confirmation that the reforms offer potential for real gains to patients.

Emergency Services, South Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current ratio of accident and emergency units to district general hospitals in South Yorkshire; and what the ratio was *(a)* two, *(b)* five and *(c)* 10 years ago.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for Trent regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Michael Carlisle, chairman of the authority, for details.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to meet employees of the South Yorkshire ambulance trust and the hon. Member for Don Valley to discuss patient transport services; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I met the hon. Member on 16 February to discuss the South Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance and Paramedic Service National Health Service Trust.

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many registered disabled people are employed in her Department; and what percentage this is of the total employed.

Mr. Sackville: In February 1994, 1·4 per cent. or 68 members of the total work force were registered disabled. In addition, a number of staff have a disability but are not registered.

Drugs Prescriptions

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish her estimate for each year since 1985 of the proportion of generic, non-branded drugs as a percentage of the total amount of drugs prescribed by general practitioners; and what was the total estimated cost in constant prices for both categories for each year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available is shown in the table.

The percentage of prescription items and the net ingredient cost of drugs prescribed generically: England

Year	Percentage prescribed generically[1]	Net ingredient cost for items prescribed generically at 1992 prices[2] (£ million)	Net ingredient cost for all items at 1992 prices[2] (£ million)
1985	35·0	359·7	1,877·2
1986	39·0	423·1	2,010·1
1987	39·0	443·8	2,131·2
1988	40·0	478·3	2,248·5
1989	42·0	560·5	2,287·0
1990	44·0	643·0	2,328·6
[3]1991	43·0	641·1	2,423·2
[4]1991	41·0	654·4	2,616·5
1992	43·0	786·0	2,858·0

[1] Prescription items for dressings and appliances are excluded from the totals in calculating generic prescribing. Items generically prescribed include those written as a generic but dispensed as a proprietary because a generic is not available.

[2] The net ingredient cost is the basic cost of drugs before discount and excludes dispensing costs or fees. The net ingredient cost figures at 1992 prices are calculated using the GDP deflator. The net ingredient cost of dressings and appliances is excluded.

[3] 1991 data are based on items and have the same coverage as 1985 to 1990 data.

[4] 1991 and 1992 data are based on items and cover all prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors, and through direct administration to patients by GPs. These include not only prescriptions originating from general practitioners in England but also from hospital doctors, dentists, and armed services doctors and dentists.

Note: 1985 to 1990 data are based on fees and cover prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors only.

Source: Prescription cost analysis statistics.

General Practitioners

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new measures she proposes to relieve the work pressure and work load on general practitioners in the light of the recent report by the Audit Commission; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We continue to take forward, in consultation with the profession, ways of reducing pressures in general practitioners' work load.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been removed from the lists of *(a)* non-fundholding general practitioners and *(b)* fundholding general practitioners, for each family health service authority in Merseyside, in each year since 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: Family health services authorities are not required to record the fundholding status of general practitioners when dealing with a request to remove a patient's name from a doctor's list.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are issued to general practitioners concerning the removal of patients from their lists; and what rights of redress patients have who have been removed from their general practitioner's list.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she will take to ensure that a private out-patient cannot bypass existing national health service waiting lists; and what steps she has taken to determine the extent to which such patients are currently able to receive priority over NHS patients.

Mr. Sackville: None. Any private work a consultant does is additional to his duties and is carried out in his own time, sometimes using resources bought from the health service. As a result more treatments are given, pressure on the national health service is relieved, and the generality of waiting times is not adversely affected.

Agensic-Anosmic

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has concerning Agensic-Anosmic; and what research is being undertaken into the loss of sense of smell.

Mr. Bowis: The Department is aware that Ageusic-Anosmic helps people who have lost their sense of taste and smell. Ageusic-Anosmic has campaigned since 1992 to draw attention to the plight of sufferers. Research into the condition is primarily a matter for the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Internationally there is research work being undertaken into the possible affects of environmental pollution on the senses of taste and smell and the Department keeps this under review.

Wakefield Health Authority

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reasons Wakefield health authority has blocked extra-contractual referrals by general practitioners within its area.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for Wakefield district health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Brian Hayward, the chairman, for details.

Health Authorities (Mergers)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list health authorities as of 1 April with details of new health authorities formed by merger listing the former health authorities merged.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information will be placed in the Library.

Tobacco Companies

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance or guidelines have been issued by her Department regarding the appropriateness of investment in tobacco companies by NHS trusts or health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: Trusts and health authorities cannot invest Exchequer funds in tobacco companies.

Paragraph 7 of schedule 3 to the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 limits the manner in which trusts can invest any money held to securities of the Government of the United Kingdom, or such other manner as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may, with the consent of the Treasury, approve. Approval has been given for investment in certain United Kingdom public sector institutions, banks which are authorised institutions under part I of the Banking Act 1987, and building societies authorised under the Building Societies Act 1986. Trusts are therefore unable to invest in tobacco companies.

There is no provision in the National Health Service Act 1977 which would allow health authorities to invest funds.

Stage Hypnotism

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to initiate research into the health hazards of stage hypnotism.

Mr. Sackville: None. I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 31 January at columns *598-99*.

Doctors (Free Speech)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether doctors employed by NHS trusts are guaranteed the same rights of free speech as apply under paragraph 330 of the Whitley council agreement for doctors employed by health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: Doctors have rights specified in their contracts.

Public Immunity Certificates

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many public interest immunity certificates she has signed in each year since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: Two. One was signed in relation to confidential policy formation documents relevant to listeria litigation and the other was to protect a confidential report into a maternal death which was requested by a solicitor in medical negligence litigation against a health authority. In the first case the court allowed the other party to see the documents and in the second case the application has been withdrawn for the time being following receipt by the solicitors of the signed certificate.

Blood Supplies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of blood supplies in each region were supplied to private hospitals in each of the last five years; and how many units this represented.

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *167*, if she will publish for the last two years the quarterly information by regional health authority on *(a)* forecast outturn spend on extra-contractual referrals and *(b)* planned level of spend.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is estimated and unaudited; it is collected, and is only appropriate for, internal performance management purposes.

Private Patients

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private patients received treatment in national health service hospitals in each medical discipline for each year since 1990 in each regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* Figures for 1989-90 and 1990-91 will be placed in the Library. Data for both years are subject to deficiencies in overall coverage and episodes with a valid diagnosis. Because of this, some specialties and regions show wide year-on-year variation, and the data should therefore be regarded as an estimate only.

TREASURY

Taxation

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will produce tables showing *(a)* the proportion of Government and social contribution income coming from indirect taxation and *(b)* the top rates of income tax in each other European Union member state.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is as follows:

	Indirect taxes as a proportion of total taxes and social security contributions, 1991[1] *(per cent.)*	*Top rate of income tax (per cent.)*
Belgium	27·0	[3]55
Denmark	35·9	65
France	33·4	56·8
Germany	31·7	[4]53
Greece	51·8	40
Ireland	43·9	48
Italy	30·1	[5]51
Luxembourg	n.a.	50
Netherlands	26·7	[6]60
Portugal	n.a.	40
Spain	[2]31·8	56
United Kingdom	39·4	40

[1] Source: Data derived from OECD statistics. Includes some taxes within OECD classification, 4,000, property. For details see "Economic Trends", February 1994.

[2] In 1990.

[3] At present, increased by a surcharge taking the effective rate to 56·5 per cent. Local authorities levy a further surcharge on top, taking the effective rate to around an average 60 per cent.

[4] For business income, can be up to 58 per cent.

[5] In addition, a local income tax at a nationwide rate of 16·2 per cent. is levied on income from business activities and investments.

[6] In addition, a municipal income tax is imposed on income from business activities. The rate varies according to municipality, but takes the effective rate to around 55 per cent.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff are working in the areas of *(a)* capital gains tax, *(b)* schedule D tax, *(c)* corporation tax, *(d)* pay as you earn and *(e)* national insurance contributions.

Mr. Dorrell: Excluding staff employed on central administration, in other supportive roles and those in certain specialist offices the table sets out the total numbers

of Inland Revenue staff working within its network of local offices for the most recent year for which data are available —1992-93. The table shows how many were working in the areas of *(a)* capital gains tax, *(b)* schedule D tax, *(c)* corporation tax and *(d)* schedule E tax. Under *(d)* figures have been provided for schedule E tax rather than as PAYE as PAYE is simply a mechanism for collecting schedule E tax. Resource usage on national insurance contribution work is incidental to mainstream tax work and not separately recorded.

	Number
Capital gains tax	833
Schedule D	19,664
Corporation tax	3,236
Schedule E	27,065
Total	50,798

Fuel and Vehicle Taxes

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the yield in 1992-93 and what is the latest estimate of yield in 1993-94 from *(a)* petrol duty, *(b)* derv duty, *(c)* vehicle excise duty, *(d)* value added tax on petrol and DERV sales and *(e)* value added tax on vehicle sales.

Sir John Cope: Information on the outturn yield in 1992-93 and the projected yield in 1993-94 is provided in the table:

	£ billion 1992-93 Outturn	*1993-94 Forecast*
Petrol duty	8·2	9·3
DERV duty	3·0	3·4
Vehicle excise duty	3·2	3·7
VAT on petrol and derv	1·6	n/a
VAT on vehicle sales	2·9	n/a

No direct figures are available for the VAT yield on petrol and DERV and on vehicle sales. The table contains estimates of the outturn on total VAT yield that can be attributed to these items on the basis of national accounts data on expenditure. For petrol and DERV the estimate covers only consumers' expenditure—the yield from business expenditure is highly uncertain because the majority of businesses can reclaim the VAT paid as input tax. The relevant data are not available for 1993-94.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will require all persons who have benefited from exemption from inheritance tax on works of art to publish details of public access to such works of art in the previous year.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) on 28 January, *Official Report*, column *454*. Records are not kept centrally of how many members of the public exercise their rights to view works of art which are conditionally exempt from inheritance tax.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to publish, at least annually in each county, a schedule of all works of art granted exemption from inheritance tax in a form which will enable citizens to exercise their rights of access.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) on 28 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *454*. The register of conditionally exempt works of art, which can be consulted at the Victoria and Albert museum in London, the national library of Scotland in Edinburgh, the national museum of Wales in Cardiff and the Ulster museum in Belfast, can be used to pick out items by broad location, usually the county, in which each object is available for viewing. The register is updated quarterly. Copies of the register in computer-readable format may also be purchased from the capital taxes office of the Inland Revenue at £10 each.

Indonesia (Visit)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the purpose of his visit to Indonesia in December; and what benefits have accrued to the United Kingdom from his visit.

Mr. Nelson: The purpose of the visit was to enable the Chancellor to see at first hand the rapid developments in the Indonesian economy, and to raise the profile of United Kingdom banks and investment houses in top level Indonesian government and business circles. The benefits of the visit will arise over the longer term through the encouragement to Indonesia to look to United Kingdom financial expertise to assist its development programme.

Money Supply

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish in table form the change in the money supply for each year since 1976 and the change in the rate of inflation two years later;

(2) what was the change in the broad money supply for each year since 1972; what is his estimate of the proportion of that change directly attributable to *(a)* the banks, *(b)* the building societies and *(c)* the balance of payments;

(3) what figures he has for the supply of broad money in the United Kingdom and the rate of inflation for each year since 1979; and what assessment he has made of the degree of correlation between them;

(4) if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1976 the percentage change in the money supply in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* West Germany;

(5) what was the increase in the money supply, broadly defined, since May 1979; and how much of it was created by Government and how much by other agencies.

Mr. Nelson: Monetary policy is conducted so as to deliver low inflation. Monetary policy decisions are based on an assessment of a range of monetary and other indicators, including narrow and broad money. However, the Government do not rely on any single indicator.

The Treasury published a detailed assessment of broad money in the autumn 1991 edition of the "Treasury Bulletin". The Government have also set a monitoring range for M4. But experience indicates that the relationship with future inflation is not sufficiently close to justify establishing M4 as a formal target.

Figures for retail price inflation, narrow and broad money in the United Kingdom since 1972 can be found in the Central Statistical Office's *Economic Trends*. More

detailed figures for the money supply—and its components and counterparts—can be found in the Bank of England's "Statistical Abstract" and in its "Quarterly Bulletin". West German money supply figures are available in the International Monetary Fund's "International Financial Statistics". Copies of all these publications are in the House Library. The relationship between the balance of payments and the overseas contribution to broad money growth is described in special articles in the Bank of England's "Quarterly Bulletin" December 1978 and December 1983 editions and in the Central Statistical Office's "Financial Statistics" explanatory handbook.

Cuba

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the next meeting of the Paris Club is scheduled to take place; whether the question of Cuba's public sector indebtedness will be on the agenda; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The next meeting of the Paris Club is scheduled to take place during the week beginning 21 March 1994. Cuba is not on the agenda.

Cuba's debt position was last discussed by the Paris Club in January. Creditors agreed to consider an application for rescheduling for Cuba during the course of 1994, subject to there being a genuine balance of payments need.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the extent of Cuba's public sector indebtedness to the United Kingdom, including interest.

Mr. Nelson: Cuba's current outstanding debts with the United Kingdom total £69·82 million, all of which are owed to the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of employees in the United Kingdom have their income linked to Inland Revenue approved profit-related pay schemes.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that about 5 per cent. of employees in the United Kingdom were covered by registered profit-related pay schemes at the end of March 1993.

Insurance

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table setting out a breakdown of the total revenue he expects to raise from insurance premium tax in 1994-95 and 1995-96 by principal type of insurance risk, including motor insurance, home building insurance, home contents insurance and private medical insurance.

Sir John Cope: The following table shows the estimated breakdown of the expected revenue yield from insurance premium tax.

	1994-95 £ million	*1995-96 £ million*
Motor (business)	25	110
Motor (private)	35	150
Building (household)	20	85
Home contents	15	60
Medical and other	5	25
Other business	75	330

Charities (VAT)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated cost to the Treasury in 1994-95 of a scheme to allow registered charities to reclaim 25 per cent. of their value added tax liability; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The Charities Tax Reform Group has estimated that such a scheme would cost £80 million a year.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each year since 1990.

Mr. Dorrell: No public interest immunity certificates have been signed by Treasury Ministers since 1990.

Council Tenants (Domestic Fuel)

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether councils which provide unmetered supplies of gas and electricity to council tenants through district heating schemes will be able to claim back VAT incurred under section 20 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983; whether council tenants receiving unmetred supplies of gas and elecricity through district heating schemes will be effectively exempt from VAT on gas and electricity; if he will provide an estimate of the number of council tenants receiving unmetered supplies of gas and electricity through district heating schemes; and how many council tenants receive metered supplies of gas and electricity through district heating schemes.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 14 March 1994]*: A local authority can recover the VAT incurred in pursuance of its statutory, non-business activities under section 20 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983. This includes the provision of council housing. Council tenants paying rents which include a flate rate element for heat supplied under an unmetred district heating scheme will, in VAT terms, be receiving only a single supply of heated accommodation and will be unaffected by the extension of VAT to domestic fuel. The number of council tenants receiving unmetred supplies is estimated to be less than half of one per cent. of total United Kingdom households.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Electric Car Project (Coventry)

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what requests he had for assistance to the City of Coventry Peugeot electric car project.

Mr. McLoughlin: None.

Engine Emissions

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance his Department is giving to the reduction of emissions from engines.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department is currently supporting some early work on fuel cells which, if successful, could find application in the transport market in the long term. The Department is also considering with other Government Departments a possible programme of field trials for selected vans and buses to assess, among other things, their emissions performance when using a number of alternative road transport fuels.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what study he has undertaken between the relative emissions between diesel engines and petrol engines with catalytic converters in normal urban driving conditions.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Transport have jointly commissioned the energy technology support unit to quantify the implications of a further switch from petrol to diesel in the United Kingdom passenger car market in terms of energy use, emissions and refinery investment. The Departments are currently consulting industry representatives on technical aspects of this work. The completed study will be published in the next few months.

Engine Development

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what direct financial assistance his Department is providing for the development of *(a)* petrol engines, *(b)* diesel engines and *(c)* electric motors for vehicles; and what research it is sponsoring in each case.

Mr. McLoughlin: The only current research project is the Drives Club II. This involves DTI financial support of up to £790,102 to ERA Technology Ltd. for innovative, pre-competitive research in the field of electric variable speed drives under the research and technology initiative. Although the project is not specifically targeted at motor vehicles, the research is relevant to electric vehicles. Rover Group, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Ltd. and Lucas Industries are involved in the research.

Excessive Interest Rates

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what is his assessment of the potential effect of the Office of Fair Trading's recommendations on the Consumer Credit Act 1974 on lenders who charge extortionate rates of interest;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of people who have encountered financial difficulties through their dealings with lenders charging extortionate rates of interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have made no estimate of the number of people encountering financial difficulties as a consequence of such dealings. In his report "Unjust Credit Transactions", the Director General of Fair Trading said that his recommendations were intended to deter socially harmful lending more strongly and to improve the ability of borrowers who are its victims to gain redress.

Ice Cream

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of ice cream; and when he will publish it.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I received the report on 14 January. It will be published as soon as possible.

Watt Committee

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with the secretariat of the Watt Committee on Energy in relation to the proposed publication of the final report of the working group on methane emissions as regards *(a)* the date of the publication, *(b)* the inclusion or exclusion of the annex submitted by the dissenting member in the published version and *(c)* representations concerning the publication of the dissenting member's annex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The Watt committee on energy has undertaken as a project commissioned by my Department, a review of United Kingdom methane emissions, in particular in support of the development of the United Kingdom's climate change programme. The working group, under the chairmanship of Professor Alan Williams of Leeds university's department of fuel and energy, brought together relevant experts from industry, academia and Government.

A number of the findings of the group have already been published as part of "Climate Change, The UK Programme."

Publication of the working group's full report is expected in May.

One of the members of the working group has raised concerns over some matters in the report. The chairman has advised my Department that these are under consideration by the group as a whole.

Beer (Short Measures)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many complaints he has received about short measures in the sale of beer for each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* The numbers of letters about short measure beer or about not receiving a full liquid pint of beer for each year from 1989 are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1989	4
1990	11
1991	31
1992	13
1993	716
[1]1994	20

[1] 1 January to 8 March.

These figures include letters from trading standards departments reporting surveys of pubs selling draught beer. They do not include replies to consultations. The figures for 1993 include 601 letters from people who had inserted their name and address in a preprinted form.

Information for the years 1979 to 1988 could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the organisations that have complained to him about short measures in the sale of beer for each of the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* My Department has received letters from the following organisations about short measure beer or about less than a full liquid pint of beer being served.

1989
Barnsley metropolitan borough council

1990
Bedfordshire county council
Tayside regional council
LACOTS
South Tyneside metropolitan borough council
Walsall metropolitan borough council

1991
Surrey county council
Association of Greater Manchester Authorities
Tomporcon Ltd. (on behalf of the Allied Brewery Traders Association)
St. Helens metropolitan borough council
North Yorkshire county council

1992
London borough of Southwark
Strathclyde regional council

1993
Association of Greater Manchester Authorities
CAMRA (Portsmouth and South East Hampshire branch)
Tomporcon Ltd. (on behalf of the Allied Brewery Traders Association)
CAMRA
Consumers Association
Hereford and Worcester county council
John Glover (Wholesale) Ltd.
Birmingham city council
Cleveland county council
North Yorkshire county council
Shropshire county council
Leeds city council
Oldham metropolitan borough council
Durham county council
Barnsley metropolitan borough council
CAMRA (Grimsdyke branch)
CAMRA (West Middlesex branch)

1994 (1 January to 8 March)
Trafford metropolitan borough council
Birmingham city council
Consumers Association
CAMRA

In addition to the organisations listed above, a number of others have written to my Department in response to consultations.

Business Statistics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what general conclusions have been reached by the study into business attitudes to the contractorisation of business statistics; and if he will place a copy of the results of the inquiry in the Library.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary on 14 January at column *308*.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Attorney-General if it is his policy to instruct counsel to advise judges that it is a matter of judicial discretion as to whether documents protected by public interest immunity certificates should be disclosed; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The test to be applied by judges is a matter of general law. Judges are required to order disclosure in any case where, in the judgment of the court, the case for disclosure in the interests of justice outweighs the public interest considerations in favour of non-disclosure. Prosecuting counsel are expected to assist the judge as to all relevant law.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Attorney-General what proposals he has to restrict the discretion of judges to inspect documents in respect of which public interest immunity certificates have been issued and decide upon their disclosure on the basis of the interests of justice; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The extent of judges' discretion to inspect documents is a matter of law. I have no power to impose any restrictions, nor would I wish to do so.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each year since 1990.

The Attorney-General: I have signed none. My predecessor signed two certificates:

(i) In 1991 relating to the civil case of Dorrian *v.* Chief Constable of the RUC.

(ii) In 1992 relating to the criminal case of Latimer, Hegan, Bell and Allen which was before the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland.

ENVIRONMENT

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions have been taken out under the Widlife and Countryside Act 1981 in England in each year since 1982 for *(a)* carrying out a potentially damaging operation to a site of special scientific interest and *(b)* contravening a nature conservation order under section 29; how may of these were successful; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The information is not available in the form requested. However, since 1984 prosecutions for damage to sites of speical scientific interest under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 have been taken on 10 occasions. Prosecution is taken only in the last resort. Where a site has been damaged, the usual practice is to seek the co-operation of the landowner in restoring it.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many outstanding management agreements for English Nature for sites of special scientific interest protection there have been in 1993-94; what is the estimate of their cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: At 28 February 1994 there were 1,964 management agreements in force under section 15 of the

Countryside Act 1968. The estimated cost of these agreements in 1993-94 is £7·9 million. Further details will be published in due course in the third annual report of English Nature.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if this month's edition of "Countywide", published by East Sussex county council conforms with the guidelines issued by the Audit Commission in connection with local government reorganisation.

Mr. Baldry: I cannot comment on individual publications. We have, however, had in operation since 1988 a code of recommended practice on local authority publicity. The code make it clear that authorities should not use public funds to mount publicity campaigns to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy.

Local Government Review, Cleveland

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library all submissions relating to the local government review of Cleveland that he has received since the final report of the commission was published on 8 November.

Mr. Baldry: When we lay an implementation order for Cleveland we will place in the Library a summary of all representations received by the Secretary of State about the Commission's final recommendations. Individual representations will be made available if requested unless the writers intended their views to be treated in confidence.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library all submissions relating to the local government review of Cleveland that have been received by the commission since the publication of its final report on 8 November.

Mr. Baldry: All such representations have been forwarded to my Department, as the commission has no further role once its review is complete.

Council Tax Banding Appeals

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against council tax banding in the London borough of Lewisham were lodged in each month since April 1993; how many were processed and concluded in each month; and what is the current backlog.

Mr. Baldry: The numbers of proposals to alter the valuation list which were received from the London borough of Lewisham area are as follows:

Month	*Received*	*Settled*
April 1993	712	0
May	545	0
June	356	1
July	281	20
August	276	25
September	210	215
October	167	60
November	546	50
December	19	37
January 1994	36	94
February	22	192
Total	3,170	694

There are therefore 2,476 cases outstanding.

Birch Coppice

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he sought legal advice on the validity of his decision to refuse planning permission to opencast at Birch Coppice announced on 2 August 1993 before the announcement.

Mr. Baldry: Once a decision has been taken by the Secretary of State, it is not his practice to comment on the merits of the decision or the process by which the decision was reached.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much *(a)* Warwickshire county council and *(b)* North Warwickshire borough council spent on the Birch Coppice public inquiry on 30 July to 23 August 1991.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on the basis of which mineral planning guidance he proposes to make the decision on opencasting at Birch Coppice in Warwickshire.

Mr. Baldry: The decision on the Birch Coppice case will be based on the version of mineral planning guidance notes which is in force at the time the decision is made.

Wandsworth Rent Assessment Panel

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of the members of the Wandsworth rent assessment panel and when they were appointed.

Sir George Young: Wandsworth falls within the area of the London rent assessment panel. I have placed in the Library a list showing the names of the 84 members of this panel, together with the year of first appointment.

Landfill Sites

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce a tax on waste disposal for those who use landfill sites.

Mr. Atkins: In order to inform our decision about whether to introduce a landfill levy, my Department commissioned a report on "Externalities from Landfill and Incineration" from the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment, Warren Spring Laboratory and the Economics for the Environment Consultancy. We are currently considering comments on that report and will announce our conclusions in due course.

UN Environment Programme

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much financial support was given to the United Nations environment programme in each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom contributed £3 million to the United Nations Environment Programme's environment fund in 1989-90; in 1990-91, £3 million; in 1991-92, £4 million; in 1992-93, £4·5 million; and in 1993-94, £4·5 million. In 1993-94 this represented the third largest national contribution.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he has taken of recent resolutions of the Dail, relating to environmental risks posed by THORP; and what meetings or communications he has had with his Irish counterpart on THORP and Sellafield.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to my answers given to him on Thursday 20 January, *Official Report*, column *827;* Wednesday 2 February, *Official Report*, column *794;* Friday 11 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *508;* and to my answer given to the hon. Members for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on Monday 29 November, *Official Report*, columns *385-86.*

I have noted the motion of the Dail of 2 March 1994.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) of 15 December, *Official Report*, column 1098, if all contracts to reprocess foreign spent fuel in THORP at Sellafield contain stipulations requiring the return of all radioactive wastes to countries of origin.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend was referring to BNFL's proposals for waste substitution in respect of those contracts with overseas customers which include options for the return of waste to the country of origin.

As was made clear in the "Statement of Government Policy on Reprocessing and Operation of the Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant at Sellafield", published in August last year, BNFL has such options in respect of all overseas spent fuel contracted for since 1976. The Government intend that these options, which are backed by formal exchanges of letters with the Governments of THORP customer countries, will be exercised. The Government have not yet reached a decision on BNFL's proposals for waste substitution.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the representations he has received from professional lobby organisations on behalf of local authorities concerning their standard spending assessment allocation.

Mr. Baldry: We receive numerous representations on standard spending assessments from the local authority associations, trades unions, chambers of commerce and other professional bodies. My right hon. Friend considered carefully all of the representations made to him on standard spending assessments before taking final decisions on the revenue support grant settlement for 1994-95.

Rents, Wandsworth

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the number of objections by local residents living in the London borough of Wandsworth to rents fixed by the Wandsworth rent assessment officers in each of the last five years; and how many of the objections were successful on appeal.

Sir George Young: Either a landlord or a tenant may appeal against a rent officer's determination, and the available statistics do not distinguish between these situations. The number of cases referred to the London rent assessment panel from Wandsworth over the last four years is shown in the table. Statistics for earlier years are not available. It should be borne in mind that the rent assessment committee fixes a rent at the time of its hearing, which can be some months later than the rent officer's original determination. Some of the differences between the two determinations may therefore reflect the passage of time.

Rent assessment committee decisions in appeal cases in Wandsworth

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Number of cases	304	631	559	339
Number of cases where rent was decreased	13 (4 per cent.)	39 (6 per cent.)	25 (4 per cent.)	31 (9 per cent.)
Number of cases where rent remained the same	53 (17 per cent.)	124 (20 per cent.)	76 (14 per cent.)	24 (7 per cent.)
Number of cases where rent was increased	238 (78 per cent.)	468 (74 per cent.)	458 (82 per cent.)	284 (84 per cent.)
Mean rent officer's current rent (£pa)	1,442	1,911	1,8,771	2,234
Mean rent assessment committee's determined rent (£pa)	1,573	2,059	1,941	2,442
Mean change to rent officer's rent	10 per cent.	7 per cent.	10 per cent.	10 per cent.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *45*, if he will set out the research and monitoring programmes on nuclear waste in Cumbria conducted by Government Departments, to which he makes reference.

Mr. Atkins: Details of the main Government-sponsored programmes are given in the following documents:

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution Annual Report (Department of the Environment, 1987-88 onwards)

Monitoring of Radioactivity in the UK Environment: an Annotated Bibliography of Current Programmes (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Directorate of Fisheries Research, Fisheries Research Data Report No. 27, 1992)

Terrestrial Radioactivity Monitoring Programme (TRAMP) Report for 1992: Radioactivity in Food and Agricultural Products in England and Wales (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, publication PB1468, 1993)

Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters of the British Isles (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Aquatic Environment Monitoring Report No. 38, 1992)
Radiological Protection Research Annual Reports (AEA Technology, editions up to and including 1993)

Copies of these documents are available in the Library of the House. The National Radiological Protection Board which advises Government on radiological matters, has also undertaken a number of radiological studies of the Cumbria area.

Water Disconnections

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring he is conducting of the number of people who have had water supplies disconnected in London; how many households in Lewisham had their water disconnected in 1991-92 and 1992-93; and to what socio-economic categories those people belonged.

Mr. Atkins: None. Responsibility for the protection of customers' interests rests with the Director General of Water Services who publishes data on the total number of domestic disconnections twice a year, by water company area. Information on disconnections according to socio-economic categories is not available.

Local Government Review

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the value of MORI opinion polling in informing of the work and recommendations of the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Baldry: It is for the Local Government Commission itself to determine the value of the opinion polling which it has commissioned.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by county and non-metropolitan district in England such information as he has concerning the amount of money spent publicising the local authority's case on the current review of local government.

Mr. Baldry: That is a matter for authorities themselves; we do not collect information on these costs.

Children at Risk

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is used to decide the relative weight given to the different factors used in the estimate of children at risk in respect of the standard spending assessment.

Mr. Baldry: The estimate of children at risk used in the personal social services standard spending assessment for children is based on the children in need index. This index is based on four indicators, with the following weightings:

(i) the proportion of dependent children aged under 18 in lone parent families (weight of 3);

(ii) the proportion of household residents under 16 years of age living in rented accommodation (weight of 1);

(iii) the proportion of children who were dependent children of claimants receiving income support (weight of 1);

(iv) the number of homeless households with dependent children or a pregnant woman accepted as in priority need for permanent accommodation, relative to the number of residents under 18 years of age (weight of 1).

The selection of indicators and the weights applied were based on detailed statistical analysis and previous research findings. In particular, the personal social services research unit at the university of Kent has carried out detailed research on the factors involved.

Homelessness

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, columns *294-95*, which London authorities raised the issue of homelessness as a indicator in the 1993 consultation; and when they raised it.

Mr. Baldry: The following London authorities made representations to my Department, on the dates shown, on the use of data on homelessness as an indicator in the calculation of standard spending assessments.

	Date
London borough of Barnet	27 May 1993
London borough of Brent	21 May 1993 23 September 1993
London borough of Ealing	5 May 1993
London borough of Enfield	9 July 1993 10 January 1994
London borough of Greenwich	8 June 1993
London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham	14 April 1993
London borough of Haringey	23 December 1993
London borough of Harrow	7 May 1993
London borough of Hillingdon	24 June 1993
London borough of Lambeth	21 June 1993
London borough of Lewisham	22 December 1993
London borough of Newham	16 April 1993 14 October 1993 5 January 1994
London borough of Tower Hamlets	9 July 1993
Westminster city council	8 April 1993 23 December 1993

Material Exposure Programme

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what work is being carried out in the national material exposure programme on building decay.

Mr. Baldry: The national materials exposure programme was initiated in 1987 as a joint exercise involving the Building Research Establishment of the Department of the Environment, the Central Electricity Generating Board —now Power Gen-National Power— the Warren Spring Laboratory of the Department of Trade and Industry, and British Coal. The aim of the programme is to assess the effects of air pollution on a range of building materials, including metals and stone.

Results so far indicate that dry deposition of sulphur dioxide on metals and stone is the main cause of attack by pollution. The wet deposition of pollutants on to materials

is of lesser consequence. The dissolution of calcareous stone by rainwater can be a significant factor, however, even in areas of low pollution.

Some of the sites used on the national materials exposure programme are also part of an international programme by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide information on the dates on which the member states of the European Union submitted their reports to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

Mr. Atkins: We understand that three member states have submitted their reports. The Netherlands submitted its report in January, and Belgium submitted its in February. The Secretary of State wrote to the chairman of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development on 6 March enclosing the United Kingdom's report. Copies of the United Kingdom's report have been placed in the Library.

Public Bodies

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the present role and remit of *(a)* the Countryside Commission and *(b)* English Nature.

Mr. Atkins: The role and remit of both the Countryside Commission and English Nature are fully detailed in the public consultation document recently issued as part of the current study into the possible bringing together of the two bodies. The document is available in the Library of the House. I have also arranged for the hon. Member to receive a copy.

Air Pollution

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what co-ordination of air pollution information is planned following the closure of Warren Spring Laboratory.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced last year the closure of Warren Spring Laboratory and the merging of its business with the environmental business of the Atomic Energy Authority Technology to form the new National Environmental Technology Centre.

The co-ordination and provision of information to the public on air quality are undertaken by a number of organisations, including Warren Spring Laboratory. We expect the closure to have no significant effect on this activity.

Wind Turbines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people have been either injured or killed as a result of the operation of wind turbines in the United Kingdom since 1979; and what information he has as to deaths resulting from the operation of wind farms or aerogenerators abroad.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

In the United Kingdom no deaths or serious injuries have occurred as a result of the operation of wind turbines.

In the Netherlands one death occurred in 1990 when a machine went out of control during a storm.

In Denmark two deaths occurred in 1991 in a single incident involving the servicing of a rotor.

In the United States of America three deaths and a number of injuries have been reported over the past 15 years of operation of the wind turbines.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

"Back to Basics"

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many members of his Department's staff are currently engaged on the Government's "back to basics" policy.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 14 March at column *464*.

Occupied Territories

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Israeli Government on disarming the settler community in the occupied territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I wrote to the Israeli ambassador on 11 March drawing his attention to the European Foreign Ministers' statement of 7 March noting that Israel is responsible for the safety of all inhabitants in the occupied territories. I welcome moves by the Israeli Government to disarm extremist settlers and outlaw two extremist settler organisations. I recognise that some settlers face risks themselves.

European Union

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the Government expect to be on the agenda of the 1996 intergovernmental conference; and for what changes to the treaty on European union the Government will be pressing.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Maastricht treaty calls for the 1996 intergovernmental conference to look at possible treaty chapters on energy, civil protection and tourism, under article 3*(t)*; the powers of the European Parliament under article 189*b*.8; defence, under article J.4.6; the common foreign and security policy, under article J.10; the hierarchy of Community acts, under a declaration on the hierarchy of Community acts made at Maastricht; and the pillared structure of the treaty on European Union under article B. It is too early to say what changes to the treaty on European Union we will press for.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's latest position on the principle of subsidiarity within the European Community.

Mr. Goodlad: The principle of subsidiarity remains central to the Government's European policy. We are committed to ensuring that it is fully applied in all areas of Community business. We welcomed the Commission's

report to the Brussels European Council in December, which must now be translated into appropriate action. Under the inter-institutional agreement of 25 October 1993, the Commission has undertaken to ensure that it will not table new proposals unless they can be justified on subsidiarity grounds.

Lomé Convention

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the implications of the latest general agreement on tariffs and trade for the future of the Lomé convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave him on 11 January at column *40*.

Seeds

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of the Government, within European Union discussions about the general agreement on tariffs and trade, concerning the potential impact on farmers in India and other Commonwealth countries, of proposals made within the GATT agreement for the enforcement of the intellectual property rights over varieties of seeds.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No such representations have been made. Traditional or well-known seeds cannot be patented because they are not new. The Uruguay round agreement on trade-related intellectual property rights will not alter this, and farmers in India and elsewhere can go on using such seeds without any restrictions.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the impact of recent military activity on the delivery patterns for humanitarian aid of Operation Lifeline Sudan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our information is that the hostilities by the Government of Sudan, factions of the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army and non-aligned groups have continued to impede the delivery and distribution of relief supplies in parts of the south. Eastern and Western Equatoria and Upper Nile are most affected. The Government of Sudan have withheld flight permission to six relief centres in March: Boma, Kajokeji, Maridi, Mundri, Pariang, and Thiet. World Food Programme relief barges along the Nile network have been suspended and clearance for the relief train serving Wau has been withheld by the SPLA.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about crop failure and food shortage in Sudan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Food and Agricultural Organisation-World Food Programme crop assessment report of December 1993 estimated emergency food aid requirements for 1993-94 at 464,000 tonnes. A copy of the report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Thailand

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the water supply project in Thailand which is under consideration for support under the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The main purpose of this project would be the improvement of the quality of drinking water supplies in 25 towns in Thailand.

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in full the report of the review of the aid and trade provision implemented in June 1993.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. We made the ATP review available as part of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's memorandum to the Foreign Affairs Committee to assist its inquiry into the Pergau hydro-electric project and the aid and trade provision.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Benefit Claims)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Prison Service notifies the Benefits Agency if a claimant is received into custody.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Governors of establishments are asked to complete a form about national insurance in respect of any prisoner admitted to custody for a period of 21 days or more. The form, which includes questions about the receipt of benefits immediately before arrest, is sent to the Contributions Agency. This procedure is being supplemented by sending the Benefits Agency, on request, lists of prisoners.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what incentives exist for remand prisoners to disclose the details of the benefits received.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A form about national insurance, which includes questions about the receipt of benefits, is designed for completion in respect of all prisoners—whether convicted or remand—admitted to custody for a period of 21 days or more. Prisoners—including those on remand and hoping to be granted bail—are encouraged to contact the DSS quickly to sort out their benefit affairs, not least so that families do not lose any benefits to which they may be entitled.

Mr. Bryan Ruppert

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he was requested to meet an all-party group of hon. Members to discuss the application of Bryan Ruppert for leave to remain in the United Kingdom on the basis of his long-term relationship with David Green; what was his response; and what were the reasons for his response.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I declined to meet an all-party group of hon. Members for the reasons set out in my letter of 17 February in reply to the hon. Member's letter of 1 February.

Colne Police

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average time for the police in Colne, Lancashire to respond to an emergency call in 1979, 1983, 1987, 1992 and at the current date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No information on emergency response times in Lancashire is available prior to 1993-94. In the current financial year, up to February, on average 86 per cent. of 999 calls were answered within 10 seconds, although no specific figures are available for Colne. During the same period, the average time taken to arrive at the scene of an emergency incident in Colne was four minutes from receiving the call.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the work of the interdepartmental working group on domestic violence;

(2) which Departments are represented on the interdepartmental working group on domestic violence.

Mr. Maclean: The official interdepartmental group on domestic violence considers initiatives designed to ensure that the perpetrators of domestic violence are brought to justice; that victims and their children receive the necessary practical and emotional support; and that preventive strategies to help reduce violence are identified and promoted. Proposals currently being considered by the group include ways of improving inter-agency co-operation at a national and local level and or raising public awareness of domestic violence. These and other related issues will be considered soon by the ministerial group on domestic violence.

Both groups are serviced by the Home Office with representation from the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Law Officer's Department, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Departments of Employment, Environment, Health and Social Security, the Department for Education, the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland Offices and the Treasury.

Immigration

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests he received from hon. Members in *(a)* 1993, *(b)* 1992, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* 1990 to exercise ministerial discretion in deportation cases and in refusals to extend the length of visas and in port clearances; in how many in each year the decision of immigration officers was overturned; to how many in each year he replied personally; and to how many the immigration and nationality department replied.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not collected in the form requested. The total numbers of letters and telephone inquiries about immigration matters received from right hon. and hon. Members in the years in question were as follows:

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Correspondence				
Ministerial replies	8,587	9,000	9,163	8,356
Official replies	677	1,383	1,899	1,928
Telephone enquiries[1]	901	900	943	829

[1] Not including calls to Ministers and their private offices.

How many of these approaches contained requests to exercise discretion in individual cases is not recorded separately. Nor is the number of cases in which decisions were changed following representations from hon. and right hon. Members.

EC Citizens (Voting Rights)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he intends to take to publicise EC voting rights and registration requirements for European citizens of voting age resident in the United Kingdom; and what are the costs of these measures, and the timetable for them in the period before the European parliamentary elections.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) on 25 February, columns *508-9*. All the measures noted in that reply have now been completed. In addition, we have also issued a press release to over 1,300 broadcast and written media, and offered a draft news article to over 100 regional newspapers. The costs of these measures have been met from within existing resources and are not separately identifiable.

Car Crime Prevention

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *735*, what was the cost of *(a)* the February 1993 phase and *(b)* the September 1993 phase of the car crime prevention campaign.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The campaign did not run during February 1993. There was a burst of national television advertising during January 1993, which cost £500,000.

A further burst of national advertising and promotions ran from May to the middle of September 1993 on television, posters, bus-sides, local press and radio at a cost of £3,419,185.

Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are detained in each prison in Yorkshire, for Humberside, what is the number of prisoners detained; of these how many are *(a)* serving prison sentences, *(b)* on remand and *(c)* awaiting deportation on the latest date for which he has figures available; and what were the figures 12 months ago.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total population in each prison in Humberside and Yorkshire is given in the tables for 31 January 1993 and 1994 and is sub-divided by type of custody.

Population in Prison Service establishments on 31 January 1994 in Humberside and Yorkshire by type of custody

County/Establishment	Remand	Sentenced	Fine defaulter	Immigration act detainee[1]	Other non-criminal	All
Humberside						
The Wolds	321	1	—	—	—	322
Hull	168	205	18	15	10	416
Everthorpe	—	223	—	—	1	224
Full Sutton	—	542	—	—	—	542
Yorkshire						
Askam Grange	—	94	—	—	1	95
Northallerton	114	38	5	—	—	157
New Hall	55	99	3	—	2	159
Wakefield	—	635	—	—	—	635
Leeds	551	549	20	6	3	1,129
Rudgate	—	247	4	—	1	252
Thorpe Arch	—	165	—	—	—	165
Wetherby	—	134	—	—	—	134
Lindholme	—	528	1	—	—	528
Moorland	440	169	8	1	—	618
Hatfield	—	174	2	—	—	176

[1] Detained pending further consideration or removal or deportation under schedule 2 or 3 to the Immigration Act 1991.

Population in Prison Service establishments on 31 January 1993 in Humberside and Yorkshire by type of custody

County/Establishment	Remand	Sentenced	Fine defaulter	Immigration act detainee[1]	Other non-criminal	All
Humberside						
The Wolds	304	—	—	—	—	304
Hull	41	200	30	3	—	274
Everthorpe	—	222	—	—	—	222
Full Sutton	—	427	—	—	—	427
Yorkshire						
Askam Grange	—	71	—	—	—	71
Northallerton	—	181	—	—	—	181
New Hall	35	79	—	—	—	114
Wakefield	—	654	—	—	—	654
Leeds	397	332	22	1	3	755
Rudgate	—	218	—	—	—	218
Thorpe Arch	—	164	—	—	—	164
Wetherby	—	119	—	—	—	119
Lindholme	—	554	—	—	—	554
Moorland	320	257	—	—	—	577
Hatfield	—	111	—	—	—	111

[1] Detained pending further consideration or removal or deportation under schedule 2 or 3 to the Immigration Act 1991.

Missing Persons

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve the procedures for tracing missing persons.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government are providing an extra £90,000 a year for three years to improve the procedures for tracing missing persons and are investing in the technology that will allow the system to be computerised.

As the first step in this process, on 18 March 1994 a police national missing persons bureau will open at New Scotland Yard, under the control of the national identification bureau. The bureau will be a central clearing house for information on vulnerable missing persons for the use of all police forces in the United Kingdom and overseas agencies.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been reported missing in each of the past five years; and of those reported missing how many are traced within a period of not less than *(a)* six months, *(b)* two years and *(c)* five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Statistics on missing persons are not currently available centrally. With the establishment of the police national missing persons bureau on 18 March statistics will begin to be collected centrally for the first time.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce a statutory requirement for people to inform the police if they have not heard from next of kin for over a year so that they can then be registered as missing.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available, and in each of the two preceeding years, were *(a)* granted temporary admission or *(b)* detained while their cases were examined; and how many of each group subsequently (i) were granted asylum, (ii) were deported, (iii) left the United Kingdom of their own volition and (iv) absconded.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The specific information requested is not available.

Information on total asylum applications, decisions, asylum seekers detained for more than one month and removals and voluntary departures of asylum applicants, is, however, contained in tables 2.1, 3.1 to 3.3, 8.1 and 9.1 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin issue 19/93, "Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 1992", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing how many people seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom who had a decision made on their application last year were detained by the immigration service for *(a)* up to one month, *(b)* one to two months, *(c)* two to three months, *(d)* three to six months, *(e)* six to nine months, *(f)* nine to 12 months, *(g)* 12 to 15 months, *(h)* 15 to 18 months and (i) over 18 months before the decision was made.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown of the number of asylum seekers currently detained in prison service accommodation by *(a)* nationality, *(b)* gender and *(c)* place of detention.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is as follows:

Asylum seekers detained in prison service accommodation on 11 March 1994

(a) By nationality

Nationality	*Number*
Algeria	18
Angola	4
Bangladesh	1
Brazil	1
Cameroon	1
China	3
Colombia	3
Egypt	3
Eritrea	1
Ethiopia	2
Ghana	26
Guinea	1
Haiti	3
India	85
Iran	2
Ivory Coast	2
Jamaica	3
Kenya	5
Libya	1
Niger	1
Nigeria	32
Pakistan	11
Poland	1
Romania	2
Sierra Leone	5
Singapore	1
Slovania	1
Somalia	1
Sri Lanka	4
Thailand	1
Tunisia	1
Turkey	30
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus	1
Zaire	2
Zimbabwe	13
Nationality Unknown	2
TOTAL	274

(b) By gender

	Number
Males	270
Females	4
Total	274

(c) by place of detention

	Number
Armley	1
Barlinnie	1
Bedford	2
Belmarsh	2
Birmingham	33
Blakenhurst	23
Brinsford	4
Bristol	2
Brixton	7
Bullingdon	1
Camphill	1
Canterbury	20
Chelmsford	1
Dover YOI	4
Dumfries YOI	1
Durham	2
Elmley	2
Exeter	1
Feltham YOI	5
Gateside	2
Glen Parva	2
Gloucester	3
Greenock	2
Haslar[1]	85
Highdown	15
Holloway	5
Hull	2
Isle of Sheppey	1
Leeds	1
Leicester	1
Lewes	3
Norwich	2
Pentonville	15
Reading	4
Risley	1
Rochester	2
Saughton	1
Shrewsbury	2
Stoke Newington	2
Waltham Gaol	2
Wandsworth	2
Wellingborough	1
Winchester	2
Wormwood Scrubs	3
TOTAL	274

[1] The Home Office holding centre at Haslar is primarily an immigration service detention centre, although managed by the Prison Service.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* nationality and *(b)* gender of the total number of asylum seekers detained pending examination of their asylum claim in *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994 to date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not available. General information on the total number of asylum applicants in 1992, including data on nationality and gender, is published in table 2.1 and at paragraph 24 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin issue 1/93 "Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 1992", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown of the number of asylum seekers who failed to comply with the terms of temporary admission and absconded in *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994 to date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not available in the form requested. The information available is given in the table.

Number of passengers at United Kingdom ports of entry

	Passengers granted temporary admission	[1]Passengers who absconded
1988	8,692	401
1989	13,744	475
1990	15,357	561
1991	13,220	601
1992	16,947	530
1993	19,066	667

[1] These figures include passengers who abscond from the control area or from detention as well as those who abscond from temporary admission. Data on the latter are not separately available.

Drug Prevention Teams

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what towns and cities drugs prevention teams are operating currently.

Mr. Maclean: Local teams are operating under the Home Office drugs prevention initiative in the following locations:

Birmingham
Bradford
Brent
Brighton and Hove
Bristol
Dundee
Glasgow
Hackney
Lambeth
Lewisham
Liverpool
Manchester
Newcastle
Newham
Nottingham
Salford
Southwark
West Glamorgan
Wirral
Wolverhampton

Young Offenders

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of offenders appearing before the courts in the Doncaster area were aged under 21 years in each year since 1988 and this year to date.

Mr. Maclean: Information for 1988 to 1992 is given in the table. Data for 1993 and 1994 are not yet available.

Number and percentage of offenders aged under 21 years convicted at Doncaster magistrates court[1] for all offences by type of offence 1988–1992

Type of offence/Year	All ages [=100%]	Aged under 21 Number	Aged under 21 Percentage
Indictable			
1988	3,079	1,324	43
1989	2,602	1,128	43
1990	2,540	1,065	42
1991	2,334	994	43
1992	2,180	816	37
Summary non-motoring			
1988	3,142	593	19
1989	2,934	720	25
1990	3,513	705	20
1991	3,106	476	15
1992	3,108	357	11
Summary motoring			
1988	3,367	648	19
1989	3,912	689	18
1990	3,899	694	18
1991	3,152	556	18
1992	3,103	484	16
All offences			
1988	9,588	2,565	27
1989	9,448	2,537	27
1990	9,952	2,464	25
1991	8,592	2,026	24
1992	8,391	1,657	20

[1] Includes convictions at the Crown court where the committing court was Doncaster PSD.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles were convicted of offences in *(a)* South Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* West Yorkshire and *(d)* Humberside for the latest date he has figures available; and what were the figures (i) five years and (ii) 10 years ago.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for 1982, 1987 and 1992 is given in the table. Data for 1993 will not be available until autumn 1994.

Number of juveniles aged 10 to under 17 years convicted of all offences by police force area and type of offence 1982, 1987 and 1992

Type of offence/Year	South Yorkshire	North Yorkshire	West Yorkshire	Humberside	England and Wales
Indictable					
1982	2,715	863	5,383	2,187	81,756
1987	1,551	410	2,055	914	41,963
1992	692	191	1,578	477	20,428
Summary non-motoring					
1982	462	231	957	632	17,145
1987	247	75	321	148	7,304
1992	180	49	478	155	6,673
Summary motoring					
1982	288	209	553	487	11,117
1987	84	66	117	167	4,330
1992	42	14	81	106	1,905
All offences					
1982	3,465	1,303	6,893	3,306	110,018
1987	1,882	551	2,493	1,229	53,597
1992	914	254	2,137	738	29,006

Prisoners (Deportation Orders)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time that a prisoner who has been the subject of a deportation order has to wait in prison or detention centre after completing his sentence.

Mr. Charles Wardle: During 1993 the average period for which a prisoner who was subject to deportation proceedings following a criminal conviction remained detained on completion of his or her sentence was about a week. In 463 out of 528 cases, there was no delay. In the others, the period included time taken to determine outstanding appeals, applications for judicial review, and applications for asylum.

Police (Attacks)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by year for the last 10 years and this year to date the numbers of *(a)* murders, *(b)* murders of members of the police force, *(c)* attacks on police officers, giving level of seriousness and *(d)* policemen and women in each post for the (i) Humberside, (ii) North Yorkshire, (iii) South Yorkshire and (iv) West Yorkshire police force areas.

Mr. Maclean: The following tables show such information as is readily available centrally.

Year	Offences decided at court to be murder	Cases in col. (1) involving police	Assaults on police			Police strength	
			Fatal	Serious	Minor/other	Male	Female
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
(i) Humberside							
1983	3	—	..	..	..	1,608	157
1984	3	—	..	..	..	1,766	146
1985	4	—	..	..	..	1,787	149
1986	—	—	..	..	..	1,810	152
1987	3	—	..	..	..	1,810	149
1988	4	—	..	..	..	1,825	154
1989	3	—	—	6	554	1,840	153
1990	3	—	—	45	273	1,830	159
1991	2	—	—	11	271	1,835	181
1992	—	—	—	7	226	1,839	194
(ii) North Yorkshire							
1983	—	—	..	..	..	1,269	85
1984	2	—	..	..	..	1,252	89
1985	—	—	..	..	..	1,249	104
1986	1	—	..	..	..	1,247	101
1987	1	—	..	..	..	1,273	110
1988	2	—	..	..	..	1,251	111
1989	4	—	—	13	113	1,261	118
1990	1	—	—	6	140	1,246	133
1991	1	—	—	13	136	1,235	147
1992	1	[1]1	—	6	134	1,258	150
(iii) South Yorkshire							
1983	8	—	..	..	..	2,581	277
1984	2	—	..	..	..	2,590	283
1985	4	—	..	..	..	2,577	273
1986	7	—	..	..	..	2,572	274
1987	3	—	..	..	..	2,647	287
1988	8	—	..	..	..	2,652	289
1989	5	—	—	23	311	2,644	302
1990	6	—	—	32	276	2,664	320
1991	3	—	—	85	99	2,661	328
1992	4	—	—	20	177	2,651	349
(iv) West Yorkshire							
1983	7	—	..	..	..	4,613	503
1984	9	—	..	..	..	4,543	483
1985	11	—	..	..	..	4,567	482
1986	7	—	..	..	..	4,636	480
1987	10	—	..	..	..	4,704	502
1988	6	—	..	..	..	4,692	522
1989	14	—	—	63	692	4,651	566
1990	15	—	—	58	629	4,662	614
1991	10	—	—	59	650	4,538	605
1992	3	—	—	58	719	4,441	629

[1] A special constable was fatally attacked: special constables are not included in the figures given for police strength.

Information for 1993 is not yet available. Offences decided at court to be murder are as at 27 August 1993; these figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and the courts, or as further information becomes available.

Drugs

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the second survey on drug usage and drugs prevention, comparing urban and rural areas, is likely to be published.

Mr. Maclean: On 17 December 1993 we published a summary of the self-reported drug usage findings of the 1992 British crime survey, together with a report by researchers at the university of Sheffield, "Drug Usage and Drugs Prevention: the views and habits of the general public", which presented the results of a survey carried out in 1992 in four major cities on behalf of the drugs prevention initiative. The documents are in the Library. Building on the four-cities survey, the drugs prevention initiative has commissioned a further report from the university of Sheffield analysing the findings of a telephone survey conducted last year of the drugs usage and attitudes of the public in Greater Manchester and the surrounding rural area. The report is not yet completed: we hope to publish it in due course.

Car Thefts and Burglaries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by year for the last 10 years and this year to date the number of cars damaged, the level of house burglary, theft from cars and burglary in the *(a)* Humberside, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* South Yorkshire and *(d)* West Yorkshire police areas.

Mr. Maclean: Information for the last 10 years on offences of burglary and theft from cars is published annually in table 3.1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume 3", copies of which are available in the Library. Figures for the latest available period for the 12 months to June 1993 are given in the table. Information on the number of cars damaged is not collected centrally.

Notable offences recorded by the police—12 months to June 1993

Number of offences

	Total—all burglary	*Burglary in a dwelling*	*Theft from cars*
Humberside	46,425	18,789	21,207
North Yorkshire	16,598	7,551	9,342
South Yorkshire	48,868	23,274	24,101
West Yorkshire	94,436	56,624	51,204

Public Interest Immunity

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response the Government have made to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on criminal justice concerning public interest immunity.

Mr. Maclean: The Royal Commission made a number of recommendations about the disclosure of information held by the prosecution, including the proposal that criminal cases where the disclosure of sensitive material is an issue should be dealt with only by High Court or nominated circuit judges—recommendation 123. As stated in the interim Government response to the Royal Commission, placed in the Library of the House on 22 February, the Government are still considering these recommendations.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each year since 1990.

Mr. Howard: No central record is kept of public interest immunity certificates covering the years 1990 to 9 April 1992. Since that time, I and my predecessor have signed 10 certificates.

Prisoners Charter

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish a prisoners charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Prison Service's commitments under the citizens charter were set out in "The Prison Service and Citizen's Charter", published in April 1993. This document was circulated very widely within the Prison Service and a copy has been placed in the Library. There is, however, no plan to publish a prisoners charter.

Director General of the Prison Service

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many days per year the chief executive of the Prison Service agency spends on his other business interests.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under the terms of his appointment the Director General of the Prison Service is permitted to spend a maximum of one and a half days a month in normal working hours as a non-executive director of other organisations.

Mr. Zahid Parvaiz

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the letters sent to him on 7 December 1993, 1 January 1994 and 10 February 1994 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. Zahid Parvaiz.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend wrote to the right hon. Member on 14 March.

Hypnosis

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to review the licensing guidelines for acts of hypnosis in Home Office circular 42/1989;

(2) what plans he has to bring stage hypnotists into a central register with a code of conduct;

(3) what plans he has to make it compulsory for stage hypnotists to carry public liability insurance.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have no present plans to do so.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information his Department has on the incidence of unlicensed stage hypnotism acts.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Between 1982 and 1992, the last year for which statistics are available, there was a total of five prosecutions for offences against the Hypnotism Act 1952, four of which resulted in convictions. Information about the number of prosecutions and convictions for the particular offence of giving an unauthorised public performance of stage hypnotism is not recorded separately.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to bring private clubs and students unions under the provisions of the Hypnotism Act 1952.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Any public peformance of stage hypnotism in such premises will already fall within the ambit of the Hypnotism Act 1952. We have no present plans to extend the application of that Act to private entertainments.

Parkhurst Prison

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Minister of State met Professor Bob Johnson, psychiatrist at Parkhurst prison; what action the Minister has taken as a result of that meeting; what analysis has been undertaken of the results obtained from work undertaken by Professor Johnson at Parkhurst prison; if Professor Johnson and the governor of Parkhurst prison have been asked to supply further information; what plans he has to visit Parkhurst prison to discuss Professor Johnson's work with staff and prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I first met Dr. Johnson during a visit to Parkhurst prison in October last year. He subsequently came to see me at the Home Office. As a result, I asked the Director General of the Prison Service to consider the need for research into the effectiveness of Dr. Johnson's work.

Dr. Johnson has since discussed his work and its evaluation with the director general and other Prison Service officials. It is intended that the research will be undertaken later this year.

I have no plans to visit the prison again in the near future.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will provide a list of the full dates of publication of the annual report of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for each year since it was established;

(2) when the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board annual report for 1992-93 will be published.

Mr. Maclean: The report for 1992-93 was published on 9 March. As indicated in my reply on 24 January to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche), column *63*, I understand the delay on this occasion was caused by a technical difficulty encountered by the board's auditors in the transfer of the board's investment accounts for children from one financial institution to another.

The dates of publication of the board's previous annual reports, to the extent that these can readily be ascertained within the time available, are as follows:

Report number	*Command number*	*Year ending March*	*Date published*
1	6,077	1965	October 1965
2	3,117	1966	October 1966
3	3,427	1967	October 1967
4	3,814	1968	November 1968
5	4,179	1969	October 1969
6	4,494	1970	October 1970
7	4,812	1971	November 1971
8	5,127	1972	November 1972
9	5,468	1973	November 1973
10	5,791	1974	November 1974
11	6,291	1975	November 1975
12	6,656	1976	November 1976
13	7,022	1977	25 November 1977
14	7,396	1978	24 December 1978
15	7,752	1979	28 November 1979
16	8,081	1980	18 November 1980
17	8,401	1981	1 December 1981
18	8,752	1982	1 December 1982
19	9,093	1983	1 December 1983
20	9,399	1984	4 December 1984
21	9,684	1985	12 December 1985
22	42	1986	16 December 1986
23	265	1987	9 December 1987
24	536	1988	6 December 1988
25	900	1989	6 December 1989
26	1,365	1990	18 December 1990
27	1,782	1991	18 December 1991
28	2,122	1992	17 December 1992

Drug Smuggling

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what his Department estimates to be the proportion of drugs smuggled into the United Kingdom which are seized by the police or Her Majesty's Customs and Excise;

(2) what hs been the country of origin of shipments of illegal drugs seized by the police and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise since 1988.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* This information is not available, but I will write to the hon. Member.

Age of Consent

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the age of consent for both men and women in each EC country.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* The following table sets out what I understand to be the ages at which, provided there is mutual consent and no special provisions apply—see footnote—persons may legally engage in heterosexual and homosexual acts in each EC country.

	Male/female	*Male/male*	*Female/female*
Belgium	14	14	14
Denmark	[1]15	[1]15	[1]15
France	15	15	15
Germany	[2]14	18	[2]14
Greece	17	17	17
Ireland	17	17	15
Italy	[1]14	[1]14	[1]14
Luxembourg	16	16	16
Netherlands	[1]16	[1]16	[1]16
Portugal	14	16	16
Spain	[1]16	[1]16	[1]16
United Kingdom	[3]16	21	[3]16

[1] A higher age may apply where the older person is in a position of authority, influence of trust.

[2] The German parliament is preparing to debate in March draft legislation which would unify the age of consent for each category at 16.

[3] Seventeen in Northern Ireland.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cereals

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cereal farmers in the United Kingdom last year received cash benefits in excess of £40,000 from the common agricultural policy; and what proportion received these benefits without growing anything.

Mr. Jack: The number of cereal farmers receiving cash benefits in excess of £40,000 from the common agricultural policy last year cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost.

The introduction of the arable area payment scheme was partly to compensate for cuts in support prices for cereals. Farmers claiming under the main arable area payments scheme for 1992-93 were required to set aside 15 per cent. of the area of their claim; the remaining 85 per cent. had to consist of eligible area crops. Therefore they could not receive benefits without growing anything. Under the voluntary five-year-set-aside scheme, there was no requirement to continue to grow arable crops to qualify for set-aside payments. Last year around 10 farmers who had set aside all their eligible arable land received payments in excess of £40,000.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of the extent to which the United Kingdom agricultural industry was disadvantaged by not applying for derogation on the moisture content in the 1993 cereal harvest.

Mr. Jack: No assessment on the lines suggested is possible.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made as to *(a)* the moisture content of the cereals that the majority of cereal purchasers will buy and *(b)* whether the majority of cereal purchasers will pay a premium for cereals with a moisture content of less than 15 per cent.

Mr. Jack: Moisture content requirements and any premium offered are a matter for the commercial judgment of the purchaser. We have no information which allows us to establish what proportion of cereals purchasers will pay a premium for cereals with a moisture content of less than 15 per cent.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will estimate the cost of the common agricultural policy to each household in the United Kingdom, breaking this figure down into *(a)* the running costs of the common agricultural policy and *(b)* the amount which the policy adds on to food prices.

Mr. Jack: The Exchequer cost of common agricultural policy expenditure in the United Kingdom in the current financial year is estimated at £2,727 million. In addition, the United Kingdom also contributes to the cost of the CAP in other member states. However, the United Kingdom contributes to the EC budget as a whole, and this is reduced by the Fontainebleau abatement which cannot be attributed to particular sectors of the EC budget.

It is not possible to provide a firm estimate of the consumer cost of the CAP to each household in the United Kingdom without making many assumptions.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will estimate the combined cost of the common agricultural policy and other national farm aids to the United Kingdom; and what this figure is broken down into *(a)* payments directly or indirectly received by farmers and *(b)* the cost to consumers in the form of higher food prices.

Mr. Jack: Total Exchequer expenditure on agricultural subsidies in the United Kingdom is estimated at £3,015 million for 1993-94, of which £2,727 million is in relation to the CAP. The remainder is either part-financed by the guidance section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund, or is wholly nationally funded. The United Kingdom also contributes to the EC budget, and thus to the cost of the CAP in other member states.

It is not possible to provide a firm estimate of the consumer cost of the CAP in the United Kingdom without making many assumptions. Most non-CAP schemes are structural in nature and would not have a direct impact on food prices.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the cost of the common agricultural policy to each citizen in the European Union in each year since 1973.

Mr. Jack: It is not possible to provide a firm estimate of the cost of the CAP to each EU citizen since it includes consumer costs which cannot be calculated without making many assumptions.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the loss of trade with non-EC countries consequent on the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Jack: No such assessment has been made. The question is purely hypothetical and if an assessment was possible it would require a large number of highly speculative assumptions.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is the area of each individual environmentally sensitive area in England already designated or to be designated in 1994;

(2) what is the area of each individual environmentally sensitive area in England already designated or to be designated, estimated to be eligible for management agreements;

(3) what is the area of each individual environmentally sensitive area in England already under management agreements at the most recent date for which accurate figures are available;

(4) how many farmers are estimated to be eligible for participation in each individual environmentally sensitive area in England already designated or to be designated in 1994;

(5) how many farmers had entered into agreements in each individual environmentally sensitive area in England at the most recent date for which accurate figures are available;

(6) what was or is the total budget for management agreements for all environmentally sensitive areas in England for the years 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Jack: Statistics relating to the 16 existing ESAs and the six to be designated this month are given in the tables.

Table 1—Uptake ESA

	Total area (ha)	*Eligible area (ha) (estimate)*	*Area under management agreement (ha) (March 1994 provisional)*[2]	*Number of current management agreements (March 1994 provisional)*[2]
Stage I (designated 1987, relaunched 1992)				
Broads[1]	36,100	24,000	14,623	718
Pennine Dales	46,600	39,100	24,276	692
Somerset Levels and Moors	27,700	25,900	12,492	841
South Downs[1]	69,000	51,700	10,430	200
West Penwith	7,200	6,900	6,051	185
Stage II (designated 1988, relaunched 1993)				
Breckland[1]	94,000	51,600	4,625	125
North Peak	54,900	50,500	44,709	100
Clun[1] (formerly called Shropshire Borders)	21,400	18,900	14,565	220
Suffolk River Valleys[1]	43,600	32,600	8,513	405
Test Valley[1]	4,800	3,300	849	29
Stage III (designated 1993)				
Avon Valley[1]	5,200	3,800	490	26
Exmoor	80,700	67,700	32,868	291
Lake District	245,400	219,300	67,431	559
North Kent Marshes[1]	13,700	11,600	2,941	39
South Wessex Downs[1]	44,900	38,300	15,915	108
South West Peak	33,900	27,000	10,822	223
Stage IV (to be designated March 1994)				
Blackdown Hills	39,900	32,200	n/a	n/a
Cotswold Hills[1]	84,700	66,100	n/a	n/a
Dartmoor	100,500	89,000	n/a	n/a
Essex Coast[1]	27,500	23,000	n/a	n/a
Shropshire Hills	38,500	34,900	n/a	n/a
Upper Thames Tributaries[1]	27,700	18,000	n/a	n/a

[1] The figures for eligible area in these ESAs contain arable land which is eligible to enter the scheme if reverted to grass. It is not expected that a high proportion of such land will enter the scheme.

[2] Information is not held about the number of farmers eligible for participation in each ESA scheme. Landlords, tenants, commoners etcetera may be eligible to apply, individually or jointly, in respect of the same holding.

Table 2—Expenditure in ESAs

Year	*£ (Thousands) (Payments to Farmers)*
1992-93	[1]10,872
1993-94	[2]18,040
1994-95	[3]31,036
1995-96	[3]43,135

[1] Outturn.
[2] Forecast outturn.
[3] Budget provision.

Infant Formulae

Mr. Faber: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *106*, if she still plans to implement the provisions of the EC directive on infant formulae and follow-on formulae by 1 June.

Mr. Soames: The implementation date of 1 June 1994 has been commented on during the consultation on the United Kingdom draft regulations. A decision on the final form of the regulations, including the coming into force date, will be announced once the Government have carefully considered all the comments received.

Agri-environmental Measures

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the total United Kingdom agricultural budget is accounted for annually by agri-environmental measures.

Mr. Jack: Forecast United Kingdom expenditure on agri-environment payments is £32·3 million in 1993-94 which represents approximately 1 per cent. of forecast expenditure on all forms of support for agriculture in the United Kingdom in 1993-94. United Kingdom expenditure on agri-environmental payments is planned to rise to over £100 million in 1995-96.

EU Surplus Foodstuffs

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the current rules governing the distribution of surplus EU foodstuffs.

Mr. Jack: The rules governing the operation of the EC surplus food scheme 1993-94 in the United Kingdom are set out in leaflets LP45 and LP46. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Kudus

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is done with the soil from the pens of kudu at London zoo;

(2) what action is being taken to prevent the transmission of spongiform encephalopathy from kudus at London zoo to other animals and to zoo staff on *(a)* entering and *(b)* leaving the kudu pen.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This Ministry currently has no powers to investigate spongiform encephalopathies in exotic ruminants at London Zoo. Precautions taken to prevent the transmission of spongiform encephalopathy in the zoo are a matter for the London zoo authorities.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give details of the genetic relationships between the greater kudus at London zoo that have died of a spongiform encephalopathy; and if the genetic relationships between the greater kudus at London zoo indicate that any of the kudu are carriers of a spongiform encephalopathy.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There have been a number of scientific papers published on different aspects of spongiform encephalopathy disease in greater kudu at London zoo. The most recent of these was in *The Veterinary Record* of 12 February 1994, while another on 9 October 1993 addressed the familial relationships between the confirmed cases and their dams.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many greater kudu from the London zoo herd have died of a spongiform encephalopathy; and how many of the greater kudu presently at London zoo are suspected to be suffering from a spongiform encephalopathy.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I understand that six greater kudu have developed a spongiform encephalopathy; they are all dead.

Food (Expenditure)

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the net disposable income per person in pound sterling in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the USA, *(c)* the European Union, *(d)* Japan, *(e)* Germany and *(f)* France at the latest available date; and what was the expenditure on food (i) as a percentage of net disposable income and (ii) in pound sterling.

Mr. Jack: The following broadly comparable information is available for 1991.

	Household expenditure per person[1]	*Expenditure on food per person*	*Expenditure on food as a percentage of household expenditure*
	£	£	*Percentage*
United Kingdom	6,207	766	12
USA	[2]8,423	831	10
European Union	6,377	1,095	18
Japan	8,555	1,162	14
Germany	7,397	[3]1,453	20
France	7,187	1,162	16

[1]Final consumption expenditure of resident households.
[2]Includes expenditure by private non-profit-making institutions.
[3]Includes alcoholic drink and meals out.
Source: EUROSTAT National Accounts ESA 1970 to 1991.
OECD National Accounts 1979 to 1991.

Orchard Replanting Grants

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the take-up in each of the last five years of orchard replanting grants; and if she will make a statement about the cessation of the scheme.

Mr. Jack: The amount of grant given in England for orchard replanting over the last five years is as follows:

Orchard replanting grants in England 1989 to 1993

Year	*Expenditure (£)*
1989	216,683
1990	234,094
1991	345,998
1992	570,530
1993	518,898
TOTAL	1,886,193

These grants were introduced essentially as pump-priming measures to improve the competitiveness of the United Kingdom orchard sector through the injection of capital for the replanting of apple and pear orchards. The objective of the scheme was that, after five years of assistance, the industry would be capable of self-sustaining development without further government intervention. A recent evaluation of the scheme carried out for us by the university of Leicester indicates that the grants were taken up by practically all of our target population. A report of the evaluation is available in the Library of the House.

Arable Aid

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent delays have occurred in payment of arable aid to farmers in *(a)* south Yorkshire, *(b)* north Yorkshire, *(c)* west Yorkshire and *(d)* Humberside who are growers of commercial oilseed rape; from what office the cheques are being paid; and whether all payments due to be met by 31 December have been paid.

Mr. Jack: Over 98 per cent. of all payments due to growers of commercial oilseed rape were issued by 31 December 1993. In a very small number of cases payments could not be made for a number of reasons. Payments are authorised by the regional service centre at Northallerton and payable orders are issued from the Ministry's finance department at Guildford.

Food Stockpile

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the items and quantity of food in the national food stockpile.

Mr. Soames: The national food stockpile contains some 93,000 tonnes of food, made up of flour, biscuits, fat and sugar. Stocks are being run down to achieve liquidation which was announced in March last year.

Animal Transportation

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, col. 847, by what authority the British

Government are able to prosecute a British haulier for breaking welfare laws for animals being transported in another EC member state who are suspected of breaking *(a)* British laws and *(b)* EC laws; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992 implements EC directive 91/628. In Great Britain this legislation is enforced by the local authorities, with support and advice from the Ministry. Allegations of infringements are investigated and where appropriate charges are brought before a magistrates court. If investigations reveal offences in another member state the facts are reported to the relevant authorities.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the country of origin and country of departure stated on documentation accompanying live sheep certified as fit to travel which arrived at an abattoir in Birmingham on 8 March and later found to have multiple caseous abcesses, oedema and emaciation, bruising and septicaemia following carcase inspection;

(2) what was the port of entry of a consignment of 300 live sheep which arrived at a Birmingham abattoir on 8 March; and what veterinary inspection they were subjected to and by whom on arrival in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: The consignment was imported from Poland into the EC through the border inspection post at Frankfurt-on-Oder in Germany. Following its arrival at a slaughterhouse in Birmingham, documentary, identity and physical inspections were carried out by the state veterinary service in conjunction with the official veterinary surgeon.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will now announce the constitution, including producer representation, of the proposed Milk Marketing Board residuary body, its budgetary provisions and proposed lifetime.

Mr. Jack: The constitution of the residuary Milk Marketing Board will depend upon the functions to be assigned to it, which must be specified in an approved reorganisation scheme. No decision can be taken on the constitution, therefore, until a reorganisation scheme has been approved. We have, nevertheless, announced our intention that producers should be strongly represented on the residuary board.

The assets and liabilities to be retained by the board after vesting day would likewise be specified in the approved reorganisation scheme. The funding provision for the residuary board would therefore be determined if and when the scheme was approved.

The lifetime of the residuary board would depend to some extent upon how quickly it could realise its assets and discharge its liabilities. Some potential liabilities could crystallise well after vesting day, however, and the residuary board is likely to have a lifetime of several years at least.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will consider the appointment of a market regulator for a period of two years to allow the orderly development of a free market for milk.

Mr. Jack: After the end of the milk marketing scheme the milk market will be subject to the normal rules on competition. The Agriculture Act 1993 does not provide for the appointment of a special regulator for the milk market.

Less-favoured Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) pursuant to her answer of 2 March, *Official Report,* columns *744-46,* if she will publish the same information for less-favoured area specialist sheep farms;

(2) pursuant to her answer of 2 March, *Official Report,* columns *744-46,* if she will provide a further breakdown of the information requested for sheep, cattle, cattle and sheep and in addition for specialist sheep farms and mixed cattle and sheep, giving unweighted estimates and distinguishing between the results from the annual farm census and the farm business survey.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* The further breakdown of the information requested is shown in the table. The numbers and proportions of farms for each type and size are taken from the June census and the estimates of net farm income are weighted averages from the farm business survey.

LFA livestock farms in England: holdings and net farm income by ESU size group

ESU size group	*Holdings (as at June 1992)*		*Net farm income 1992-93[1] (£'000)*
	Number	*Proportion*	
Farms classified as SDA Specialised sheep			
<8	1,091	41	—
8<16	402	15	11·0
16<28	384	14	
28<40	267	10	
40<60	284	11	22·4
60<100	174	7	
100<200	48	2	35·7
200 and over	4	0	
All sizes	2,654	100	15·1
ESU per holding			
Average of all sizes	22	—	—
Average of over 8 ESUs	36	—	—
Farms classified as SDA Specialised beef			
<8	1,075	58	—
8<16	330	18	—
16<28	239	13	—
28<40	93	5	—
40<60	68	4	—
60<100	33	2	—
100<200	12	1	—
200 and over	2	0	—
All sizes	1,852	100	—
ESU per holding			
Average of all sizes	13	—	—
Average of over 8 ESUs	25	—	—
Farms classified as SDA Mixed cattle and sheep			
<8	738	20	—
8<16	488	13	9·6
16<28	632	17	
28<40	555	15	
40<60	608	16	22·6
60<100	543	14	
100<200	175	5	65·9
200 and over	18	0	
All sizes	3,757	100	17·8

ESU size group	Holdings (as at June 1992) Number	Proportion	Net farm income 1992-93[1] (£'000)
ESU per holding			
Average of all sizes	37	—	—
Average of over 8 ESUs	45	—	—
Farms classified as DA cattle and sheep			
<8	1,686	47	—
8<16	689	19	
16<28	497	14	3·5
28<40	256	7	
40<60	224	6	
60<100	160	4	11·6
100<200	63	2	
200 and over	4	0	71·1
All sizes	3,579	100	5·5
ESU per holding			
Average of all sizes	18	—	—
Average of over 8 ESUs	31	—	—
All farms classified as cattle and sheep (LFA)[2]			
<8	4,590	39	—
8<16	1,909	16	
16<28	1,752	15	7·7
28<40	1,171	10	
40<60	1,184	10	
60<100	910	8	21·7
100<200	298	3	
200 and over	28	0	61·8
All sizes	11,842	100	13·7
ESU per holding			
Average of all sizes	24	—	—
Average of over 8 ESUs	37	—	—

[1] Weighted averages. Unweighted averages are not appropriate as they do not accurately reflect the distribution of farms.

[2] Includes the following main types: SDA specialist sheep, SDA specialist beef, SDA mixed cattle and sheep, DA cattle and sheep, means sample too small to provide reliable results for individual size groups. In some cases size groups have been combined.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *1068*, if the weighting of the sample information from the farm business survey analysis of less-favoured area livestock farms takes into account the economies of scale achieved in relation to farm size; what mechanism there is for measuring the economies of scale achieved by less-favoured area livestock farms in relation to farm size; and if she will publish the results according to standard farm classification in terms of the size group set out in her answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *744*, for (i) specialist sheep farms and (ii) mixed cattle and sheep farms.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* The weighting system ensures that sample results from the farm business survey for farms of different size, type, region and tenure are combined in proportion to the number of farms recorded at the June agricultural census. An analysis of three performance ratios for small, medium and large farms for all LFA cattle and sheep farms represented in the farm business survey is published in "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom".

There are insufficient farms in the sample to allow an analysis for each of the size groups set out in the previous reply; however, the table shows the results for small, medium and large farms.

Performance measures by size of farm in England, 1992-93[1]

		SDA specialist sheep farms	SDA mixed cattle and sheep farms
Output (£'000) per labour unit	Small	22	24
	Medium	31	37
	Large	32	55
	All sizes	27	33
Output per £100 of total assets (£)	Small	22	20
	Medium	29	26
	Large	39	27
	All sizes	26	24
Output per £100 of total input (£)[2]	Small	101	97
	Medium	118	112
	Large	123	128
	All sizes	109	109

[1] The size groups are: small (8 to <40 ESUs), medium (40 to <100 ESUs) and large (100+ ESUs).

[2] Total input includes rental value, tenant-type inputs and farmer and spouse manual labour, but excludes interest payments.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Museums Review

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress has been made in his Department's review of museums, announced after the financial statement in 1993.

Mr. Sproat: No formal announcement has been made about a decision to review the Government's policy on museums. However, the Museums and Galleries Commission is considering ideas for a national policy, and I am taking a close interest in this initiative.

Millennium Commission

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to announce the names of the members of the Millennium Commission.

Mr. Brooke: The names of the members of the Millennium Commission were announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 17 February. I shall have the honour of being chairman of the commission. The other members are:

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade
Professor Heather Couper, FRAS
The Earl of Dalkeith
The hon. Robin V. Dixon, CBE
Sir John Hall
Mr. Simon Jenkins
Mr. Michael Montague CBE
Ms Patricia Scotland QC

Royal Palaces

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on how many occasions he has given the right hon. Member for Swansea, West holding answers on parliamentary questions relating to the occupied royal palaces; what has been the length of the delays before substantive answers were given; how many were answered on Fridays; and what were the reasons for the delays.

Mr. Sproat: Holding answers have been given on 12 occasions: three for two working days; five for three; two for four and one for seven working days. None was answered on a Friday. The delays occurred because the detailed information requested was such as to require significant staff time to assemble or identify.

In the one other case, where the holding answer was for a duration of 23 working days and which I answer today, the delay was caused by an oversight within my Department for which I apologise.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the total rent received from the grace and favour accommodation in the occupied royal palaces.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* Rent of £69,000 per annum is received for residential accommodation in the occupied royal palaces.

Regional Orchestras

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether the Arts Council has approached him since 3 March for additional funding for regional orchestras.

Mr. Brooke: No.

Cathedrals (Stone Decay)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what contact he has had with the Cathedrals fabric committee on first aid and remedial treatment for stone decay.

Mr. Brooke: None. English Heritage is carrying out work on first aid and remedial treatment for stone decay and is in regular contact with the Cathedrals Fabric Commission.

Historic Buildings

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the extent of the decreases in concentrations of sulphur dioxide according to the information available to his Department, in relation to the rate of decay of historic buildings.

Mr. Brooke: The report of research on atmospheric pollution and stone decay for the joint working party between the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England and the joint environmental programme of National Power plc and Power Gen plc, published last year, found that the annual average concentrations of sulphur dioxide had decreased very markedly over the last 30 years. However, there is likely to be decay in historic stone as a result of past depositions. The Building Research Establishment is maintaining a programme of research on the effects of sulphur dioxide and other pollutants on the decay of stone and other materials as part of the national materials exposure programme of the Department of the Environment and the international materials exposure programme of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Overseas Investors

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to encourage more potential overseas investors in the United Kingdom to include a visit to Northern Ireland in their fact-finding itinerary, prior to making a decision on where to site new industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland continues to work closely with the Invest in Britain Bureau of the Department of Trade and Industry to ensure that prospective inward investors visiting the United Kingdom have the opportunity to include a visit to Northern Ireland on their itinerary. Independently from the Department of Trade and Industry the Industrial Development Board organises a number of visits to Northern Ireland for potential investors from its target markets overseas through its network of overseas offices placed in these strategic regions.

Housing Executive

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the proportion of *(a)* Protestant and *(b)* Catholic staff, by seniority, in the district 6 office of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Tim Smith: Information about the religious make-up of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's work force as a whole is published annually in the Fair Employment Commission's report "A Profile of the Northern Ireland Workforce: Summary of the Monitoring Returns". The most recent report for 1992 is available in the Library.

I am advised by the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that it allocates staff resources to various parts of the organisation on the basis of its operational needs and personnel management policies. The executive does not release information about the religious composition of staff in individual offices.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the proportion of public authority housing in terms of *(a)* Protestant and *(b)* Catholic occupancy administered by the district 6 office of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Tim Smith: I am advised by the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that it does not

hold statistical information on the religious composition of its tenants. The Housing Executive has consistently administered housing policies in a fair and open way on the basis of need, irrespective of religion.

EC Funds

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the receipts under the European social fund in each financial year were earned by *(a)* the private sector, *(b)* non-central Government public sector bodies and *(c)* central Government.

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

Year	Private/Vol. sector	£million non-central Government public bodies	Central Government
1973-74	—	—	—
1974-75	0·41	0·31	2·68
1975-76	—	—	—
1976-77	0·77	0·58	5·05
1977-78	0·90	0·68	5·92
1978-79	1·80	1·35	11·85
1979-80	1·80	1·35	11·85
1980-81	2·76	2·07	18·17
1981-82	3·00	2·25	19·75
1982-83	4·22	3·17	27·81
1983-84	4·56	3·42	30·02
1984-85	4·56	3·42	30·02
1985-86	3·00	2·25	19·75
1986-87	6·39	4·80	42·11
1987-88	6·77	5·08	44·55
1988-89	4·33	3·25	28·52
1989-90	5·35	4·01	35·19
1990-91	5·24	3·93	34·50
[1]1991-92	5·06	3·80	33·32
	60·92	45·72	401·06

[1]This is the latest available information as claims for 1993, and some for 1992, have not yet been settled.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money Northern Ireland has received in each financial year from EC sources apart from payments under the three structural funds.

Sir John Wheeler: The following amounts have been identified as being received in Northern Ireland from European Community sources other than the three structural funds since 1987-88 when meaningful figures first became available.

Financial year	Total £ million
1987-88	27·6
1988-89	27·8
1989-90	46·1
1990-91	48·1
1991-92	59·7
1992-93	56·3

Most of the receipts in this category are from the guarantee section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. However, it should be noted that the bulk of guarantee section receipts are disbursed centrally by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce and details of payments are not generally maintained at regional level. Other small payments are made by the European Commission direct to recipients which are not passed through the United Kingdom Government.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money received in each financial year up to 31 December 1993 from EC sources has been paid into the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund.

Sir John Wheeler: All money received from EC sources is paid into the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money Northern Ireland has received in each financial year up to 31 December 1993 from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund, guidance sector; how much of those receipts were paid to the private sector; how much of these receipts were paid to the public sector; how much of these receipts represented a cash addition to the Northern Ireland economy; and how much was used each year to offset Government expenditure on Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The following amounts were received from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund, guidance section.

£ million

Financial year	Individual capital projects		Other guidance schemes		Total
	Private sector	Public sector	Private sector[1]	Public sector	
1974-75	—	—	0·25	—	0·25
1975-76	0·45	—	0·25	—	0·66
1976-77	1·87	0·31	0·27	—	2·45
1977-78	1·28	0·31	1·28	—	2·87
1978-79	0·70	0·24	2·46	—	3·40
1979-80	1·27	0·20	3·21	—	4·68
1980-81	1·91	1·05	3·35	—	6·31
1981-82	1·43	0·13	4·69	—	6·25
1982-83	2·47	0·99	3·30	—	6·76
1983-84	1·59	0·38	14·65	—	16·61
1984-85	0·95	0·28	13·29	—	14·52
1985-86	3·56	0·03	11·83	—	15·42
1986-87	2·58	0·11	5·96	—	8·65
1987-88	3·29	—	5·99	—	9·28
1988-89	2·31	0·51	10·05	—	12·87
1989-90	2·84	—	6·60	—	9·44
1990-91	4·75	—	6·25	—	11·00
1991-92	4·31	—	21·78	2·86	28·95
1992-93	8·31	—	9·56	0·45	18·32
1993-94[2]	0·66	—	13·17	2·70	16·53
Totals	46·53	4·54	138·15	6·01	195·22

[1] Includes reference to the approximate share in Northern Ireland on various structural schemes which were applied throughout the United Kingdom.
[2] To December 1993.

All these receipts present cash additions to the recipients and are subject to normal European Community audit arrangements. The overall level of receipts is taken into account in the Government's decision on public expenditure allocations and their availability enables public expenditure to be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise be feasible.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the receipts which Northern Ireland has received from the European regional development fund since 1973 has been earned by *(a)* infrastructure projects undertaken by non-central Government bodies, *(b)* infrastructure projects undertaken by central Government and *(c)* industrial projects.

Sir John Wheeler: The following amounts have been received from the European regional development fund to 31 December 1993:

Infrastructure	*£ Million*
Non-central Government	125·8
Central Government	79·9
Industry	100·7
Programmes[1]	222·6
TOTAL[2]	529·0

[1] These programmes combine elements of both industry and infrastructure.
[2] Includes estimated receipts for the first nine months of the 1993-94 financial year.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money has been received by Northern Ireland under each of the European Community initiatives to date.

Sir John Wheeler: Under the 1989 to 1993 structural funds allocation, Northern Ireland has 10 approved Community initiatives. The amounts recived to date under each initiative are:

	£ million
INTERREG (assistance to border areas)	25·52
STRIDE (research and technological development)	8·55
ENVIREG (environmental improvement)	2·34
PRISMA (assistance to firms)	3·41
TELEMATIQUE (promotion of telecommunications service)	3·36
EUROFORM (qualifications and new skills and employment opportunities)	0·90
NOW (employment opportunities for women)	0·90
HORIZON (handicapped and certain disadvantaged groups)	0·71
RETEX (diversification for textile regions)	0·90
LEADER (rural development)	1·09

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money Northern Ireland has received from the European social fund in each financial year up to 31 December 1993; now much each year represented a cash addition to the Northern Ireland economy; and how much was used to offset Government expenditure on Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The following amounts were received from the European social fund:

Financial Year	*Total £ million*
1973-74	—
1974-75	3·4
1975-76	0·0
1976-77	6·4
1977-78	7·5
1978-79	15·0
1979-80	15·0
1980-81	23·0
1981-82	25·0
1982-83	35·2
1983-84	38·0
1984-85	38·0
1985-86	25·0
1986-87	53·3
1987-88	56·4
1988-89	36·1
1989-90	44·6
1990-91	43·7
[1]1991-92	42·2
Total	507·8

[1]This is the latest available information as claims for 1993, and some for 1992, have not yet been settled.

Receipts earned by the private sector and by non-central Government public sector bodies are paid to the claimant. The recipients represent cash additions to the recipients. Receipts earned by central Government are paid into the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund. All ESF receipts are subject to EC audit arrangements.

The overall level of receipts is taken into account in the Government's decisions on public expenditure allocations, and their availability enables public expenditure to be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise be feasible.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much Northern Ireland's share of the United Kingdom's payments into the European Economic Community was from 1 January 1973 to 31 December 1993; how much Northern Ireland's share was of the receipts for the same period; and how much of those receipts was used to offset Government expenditure on Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: It is not possible to determine Northern Ireland's actual share of the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Community because payments are made on a national and not a regional basis. Similarly it is not possible to identify the full extent of receipts from the Community. However, a Northern Ireland attributed share of the contribution to the EC is calculated as an accounting mechanism necessary because of the operation of a separate Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund. This notional attributed share does not count as an item of expenditure within the Northern Ireland public expenditure programme and has therefore no bearing on the level of public expenditure in the Province.

Figures for the notional attribution of part of Northern Ireland's share of the United Kingdom's payments and for those areas where the receipts from the European Community's structural funds can be separately identified are as follows:

Financial year	*Attributed share (part) £ million*	*Identified receipts[2] £ million*
1973-74	1	0
1974-75	6	4
1975-76	8	4
1976-77	13	16
1977-78	16	14
1978-79	24	19
1979-80	28	31
1980-81	28	44
1981-82	50	41
1982-83	66	53
1983-84	66	51
1984-85	68	58
1985-86	74	44
1986-87	62	77
1987-88	91	111
1988-89	85	96
1989-90	104	95

Financial year	Attributed share (part) £ million	Identified receipts[2] £ million
1990-91	107	110
1991-92	[1]100	132
1992-93	[1]134	158
Total	1,131	1,158

[1]Attributed share figures for the last two years are provisional estimates which will be revised when final details of tax revenues are determined.
[2]This comprises total identified EC structural funds receipts in Northern Ireland.

All receipts represent cash additions to the recipients and are subject to normal European Community audit arrangements.

The overall level of receipts is taken into account in the Government's decisions on public expenditure allocations and their availability enables public expenditure to be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise be feasible.

Prisoners (Christmas Leave)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by *(a)* Her Majesty's prison and *(b)* Her Majesty's remand prison the number of prisoners who applied for Christmas leave and the number of those who were granted Christmas leave; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: In December 1993 a total number of 446 convicted prisoners were released from the following prisons for Christmas home leave. Under the criteria for Christmas home leave, remand prisoners are not eligible to apply.

Prison	Applications	Applications granted
Belfast	33	32
Maze	116	111
Maghaberry	115	109
Magilligan	162	145
Young Offenders Centre	79	49

The Christmas home leave scheme and other release schemes play a key part in the Northern Ireland prison service's objectives by enabling prisoners to retain, and in some cases, re-establish family and community links in preparation for eventual release, and this has proved to be very successful. Of the 466 prisoners only two remain unlawfully at large. Both are medium-risk prisoners who had short periods left to serve.

Outdoor Education Centres

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names, location and county of each of the outdoor education centres in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Outdoor education centres

Name	Location	County
Ballyholme	Portrush	Antrim
Bushmills	Bushmills	Antrim
Derganagh House	Ballycastle	Antrim
Drumalla House	Carnlough	Antrim
Ardnabannon	Castlewellan	Down
Binnian	Newcastle	Down
Cabra Towers	Newry	Down
Delamont	Killyleagh	Down
F. H. Ebbit	Newcastle	Down
Ganaway	Millisle	Down
Killowen	Rostrevor	Down
Killyleagh	Killyleagh	Down
Shannaghmore	Newcastle	Down
Tullymore	Newcastle	Down
Yellow Water Cottage	Rostrevor	Down
Coranerk	Derrygonnelly	Fermanagh
Gortatole	Florencecourt	Fermanagh
Carrowmena	Limavady	Londonderry
Magilligan Field Centre	Limavady	Londonderry
Woodhall	Kilrea	Londonderry
Camteel	Aughnacloy	Tyrone
Corrick	Newtownstewart	Tyrone
Goles Cottage	Keadycam, Plumbridge	Tyrone

Dentistry

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the amount spent per child aged under 18 years on general dental services in the Province, whether or not registered with a general dental practitioner.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) on 11 March 1994 at columns *436-37.*

EDUCATION

Teachers (Trials)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* head teachers and *(b)* teachers in (i) 1992-93 and (ii) 1993-94 were committed to trial and found guilty; and what information he has concerning costs incurred.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected in the form requested. The Department receives about 150 reports a year from the police or employers about the conviction of teachers and other staff. Records are not held by year of conviction or by category of staff. We have no information about the cost of bringing teachers to trial.

Science

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the decision to withdraw combined science as a compulsory double subject at GCSE level in the national curriculum; what is his Department's assessment of the effect this will have on *(a)* the number of 16-year-olds studying science, *(b)* their total exposure to science subjects during their education and *(c)* the longer-term scientific literacy of British society.

Mr. Robin Squire: There has been no such decision. Double award science never has been compulsory at GCSE level. Sir Ron Dearing's final report recommends that the minimum statutory requirement for science at key stage 4—14 to 16-year-olds—should continue to be the single award science. Most 14 to 16-year-old pupils—around 85 per cent. when last sampled in 1993—do, however, take double award science, and we welcome that.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what initiatives his Department is taking to encourage more young people at school to study science and to choose science subjects in higher education.

Mr. Boswell: The national curriculum ensures that all pupils, from the age of five to 16, study science. Most pupils in their final year of compulsory schooling—about 85 per cent. when last sampled in 1993—take the double award in science. That ensures that they are qualified for further study. In addition to the traditional A-level route, new high-quality vocational qualifications post-16 will provide alternative routes for students to continue their science and technology studies. General national vocational qualifications in science started a pilot phase in September 1993.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish tables showing the percentage of teaching time devoted to *(a)* mathematics, *(b)* physics, *(c)* chemistry and *(d)* total for all science subjects for the average 14-year-old, 15-year-old and 16-year-old in (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) France, (iii) Germany, (iv) Italy, (v) Japan and (vi) the United States of America at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not available centrally.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the numbers and percentages of *(a)* schools and *(b)* children at (i) primary and (ii) secondary levels who are in grant-maintained establishments for each London borough, both inclusive and exclusive of those in the private sector.

Mr. Robin Squire: The tables show numbers and percentages of grant-maintained schools and pupils in such schools in the 33 London boroughs.

Schools and pupils in the London boroughs

Table A: maintained primary schools

LEA	*1 Total number schools*	*2 Total number GM schools*	*3 Percentage GMS in LEA*	*4 Total number pupils*	*5 Total number GM pupils*	*6 Percentage GM pupils*
Corporation of London	1		0·0	214	0	0·0
Camden	41		0·0	10,610	0	0·0
Greenwich	77		0·0	20,934	0	0·0
Hackney	69		0·0	16,677	0	0·0
Hammersmith	38		0·0	9,025	0	0·0
Islington	57		0·0	14,966	0	0·0
Kensington and Chelsea	27	1	3·7	6,292	326	5·2
Lambeth	78	5	6·4	19,053	1,250	6·6
Lewisham	70	1	1·4	20,479	361	1·8
Southwark	76	5	6·6	21,222	1,265	6·0
Tower Hamlets	74		0·0	20,717	0	0·0
Wandsworth	65	2	3·1	17,250	515	3·0
Westminster	41		0·0	9,122	0	0·0
Barking	54		0·0	15,727	0	0·0
Barnet	89	2	2·2	23,790	776	3·3
Bexley	65	2	3·1	18,596	447	2·4
Brent	65	1	1·5	22,228	493	2·2
Bromley	78	2	2·6	20,449	934	4·6
Croydon	98	2	2·0	26,271	836	3·2
Ealing	91	4	4·4	27,652	1,217	4·4
Enfield	70	1	1·4	23,316	149	0·6
Haringey	77		0·0	19,127	0	0·0
Harrow	54		0·0	19,109	0	0·0
Havering	74		0·0	19,624	0	0·0
Hillingdon	72	11	15·3	20,107	2,602	12·9
Hounslow	63		0·0	19,339	0	0·0
Kingston upon Thames	36	1	2·8	10,463	191	1·8
Merton	49		0·0	15,224	0	0·0
Newham	67		0·0	25,235	0	0·0
Redbridge	56		0·0	19,045	0	0·0
Richmond upon Thames	39		0·0	10,785	0	0·0
Sutton	43	3	7·0	12,884	799	6·2
Waltham Forest	62		0·0	19,705	0	0·0
Totals	2,016	43	2·1	575,237	12,161	2·1

Table B: maintained secondary schools

LEA	*1 Total number schools*	*2 Total number GM schools*	*3 Percentage GMS in LEA*	*4 Total number pupils*	*5 Total number GM pupils*	*6 Percentage GM pupils*
Corporation of London	0	0	0·0	0	0	0·0
Camden	11	2	18·2	10,479	2,340	22·3
Greenwich	15	0	0·0	13,956	0	0·0
Hackney	10	0	0·0	7,384	0	0·0
Hammersmith	9	1	11·1	5,976	1,229	20·6
Islington	9	0	0·0	7,037	0	0·0

LEA	1 Total number schools	2 Total number GM schools	3 Percentage GMS in LEA	4 Total number pupils	5 Total number GM pupils	6 Percentage GM pupils
Kensington and Chelsea	4	1	25·0	3,203	629	19·6
Lambeth	10	5	50·0	6,350	3,363	53·0
Lewisham	13	0	0·0	10,515	0	0·0
Southwark	14	5	35·7	9,121	2,765	30·3
Tower Hamlets	15	1	6·7	11,582	907	7·8
Wandsworth	10	6	60·0	8,907	6,487	72·8
Westminster	8	0	0·0	7,358	0	0·0
Barking	8	0	0·0	9,493	0	0·0
Barnet	21	9	42·9	18,416	8,946	48·6
Bexley	16	4	25·0	14,391	2,818	19·6
Brent	14	8	57·1	12,387	8,154	65·8
Bromley	17	11	64·7	16,688	10,581	63·4
Croydon	20	4	20·0	14,561	3,713	25·5
Ealing	12	5	41·7	10,998	4,905	44·6
Enfield	17	5	29·4	17,390	5,576	32·1
Haringey	9	0	0·0	9,060	0	0·0
Harrow	10	1	10·0	7,965	483	6·1
Havering	18	4	22·2	14,825	3,813	25·7
Hillingdon	17	12	70·6	13,715	11,467	83·6
Hounslow	14	2	14·3	14,010	2,108	15·0
Kingston upon Thames	10	4	40·0	7,607	2,859	37·6
Merton	11	0	0·0	7,167	0	0·0
Newham	14	1	7·1	13,575	556	4·1
Redbridge	14	1	7·1	14,952	1,113	7·4
Richmond upon Thames	8	0	0·0	7,447	0	0·0
Sutton	14	8	57·1	11,065	6,591	59·6
Waltham Forest	16	2	12·5	11,049	1,915	17·3
Totals	408	102	25·0	348,629	93,318	26·8

Table C: All schools

LEA	1 Total number schools	2 Total number GM schools	3 Percentage GMS in LEA	4 Total number pupils	5 Total number GM pupils	6 Percentage GM pupils
Corporation of London	4	0	0·0	1,795	0	0·0
Camden	90	2	2·2	27,541	2,340	8·5
Greenwich	112	0	0·0	38,182	0	0·0
Hackney	103	0	0·0	28,246	0	0·0
Hammersmith	71	1	1·4	19,605	1,229	6·3
Islington	78	0	0·0	23,295	0	0·0
Kensington and Chelsea	78	2	2·6	20,365	955	4·7
Lambeth	115	10	8·7	28,366	4,613	16·3
Lewisham	100	1	1·0	35,046	361	1·0
Southwark	114	10	8·8	36,788	4,030	11·0
Tower Hamlets	107	1	0·9	33,841	907	2·7
Wandsworth	115	8	7·0	32,304	7,002	21·7
Westminster	81	0	0·0	22,616	0	0·0
Barking	65	0	0·0	25,373	0	0·0
Barnet	146	11	7·5	48,850	9,722	19·9
Bexley	90	6	6·7	34,112	3,265	9·6
Brent	101	9	8·9	37,168	8,647	23·3
Bromley	120	13	10·8	43,202	11,515	26·7
Croydon	155	6	3·9	50,660	4,549	9·0
Ealing	134	9	6·7	45,378	6,122	13·5
Enfield	99	6	6·1	42,479	5,725	13·5
Haringey	105	0	0·0	31,106	0	0·0
Harrow	83	1	1·2	31,983	483	1·5
Havering	102	4	3·9	35,353	3,813	10·8
Hillingdon	106	23	21·7	37,753	14,069	37·3
Hounslow	88	2	2·3	34,493	2,108	6·1
Kingston upon Thames	64	5	7·8	21,623	3,050	14·1
Merton	76	0	0·0	25,980	0	0·0
Newham	98	1	1·0	40,266	556	1·4
Redbridge	89	1	1·1	38,043	1,113	2·9
Richmond upon Thames	71	0	0·0	25,040	0	0·0
Sutton	71	11	15·5	26,232	7,390	28·2
Waltham Forest	91	2	2·2	33,357	1,915	5·7
Totals	3,122	145	4·6	1,056,441	105,479	10·0

Footnotes to the tables

1. The figures for total schools and pupils are estimates derived from the Department for Education's January 1993 schools' census.
2. The figures for numbers of pupils are based on a head count of full-time and part-time pupils.

3. The numbers of grant-maintained schools are the totals operating in January 1994.
4. Table A—maintained primary sector—and Table B—maintained secondary sector—exclude figures for special and independent schools. The data on these schools held by the Department cannot be divided into "primary" and "secondary".
5. Table A and Table B include middle deemed primary and middle deemed secondary schools respectively.
6. Table B excludes sixth form colleges as these institutions are now part of the further education sector.
7. Table C includes maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, and non-maintained special and independent schools.

Expelled Pupils

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils have been expelled from secondary schools for *(a)* drug abuse and *(b)* violence in each of the London boroughs in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Forth: Figures for each of the last 10 years are not available. Information on permanent exclusions from maintained schools in England was collected by the Department over a two-year period, starting with summer term 1990, under the national exclusions reporting system. In England, 81 pupils were excluded for drug-related offences and solvent abuse in year one and 179 in year two. The figures for physical aggression against others was 1,059 and 1,476 respectively. It is not possible to provide an area breakdown of the figure because of assurances given as to confidentiality.

Opted-out Schools (Advertisements)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost of the advertisements relating to opting out of schools which have appeared in recent editions of the *Radio Times.*

Mr. Robin Squire: The total cost of the recent advertising campaign, which was designed to give governors, schools and parents access to the factual information published by the Department on grant-maintained status and which ran for five weeks, was around £200,000. The advertisements appeared in *The Independent, The Guardian,* the *Sunday Times, The Mail on Sunday, The Observer, The Times Educational Supplement,* as well as the *Radio Times.* It is not possible to disaggregate the cost of the advertisements that appeared in the *Radio Times.*

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many respondents there have been to the advertisements regarding the opting out of schools which appeared in recent editions of the *Radio Times.*

Mr. Robin Squire: To date there have been almost 3,000 responses. The advertisements appeared in *The Independent, The Guardian,* the *Sunday Times, The Mail on Sunday, The Observer, The Times Educational Supplement,* as well as the *Radio Times.* Almost 500 of the responses were related to the advertisements in the *Radio Times.*

Higher Education

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table giving the number of applicants per place on offer in higher education establishments in all major subject areas in September 1993.

Mr. Boswell: Institutions decide within the resources available to them how many students in any given subject area to admit. The ratio of home applications to acceptances/admissions through the Universities Central Council on Admissions and the polytechnics central admissions systems respectively for entry in autumn 1993 is shown.

Subject	*UCCA*[1][2] *Rate of applications to acceptances*	*PCAS*[1][2] *Rate of applications to admissions*
Medicine and dentistry	10·3 : 1	—
Topics allied to medicine	12·4 : 1	11·5 : 1
Biological sciences	8·0 : 1	10·8 : 1
Agriculture and related subjects	7·2 : 1	3·6 : 1
Physical sciences	6·1 : 1	7·6 : 1
Mathematical sciences	6·6 : 1	5·1 : 1
Engineering and technology	6·6 : 1	5·3 : 1
Architecture, building and planning	11·1 : 1	5·6 : 1
Social science	10·2 : 1	10·4 : 1
Business and administration	11·3 : 1	7·6 : 1
Mass communication and documentation	20·8 : 1	11·0 : 1
Languages and related studies	7·6 : 1	11·6 : 1
Humanities	6·8 : 1	11·6 : 1
Creative arts	13·0 : 1	11·7 : 1
Education	11·6 : 1	12·0 : 1
Combined subjects	8·9 : 1	6·5 : 1
Total	8·8 : 1	8·3 : 1

Source of data:
UCCA—Table 7 and Figure 5 from the UCCA 31st report 1992-93.
PCAS—PCAS statistical supplement 1992-93 due to be published by UCAS in June 1994.

Notes:
[1] For 1993 entry some 48 per cent. of all applicants to higher education through UCCA and PCAS applied to both schemes. Their applications to acceptances/admissions are included in both columns.
[2] The average number of applications per applicant is 4·2 and 3·5 for UCCA and PCAS respectively. The division of the ratios in each column by the average number of applications per applicant gives an approximate measure of the ratio of the numbers of applicants in each subject area to the numbers accepted or admitted.

Discretionary Awards

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many new discretionary awards were offered to students on educational courses; and what was the value of the awards in *(a)* England as a whole and *(b)* in each local education authority for the year 1992-93 and for the year 1993-94, broken down in each case for higher education level courses and further education level courses.

Mr. Boswell: Provisional figures for the academic year 1992-93, the latest available, indicate that 131,500 new discretionary awards were made by local education authorities in England. Information on the value of new discretionary awards is not collected centrally. Information on the numbers and value of discretionary awards made by individual local education authorities and on the level of the courses supported is not yet available.

Suspended Teachers

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* head teachers and *(b)* teachers were suspended in (i) 1992-93 and (ii) 1993-94 following

allegations made against them by children in schools; and if he will estimate the teaching hours lost through suspensions.

Mr. Forth: This information is not held centrally. The power to suspend teachers rests with head teachers and governing bodies of schools with delegated budgets under schemes for the local management of schools. Local education authorities have such power only in respect of school teachers employed elsewhere. Neither schools nor LEAs are required to inform the Department for Education when they suspend a teacher.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what power he has to shorten the period of office of governors of former local authority colleges of further education; what financial consequences he expects from failure by colleges to agree the new contract between the College Employers Forum and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend does not have the power to reduce the period of office of college governors except in exceptional circumstances. Under section 57 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, if the Secretary of State is satisfied that the affairs of any institution within the further education sector have been or are being mismanaged he may, on the recommendation of the Futher Education Funding Council, remove all or any of the members of the governing body and appoint new members in their places. Some £50 million of the Further Education Funding Council's grant will be held back in 1994-95. It will be released when college governing bodies certify that all contracts for new staff from 1 April 1994 provide adequate flexibility for the college's needs. It is for colleges to decide whether adoption of the contract recently agreed by CEF and ATL will allow them to do this.

Education Costs

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost to public funds of the education of an average pupil at an average grant-maintained and at an average local authority secondary school in 1992-93.

Mr. Robin Squire: The average recurrent spending per pupil in 1992-93 was £2,450 for grant-maintained secondary schools and is estimated as being £2,182 for local authority maintained secondary schools, reflecting the greater responsibilities of the former.

Outdoor Education Centres

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the names, location and county of each of the outdoor education centres in England.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Disabled Student Allowance

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the take-up of the disabled student allowance; how it is administered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Mandatory awards are made by local education authorities to eligible students attending full-time first degree or comparable courses and courses of initial teacher training in the United Kingdom. The disabled students' allowances are assessed by local education authorities as part of the total maintenance requirement of mandatory award holders who are obliged, by reason of their disability, to incur additional expenditure in respect of their attendance at their courses. The total assessed value of the disabled students allowances before means-testing was £1,960,000 in 1991-92, the latest year for which figures are available. Information on the numbers of students receiving the disabled students' allowances is not available.

Independent Schools

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list the independent schools that have been struck off the register of independent schools in the past five years, giving the date of when they were struck off;

(2) if he will list the private and independent schools that have received a notice of complaint from his Department within the past five years with the date of issue of the notice and the number made for each school.

Mr. Forth: In the five years 1989-94 the registrar of independent schools has caused one school, namely Hilsea college, to be struck off the register in accordance with section 73 of the Education Act 1944.

During the same period, eight schools have been served with notices of complaint under section 71 of the Act. It is not the Government's policy to name schools served with a notice of complaint, unless this leads to a subsequent decision that the school should be struck off the register.

Also, during the same period, 233 schools have voluntarily removed their names from the register. In many cases, the closure of these schools followed official letters from the registrar addressing concerns about standards of accommodation, tuition and other matters which, but for the school's voluntary closure, might have led to a notice of complaint.

School Inspections

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the private and independent schools that were inspected by Her Majesty's inspectorate in the three years up to 1 September 1992, giving the date of the inspection.

Mr. Robin Squire: A list of the independent schools inspected by HMI between 1 September 1989 and 31 August 1992 showing the date of the inspection has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the private and independent schools that have been inspected by Her Majesty's inspector of schools or the Office for Standards in Education in the past five years, giving the date of inspection, where the inspection led to a published report.

Mr. Robin Squire: The new Government Department, the Office for Standards in Education, was created on 1 September 1992. All inspections carried out by Her Majesty's inspectorate or reports published since that date are a matter for Ofsted. I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Member.

Those independent schools which received an Her Majesty's inspectorate inspection between 1 September 1989 and 31 August 1992 which led to published reports are as follows:

School name	Date of visit
Annie Lawson School	6 June 1990
Nanhurst School	30 October 1989
Oaktree House	11 June 1990
Rodney School	3 June 1991
Stonely Grange School	14 October 1991
The Small School at Red House	30 January 1992
Wells Cathedral School	1 December 1989

Dyslexia

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many appeals from Doncaster education authority relating to dyslexia are being currently dealt with by his Department;

(2) how many appeals are currently with his Department in respect of children who have been statemented by Doncaster local education authority; how many statements have been assessed; and how many children have been made the subject of formal assessment by Doncaster education authority for each of the last 10 years;

(3) how many children have been *(a)* statemented and *(b)* formally assessed by Doncaster education authority in each year for the last 10 years, whose special need is as a result of diagnosis of dyslexia.

Mr. Forth: The Department is currently dealing with two appeals from parents of children with special educational needs in Doncaster. Neither of these children has dyslexia.

Information on the number of formal assessments and statements made by Doncaster LEA, for each year since 1984, is shown in the table. Information is not available centrally on the special need or needs for which a given statement was issued.

Sixth Forms

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the expected numbers of pupils in each of the new sixth forms he announced on 16 February in Departmental press notice 42/94.

Mr. Robin Squire: The total numbers of pupils in the sixth forms concerned are expected to be:

	Number
The Arnewood School, Hampshire	236
The Burgate School, Hampshire	120
Chellaston School, Derbyshire	200
The King John School, Essex	282
The Merrill Community School, Derbyshire	100
Ringwood School, Hampshire	120
Sheringham High School, Norfolk	120
New school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years in Halifax, Calderdale	120

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Credit

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy for lone parents to be reassessed for family credit, if their circumstances change, one month or more after the previous assessment.

Mr. Burt: No. Family credit awards are fixed for 26 weeks and neither increases nor decreases in income during that period are taken into account. This works to the advantage of many beneficiaries.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many lone mothers on family credit were affected by the regulations introduced by his Department on 7 February to reduce the maintenance payments from their former partners; and how much money on average they will lose before their family credit is reassessed.

Mr. Burt: We estimate that there are fewer than 1,000 families whose family credit awards have been based on a Child Support Agency maintenance assessment figure and where this maintenance may be liable to reduction as a result of the recent child support changes. We estimate that the average loss per family will be under £100 in total. However, those families entitled to housing benefit and council tax benefit, or who become entitled following changes in maintenance, could recover up to 85 per cent. of their loss through an increase of those benefits.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will reimburse lone mothers at their next assessment for family credit for loss of income incurred as a result of the regulations introduced on 7 February to reduce the level of maintenance payments from their former partners;

(2) whether he will ensure that funds will be made available to reimburse lone parents on family credit for losses incurred in income as a result of DSS regulations introduced on 7 February to reduce the level of maintenance payments from their former partners.

Mr. Burt: Family credit awards are fixed for 26 weeks and neither increases or decreases in income during that period are taken into account. This works to the advantage of many beneficiaries. Any reduction in maintenance during the period of a family credit award will be taken into account in assessing the renewal award. However, those families entitled to housing benefit and council tax benefit, or who become entitled following changes in maintenance, could recover up to 85 per cent. of any loss through an increase of those benefits.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Hague: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has had no new furniture for his private office in 1993-94.

Income Support (Further Education)

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will amend regulations so as to ensure that parents on income support receiving allowances and

benefits on account of their children in further education should continue to receive the allowances after the children turn 19 until the end of the young person's course of study;

(2) what study he has made of the effect of the withdrawal from parents on income support of benefits and allowances in respect of young people following courses in further education, when those young people reach the age of 19 years; and how many students then give up their courses as a result.

Mr. Burt: We believe that young people remaining at school after their 19th birthday to complete their studies, and their families, should turn for any necessary additional financial assistance to the sources of funding available through the educational maintenance system.

The information requested about the numbers involved is not available.

Industrial Injuries Compensation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what amount was recovered, under section 22 of the Social Security Act 1989, from the damages paid to victims of industrial injury for *(a)* the Doncaster area, *(b)* South Yorkshire as a whole by year for the last four years and *(c)* the current year to date.

Mr. Hague: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what schemes he has launched to compensate disabled people for the increased value added tax being introduced from 1 April.

Mr. Scott: Details of the extra help in respect of VAT on domestic fuel were given in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on 30 November 1993 at columns *437-38*.

Prisoners (Resettlement Grants)

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what guidance is given to social fund officers regarding the priority given to resettlement grants to those leaving prison;

(2) if he will make it his policy to ensure that resettlement grants to those leaving prison are given high priority in all areas of the country.

Mr. Scott: People leaving prison are among those specifically included in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's list of groups normally to be given priority for community care grants. Guidance on priority groups is contained in the social fund guide, in the Library. However, it is for each individual social fund officer, who acts independently, to decide the priority of an application after fully considering all the circumstances of the particular case.

Pensions

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the cost to date to public funds of the incentive for contracting out pensions.

Mr. Hague: The cost to the national insurance fund to date of the 2 per cent. incentive to newly contracted-out pensions is estimated at £3·6 billion.

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many rebate-only personal pensions have been sold since they were introduced; what is the estimated administrative expense involved in each case; what controls there are over administrative expenses in such cases; and what requirements as to warnings to purchasers comparing the risks and expense overheads compared with the state earnings-related pension scheme have been made by the DSS.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested. Since 1988, the Contributions Agency has received 6,456,901 applications to contract out of SERPS by way of an appropriate personal pension—although the number of APP holders in any one year would be less than that. Inland Revenue data suggest that, in the financial year 1991-92, 2·1 million APP holders made payments in addition to the DSS contribution. Information about the administrative expenses connected with those pensions is not available. Rules on the marketing of personal pensions and other investment products are a matter for the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the estimated total administrative expense of appropriate personal pensions and the equivalent anticipated administrative expenses for the contracted-out cohort through the national insurance fund.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is not available.

Benefits, London

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are currently receiving *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* disability allowance, *(c)* family credit, *(d)* income support, *(e)* invalidity benefit and *(f)* sickness benefit in each of the London boroughs; and what were the respective figures for 1990.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate for the Lewisham area the number of people who will be affected by the decision to reduce the entitlement to unemployment benefit from 12 months to six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra) on 18 January at column *559*.

VAT (Domestic Fuel)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much financial assistance will be made available by the Government to individual residents of sheltered housing units with communal facilities to help them meet increased costs resulting from the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel.

Mr. Burt: People in sheltered housing may be entitled to receive any of the wide range of social security benefits that are available, subject to individual circumstances.

Details of the extra help in respect of VAT on domestic fuel were given in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on 30 November 1993 at columns *437-38*.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many residents in sheltered housing units with communal facilities will be eligible for extra financial assistance from the Government to help meet increased costs resulting from the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel *(a)* in London and *(b)* in Lewisham; and how many such residents there are in total (i) in London and (ii) in Lewisham.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of existing recipients of invalidity benefit in the Doncaster area who will be disqualified under the new capacity test.

Mr. Scott: Numbers cannot be reliably estimated at this stage, but our current estimate is that around 200,000 of the people who will initially transfer to incapacity benefit from invalidity benefit may fail to satisfy the test within the first two years. The estimate cannot be broken down by district.

War Pensions

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, following consultation, he has reached a decision on the proposals to exclude death or disablement caused by a smoking or alcohol-related disease from the scope of the war pensions scheme.

Mr. Hague: Following consultation, we have decided to go ahead with the change but with a significant easement. We originally proposed to except from the exclusion any individual who suffered from a service-related mental disablement that was assessed at 80 per cent. or more and therefore caused him to smoke or drink.

We have decided to set the minimum level of mental disablement that will be considered at 50 per cent. Individual claims will still be subject to the further test that, whatever the assessed level of disablement, it must also cause the individual to smoke, or prevent him from giving up.

An amending order will be laid shortly.

Unemployed People (Voluntary Organisations)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the rules allowing the unemployed to work for voluntary organisations which engage in political activities.

Mr. Hague: The rules governing benefits for unemployment allow unemployed people to undertake voluntary work for voluntary bodies without losing benefit, provided that they remain available for and actively seeking work. The Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit) Amendment Regulations 1993 define a voluntary body as

"a body the activities of which are carried out otherwise than for the purpose of profit".

We have no plans to review these rules.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each year since 1990.

Mr. Hague: No Secretary of State for Social Security has signed a public interest immunity certificate since 1990.

WALES

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were not on waiting lists for treatment but waiting to see a specialist in the NHS on 1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October of each year since 1 January 1990.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The following table gives the number of people waiting for a first out-patient attendance at Welsh hospitals for each available date since 31 March 1990. Such information is collected centrally for 31 March and 30 September only.

Number of people waiting for a first out-patient attendance

	Number
31 March 1990	83,151
30 September 1990	91,403
31 March 1991	86,653
30 September 1991	96,078
31 March 1992	97,109
30 September 1992	113,044
31 March 1993	118,853
30 September 1993	127,802

Work of Equal Value

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the past and current number of equal value cases in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Information is not available in the form requested. However, the table shows the numbers of all equal pay cases—which included equal value cases—dealt with by the Cardiff regional office of the industrial tribunals in the period April 1985 to 31 March 1993.

	Applications registered
1985-86	6
1986-87	7
1987-88	96
1988-89	12
1989-90	12
1990-91	36
1991-92	17
1992-93	60

The Cardiff region of the industrial tribunals currently serves the whole of Wales, together with parts of Shropshire and Herefordshire. Prior to January 1986, the Birmingham office included part of the current Cardiff region in its catchment area. In addition, prior to 1987, the former regional office at Liverpool served the north Wales area.

Minimum Wages Protection

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on minimum wages protection in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Statutory minimum wage fixing, in Wales or elsewhere, distorts the operation of the labour market and destroys jobs.

Tourism

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he had with the chairman of the Welsh tourist board over the choice of the Welsh celebrities chosen to feature on the posters and other advertising literature used to attract visitors to Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will be seeking public consultation on the options presented to him by the forestry review group.

Mr. Redwood: We are now considering the forestry review group's report; the form and timing of consultation will depend on the conclusions which we draw from it.

Outdoor Education Centres

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the names, location and county of each of the outdoor education centres in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The information is not available in the form requested.

Surplus School Places

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what assessment he has as to the number of surplus school places; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish for each education authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole, his Department's assessment of surplus school places in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools for the latest available year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department's estimate of the number of surplus school places as at January 1993 is as follows:

Local education authority	*Primary*	*Secondary*
Clwyd	7,676	2,110
Dyfed	8,827	1,147
Gwent	7,453	9,133
Gwynedd	4,435	4,355
Mid Glamorgan	13,027	5,952
Powys	3,173	1,581
South Glamorgan	8,491	6,363
West Glamorgan	11,318	6,321
WALES	64,400	36,962

Local authorities will recognise that removal of unwanted surplus school places would release significant resources for redeployment in other areas of the education service.

Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place a copy in the Library of the efficiency scrutiny of the monitoring arrangements for sponsoring non-departmental public bodies in Wales carried out during 1993 by the Prime Minister's efficiency unit.

Mr. Redwood: When I have considered the report's recommendations and what action is needed, I will place a copy, together with my plans for implementing them, in the Library of the House.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those non-departmental public bodies which have not had a financial management and policy review for more than five years.

Mr. Redwood: All executive NDPBs are subject to financial management and policy reviews at five-year intervals. The reviews due by or in the current financial year have been completed or are in the process of being carried out, with the exception of the Curriculum Council for Wales and the Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting. The Curriculum Council for Wales is to be replaced from 1 April this year by the new Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales. The review of the Welsh national board has been postponed pending decisions on reviews on the analogous English, Scottish and Northern Irish boards.

NHS Accounting Officer

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales who will be the accounting officer for the expenditure on the national health service in Wales subsequent to the planned merger between the national health service directorate in Wales and his Department's health policy division; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Mr. Peter Gregory.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the initial external financial limit for each of the existing and new national health service trusts in Wales for the year commencing April 1994; and if he will give the level of capital spending agreed for each trust for the same financial year.

Mr. Redwood: I shall be issuing details of the provisional 1994-95 external financing limits for each of the existing and new NHS trusts in Wales shortly.

Conflicts of Interest (Advice)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, column 596, if he will specify the date on which he will place in the Library the relevant advice and guidance on conflicts of interest.

Mr. Redwood: A copy of the relevant guidance was placed in the Library of the House on 14 March.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each year since 1990.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Industrial Business Allowances

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those projects in Wales that have received industrial business allowances.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

This information is not collected centrally. In any case, normal taxpayer confidentiality rules would rule out publication.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment

14. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Lambeth have been unemployed for more than two years.

Miss Widdecombe: For the Lambeth local authority district, 5,907 on the unadjusted claimant count basis in January 1994.

27. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for unemployed men in the Liverpool travel-to-work area; and what proportion of these have never worked at all.

Miss Widdecombe: The figure was 55,846 on the unadjusted basis in January 1994. The claimant unemployment count does not record details of previous employment history.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of youth unemployment in the Doncaster area and the level 12 months ago.

Miss Widdecombe: In the Doncaster travel-to-work area unadjusted claimant unemployment among 18 to 24-year-olds has fallen by 15 per cent. in the past year, from 5,065 in January 1993 to 4,301 in January 1994.

24. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of people who are unemployed but who do not appear in his Department's claimant count of unemployed people for January.

Miss Widdecombe: The claimant measure and the International Labour Organisation recommended measure both show falling unemployment in the United Kingdom, at about 2·8 million.

Trade Unions

15. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from individual members of trade unions arguing that the trade union legislation since 1979 should be repealed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Hardly any.

Redundant Miners

16. **Mr. Hoon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the employment prospects of miners made redundant as the result of recent colliery closures.

Miss Widdecombe: British Coal Enterprise is very active in resettling ex-mineworkers, with success rates of 85 per cent. 12 months since pits have closed.

BCE is continuing its valuable and successful resettlement efforts for all ex-mineworkers.

North Norfolk Action

17. **Sir Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a progress report on North Norfolk Action.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Early indications are that North Norfolk Action is successfully achieving its aim of helping unemployed people back into work or into further training.

Astra Training Agency

18. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department will make a statement on the implications for training provision and the losses to the public purse of the privatisation and subsequent bankruptcy of the Astra training agency.

Miss Widdecombe: The receivership of Astra Training Services has had no implications for training provision, as training and enterprise councils have found alternative training for those affected. Astra was losing £30 million a year before privatisation. The Department is now a creditor of Astra for the statutory payments made by the redundancy payments service to those employees made redundant. It is therefore too early to say what the net cost will be.

Health and Safety

19. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which health and safety at work regulations he considers to be a burden on business.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This is among the questions that I have put to the Health and Safety Commission and I am awaiting its advice.

Confederation of British Industry

20. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met representatives of the CBI to discuss problems in the labour market.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met Howard Davies on 18 February.

ABB Transportation Ltd.

21. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department has taken to ensure that the workers made redundant last year by ABB Transportation Ltd. in York received the unemployment benefits to which they are entitled.

Miss Widdecombe: So far as I am aware, there are no outstanding cases of clients not having received unemployment benefit to which they are entitled.

Maximum Working Week

22. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received in support of a statutory maximum working week of 35 hours.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. Statutory controls of this type serve only to destroy jobs and the prosperity of workers.

Labour Statistics

23. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of persons in full-time work on 1 January.

Miss Widdecombe: In September 1993 there were 17,427,000 full-time workers in Great Britain. December 1993 figures will be published tomorrow.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the proportions of full-time adult manual workers, full-time adult non-manual workers, and all full-time adult workers with earnings, including overtime, of less than *(a)* £100, *(b)* £120, *(c)* £140, *(d)* £160, *(e)* £180, *(f)* £200 and *(g)* £220 per week in the Doncaster area; and if he will provide separate figures for males and females.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available from the new earnings survey is for South Yorkshire and is as follows:

Full-time employees on adult rates in the county of South Yorkshire—pay unaffected by absence: proportion with gross weekly earnings (including overtime) below the following amounts: at April 1993

Amount	Male	Female	All
Manual employees			
£100	0·5	4·5	1·1
£120	1·7	19·2	4·5
£140	4·7	37·2	9·8
£160	9·0	48·7	15·3
£180	13·2	62·8	21·1
£200	21·8	79·5	30·9
£220	29·7	86·5	38·7
Non-manual employees			
£100	0·5	1·6	1·0
£120	1·4	5·1	3·1
£140	3·3	11·2	6·9
£160	6·2	20·6	12·7
£180	8·5	29·3	17·9
£200	12·8	39·7	25·0
£220	17·5	50·2	32·3
All employees			
£100	0·5	2·1	1·0
£120	1·6	7·9	3·6
£140	4·0	16·2	8·1
£160	7·6	26·1	13·8
£180	10·9	35·8	19·2
£200	17·4	47·4	27·4
£220	23·8	57·3	34·9

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average wage of *(a)* males and *(b)* females in part-time employment in the Doncaster area for each year since 1979, and this year to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available from the new earnings survey for part-time female employees in the county of South Yorkshire is shown in the following table. There were too few part-time male employees in the new earnings survey samples for reliable figures to be produced.

Average gross weekly earnings for part-time females in the county of South Yorkshire for the years 1979 to 1993 inclusive

Year	Average gross weekly earnings part-time female £
1979	25·2
1980	32·5
1981	35·1
1982	38·3
1983	41·5
1984	44·1
1985	47·3
1986	49·8
1987	52·7
1988	56·0
1989	64·9
1990	72·6
1991	78·5
1992	88·2
1993	89·4

Job Creation

25. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of differences in levels of job creation in the USA since 1980 and job creation in the European Community over the same period, in both the private and public sectors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Between 1980 and 1991 the USA created over 17·5 million jobs, mostly in the private sector, while the EC created 6·5 million jobs, mostly in the public sector.

Mountain Search and Rescue

26. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to improve the employment and training prospects of people engaged in mountain search and rescue-related activity.

Miss Widdecombe: I very much welcome the role volunteers play in a wide range of activities, including mountain rescue, and would encourage employers to recognise the value of volunteering not just to the community but to their own business.

Local Government Reform

28. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made in changes in patterns of employment as a result of local government reform.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is for local authorities to decide their own staffing structures.

Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total amount spent by his Department for training in England in each year since 1989-90, the expected outturn in 1993-94, and plans for 1994-95 in 1993-94 prices and cash terms.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the following table:

Training expenditure 1989-90 to 1993-94 and plans for 1994-95 at 1993-94 prices, England[1] [2]

	£ million
1989-90	
Cash	2,240
Real terms	2,760
1990-91	
Cash	2,053
Real terms	2,340
1991-92	
Cash	1,906
Real terms	2,043
1992-93	
Cash	1,869
Real terms	1,930
1993-94	
Estimated outturn	1,938
1994-95 (Plans)[3]	
Cash	1,892
Real terms	1,819

[1] Excludes European social fund.
[2] Excludes administration/running costs.
[3] Excludes programmes transferring to the single regeneration budget.

Since 1989-90, approaching 1 million young people have entered youth training. An estimated 133,000 have been helped in 1993-94; plans for 1994-95 are for 147,000 young people to enter the programme. YT funding for 1994-95 will be £692 million, which is £50 million more than the training and enterprise councils are forecast to spend this year. Further increases are planned for future years.

Training for work and its predecessors have helped almost 1·5 million unemployed people since 1989-90. Expenditure on TFW in England in 1994-95 will be £705 million: 115,000 places will be provided and 273,000 long-term unemployed people will be helped, compared with 240,000 in 1993-94.

In addition, this of course excludes money raised by TECs themselves, and the estimated £20 billion spent by employers on training each year.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total amount spent by his Department for training in Great Britain in each year since 1989-90, the expected outturn in 1993-94 and plans for 1994-95 in 1993-94 prices and cash terms.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the table. The figures include training programme expenditure and administrative running costs.

Training expenditure 1989-90 to 1993-94 and plans for 1994-95 at 1993-94 prices—Great Britain

	£ million
1989-90	
Cash	2,940
Real terms	3,622
1990-91	
Cash	2,802
Real terms	3,194
1991-92	
Cash	2,694
Real terms	2,888
1992-93	
Cash	2,693
Real terms	2,781
1993-94	
Estimated outturn	2,828

Total planned expenditure for 1994-95 is available for England only. Planned expenditure for Wales and Scotland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales.

Wages Councils

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of females in Wales affected by the abolition of the wages councils.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It was estimated that in 1992 there were some 120,000 workers, men and women aged 21 or over, in Wales covered by the wages councils. Estimates of the number of women formerly covered by the councils in the constituent parts of Great Britain are not available.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the Central Arbitration Committee.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The members of the Central Arbitration Committee on 10 March 1994 were:

Sir John Wood *(Chairman)*
Professor S. Kessler *(Deputy Chairman)*
Mr. S. McDowall *(Deputy Chairman)*
Professor R. W. Rideout *(Deputy Chairman)*
Ms S. Rothwell *(Deputy Chairman)*
Mr. D. Sawbridge *(Deputy Chairman)*
Miss S. R. Corby
Mr. L. D. Cowan
Mr. G. L. Dennis
Ms B. Hillon
Miss I. Innes
Mrs. T. Marsland
Miss A. Minto
Mr. P. Moseley
Professor A. J. Pointon
Mr. A. E. Powell
Mr. P. N. Scott
Mr. D. A. P. Staines
Miss D. Whittingham
Mr. G. Wright

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The members of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Council on 10 March 1994 were:

Mr. J. W. Hougham *(Chairman)*
Mrs. O. Aikin
Mr. G. J. Armstrong
Mr. J. W. Edmonds
Professor J. F. B. Goodman
Mr. W. Jordan
Mr. W. B. Keates
Mr. W. J. Knox
Mr. J. S. Monks
Professor A. J. Pointon
Mrs. C. Wells

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to Remploy Ltd.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The members of Remploy's board are as follows:

The two officers are:

Chairman David Heywood
Chief Executive Tony Whithey

There are three executive directors:

Simon Norris
Kenneth Taylor
Maurice Westbrook

and six non-executive directors:

William Bogie
Derek Boothman
Roy Jackson
Jennifer Laing
John Ramsey
Ann Roberts

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The members of the Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal on 10 March 1994 were:

Sir David Calcutt *(Chairman)*
Mr. D. J. Burt OBE
Mr. L. D. Cowan
Mr. J. R. Crosby
Mr. J. D. Hughes
Lord McCarthy
Mr. D. Robinson
Mrs. J. C. Rubin
Lord Wedderburn
Mr. G. E. Yates

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The members currently appointed by the Secretary of State to the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board are as follows:

CHAIRMAN

N. N. W. Dunlop—Director, Foster Wheeler Energy Ltd.

MEMBERS

A. Y. Innes—Managing Director, Babcock Construction Ltd.
A. McPherson—Regional Contracts Director, Press Offshore Ltd.
R. S. Miller—Managing Director, Octavius Atkinson and Sons Ltd.
J. A. Murphy—Managing Director, Motherwell Bridge Construction Group.
M. O'Reilly—Managing Director, Caxios Ltd.
J. B. Orr MBE—International Projects Director, Davy Metals
T. D. Sullivan—Director of Construction, NEI. International Combustion Ltd.
R. F. Wood—Managing Director, Jordan Engineering UK Ltd.
D. N. Odling—Director of Sales and Marketing, AOC International Ltd.
W. A. French—Assistant Principal, Falkirk College of Technology.
D. Hewitt—National Secretary, GMB Technical Craft Section
T. Maclean—National Secretary, Construction Section, Amalgamated Engineering Union.
M. L. Morton—Director, Oil and Chemical Plan Constructors' Association.
J. G. Porter—Director, National Engineering Construction Employers's Association.
A. C. Probert—Senior Consultant, Industrial Relations, BP Engineering.
R. B. Williams—Manager, Project services Branch, PowerGen PLC.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the Construction Industry Training Board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The members currently appointed by the Secretary of State to the Construction Industry Training Board are as follows:

Chairman
Sir Clifford Chetwood

Deputy Chairman
H. W. Try—Chairman, Try Group Plc.

Members
P. F. R. Backaller—Managing Director, Stribley and Backaller (Builders) Ltd.
A. J. Barry—Chairman, Commercial Finishing Contractors Group.
I. Dixon, CBE—Chairman, Wilmott Dixon Ltd.
J. R. T. Douglas, OBE—Chairman, Tilbury Douglas Plc.
A. N. Duncan—Chairman, Duncan Group (Scotland) Ltd.
G. M. Fordy—Chairman and Chief Executive, The FT Construction Group.
P. Joyner—Managing Director, A. Joyner Ltd.
I. M. McAlpine—Director (Midland Operations), Sir Robert McAlpine and Sons Ltd.
D. McGinley—Managing Director, McGinley Construction Services Ltd.
G. Thomas—Managing Director, Dyfed Joinery (Wales) Ltd.
B. G. Tierney—Director, R. F. Peachey and Sons Ltd.
Mrs. M. Todd—Chairman, A. E. Burt and Co. Ltd.
G. B. Brumwell—General Secretary, UCATT.
G. P. Henderson—National Building Secretary, TGWU.
W. Duthie—Deputy Principal, Glasgow College of Building and Printing.
Professor M. Romans—Executive Dean, Faculty of the Environment, University of Westminster.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently employed to the Sheltered Employment Consultative Group.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mr. Peter Kilfoyle, dated 15 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Employment has asked me to reply to your question asking who are the members, currently appointed to the Sheltered Employment Consultative Group.

Members' names are shown below:

Mr. M. A. Bargett, OBE, Mr. D. Bradford, Mr. R. Bridges, MBE, Mr. K. Metcalf, Mr. J. Gallagher, Councillor A. Keenan, Mr. R. McManus, Mr. G. W. Mann, Councillor W. Minto, OBE, Mr. S. Norris, Mr. F. Rankin, Mr. G. H. Robins, Mr. R. Winter.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the National Advisory Council on Employment of People with Disabilities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The members currently appointed to the National Advisory Council on Employment of People with Disabilities are:

Council chairman:
Mr. Alan Smith, MBE, FIPM, FBIM, FinstD

Members representing employers:
Ms Julie Mellor

Mr. Roger Spoor, OBE, RD, DCL(Hon), DL, FCA
Mr. Alan Wild, BA(Hons), MIPM

Members representing workers:
Mr. William Anderson, BSc(Econ), FLA
Mr. Richard Exell
Mr. Peter Gallant, BSc, ARCS, C Chem, FRSC

Independent members:
Professor Ian Bruce, BSocSC, FBIM
Mr. John Denholm
Dr. Ann Fingret, MBBS, MFOM
Sir Peter Large
Mr. Peter MacDonald
Mr. Bert Massie, OBE
Dr. Clive Morton, OBE, CEng, MICE, MIPM
Mr. Tim Papé, BSc
Ms Susan Scott-Parker, BA
Ms Dianah Worman

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the Health and Safety Commission.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Commission has a chairman, Mr. Frank Davies, and nine members: Eddie Carrick, Christopher Chope, Paul Gallagher, Peter Jacques, Nigel Pitcher, Geraldine Schofield, Rex Symons, Alan Tuffin and Dame Rachel Waterhouse.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The current members of the Equal Opportunities Council are as follows:
Ms Kamlesh Bahl—Chairwoman
Mrs. June Bridgeman—Deputy Chairwoman
Ms Noren Bray—Director, Good Relations Limited
Lady Brittan—Deputy Chair, Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority
Ms Anne Gibson—National Officer, MSF
Ms Bernadette Hillon—National Women's Officer, USDAW
Mrs. Barbara Kelly—Partner in mixed dairy farming enterprise
Mr. Clive Mather—Director of Personnel and Administration, Shell UK Limited
Miss Anne Watts—Equal Opportunities Director, Midland Bank
Ms Cecilia Wells—Consultant in Human Resources

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The members currently appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the National Council for Vocational Qualifications are as follows:

CHAIRMAN
Mr. Michael Heron—Chairman, the Post Office.

MEMBERS
Mr. John Barnes—Senior Lecturer in Political Science, London School of Economics and Political Science.
Dr. John Capey OBE—Principal, Exeter College.
Professor Raymond Cowell—Vice-Chancellor, the Nottingham Trent University.
Mr. David Gwyther—Chairman, Somerset Training and Enterprise Council.
Mr. Peter Hill—Ex-Managing Director, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars.
Mr. John Hillier (ex-officio member)—Chief Executive, NCVQ.
Ms Prudence Leith OBE—Managing Director, Prudence Leith Ltd.
Mr. Kevin Lyden—Managing Director, Shotton Paper Company Ltd.
Mr. Leif Mills—General Secretary, Banking Insurance and Finance Union.
Mr. John Randall—Director, Professional Standards and Development Directorate, the Law Society.
Ms Ruth Silver—Principal, Lewisham College.
Dr. John Spece OBE—Chairman, Training and Employment Agency, Belfast.
Mr. George Stevenson—Managing Director, Mathiesons Family Bakers.

Immigrants (Employment)

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next expects to meet his European counterparts to discuss the prospects for employment of legal immigrants from outside the Community.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State next expects to meet his European counterparts at the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 19 April 1994. A range of employment matters will be under discussion in the context of the follow up to the White Paper on "Growth, Competitiveness and Employment". Commissioner Flynn's Green Paper on social policy, which makes passing reference to improving employment opportunities for legal immigrants, may also be discussed.

Union Levies

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the Trades Union Congress general secretary to discuss union levies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have no plans for a meeting to discuss union levies. A trade union does not need a political fund levy unless it wishes to spend money on electoral or other party political activities.

Pathfinder Career Service

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what factors have prevented the signing of contracts with tenderers for the Pathfinder career service; and what steps he is taking to overcome them.

Miss Widdecombe: Negotiations with organisations tendering to provide careers services are progressing well.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many contracts have now been signed with tenderers for the Pathfinder careers service; when any outstanding contracts will be signed; and if it is his policy that all the career services where tenders were received will be contracted out to tenderers; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The negotiations are of a commercial nature and are being treated in confidence. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will announce those organisations with which he will contract when negotiations are finalised.

Outdoor Education Centres

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to start the inspection of outdoor education centres; and when the first report will be available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive and local authorities both inspect outdoor activity centres, including outdoor education centres, as part of their routine work. The special programme of visits to outdoor activity centres will start on 1 April 1994 as the outdoor pursuit season gets under way. I will let the House know immediately if any areas of significant concern emerge. A report of the findings of the visits will be made available in spring 1995.

Skill Centres

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the record of the skill centres in the east midlands since privatisation.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The Employment Department has not contracted with the former skill centres since privatisation.

Former skill centres which have delivered Government training programmes under contract to training and enterprise councils will have been subject to the same financial and quality assurance checks as other providers.

Beyond this, the Employment Department has not undertaken any specific assessment of their record in the east midlands.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Air Miles

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what guidance exists for the use of free air miles accrued by civil servants on official business.

Mr. David Davis: It has recently been decided that the benefits of frequent fly and similar schemes deriving from expenditure on official business should be used only for official travel or forgone. Departments have been asked to issue guidance to their staff to implement that decision.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each year since 1990.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Research Councils

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress he can report in making senior appointments to the new research council system.

Mr. Waldegrave: The appointments procedure has been completed. From 1 April 1994 the part-time non-executive chairmen and full-time chief executives of the six research councils will be:

	Chairmen	*Chief executives*
Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council	Sir Alistair Grant	Professor Tom Blundell FRS
Engineering and Physical Science Research Council	Dr. Alan Rudge, OBE, FRS, FEng	Professor Richard Brook, OBE
Economic and Social Research Council	Dr. Bruce Smith, OBE	Professor Howard Newby
Medical Research Council	Sir David Plastow	Sir Dai Rees, FRS
Natural Environment Research Council	Mr. Robert Malpas, CBE, FEng	Professor John Krebs, FRS
Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council	Dr. Peter Williams, CBE	Professor Kenneth Pounds, CBE, FRS

The councils will be under the general direction of Sir John Cadogan, CBEHon, FEng, FRS, the first Director General of Research Councils. Sir John and the chairmen and chief executives will have a vital role. They will be working together to implement the Government's strategy for science engineering and technology as set out in the 1993 White Paper "Realising our Potential"—Cm 2250.

Parliamentary Answers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on how many occasions he has knowingly offered incomplete information in an answer to a parliamentary question; and on what subjects.

Mr. Waldegrave: I answer parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". I also seek to comply with the Speaker's guidance on the need for brief answers to oral questions.

PRIME MINISTER

Scott Inquiry

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Prime Minister whether it will be for Lord Justice Scott to decide on the timing of the publication of his report.

The Prime Minister: As I said when I announced the terms of reference for the inquiry, *Official Report,* 16 November 1992, columns *74-75,* Lord Justice Scott will be entirely free to decide on the publication of his report. The inquiry will report to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Tigris and Euphrates Valleys

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he had with President Clinton during his visit to the United States from 27 February to 1 March on malnutrition-related disease in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates.

The Prime Minister: We are in regular contact with the United States about Iraqi issues in general.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Prime Minister if he will instruct the relevant Department to place in the Library copies of all telexes made the subject of public interest immunity certificates in the case of Mr. Lorrain Osman; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. It would not be in the public interest to disclose the contents of classified documents concerning the international relations of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Prime Minister how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each year since 1990.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 3 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *803*.

Constituency Visits

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister how much notice his Office gives to hon. Members prior to visits made to hon. Members' constituencies.

The Prime Minister: My Office contacts all hon. Members whose constituencies I visit as part of my regional tours. In the light of security arrangements which have to be made for these visits, advance notice for hon. Members may have to be restricted to 24 hours.

Council of Europe and Western European Union

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library a copy of the information bulletin on the activities of the United Kingdom delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Assembly of Western European Union, which has been sent to him.

The Prime Minister: I have done so.

TRANSPORT

Driving School Agency

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he is undertaking a review of the number, status or distribution of locations at which the Driving Standards Agency has a presence;

(2) how many whole-stime equivalents staff were in post in the Driving Standards Agency *(a)* at 1 April 1993 and *(b)* currently; if he will give their locations; and how many of these staff are affected by the market testing of booking and finance functions.

Mr. Key: Responsibility for the subject of these questions has been delegated to the Driving Standards Agency under its chief executive, Dr. S. J. Ford. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Dr. S. J. Ford to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 14 March 1994:

DRIVING STANDARDS AGENCY

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to the questions you have raised about certain of DSA's operations.

PQ 1563/93/94

You asked about DSA staffing levels both at 1 April 1993 and currently, and how many of these staff would be affected by the market testing of booking and finance functions.

The Agency currently employs 1,829 full time equivalent staff, this compares with a total of 1,810 at 1 April 1993. These staff are located across GB at the Agency's headquarters in Nottingham, 10 regional offices and a network of nearly 500 test centres. The staff who are affected, directly or indirectly, by the market test are those identified in the attached schedule. (The figures quoted are for December 1993, but there has been no change since then.)

PQ 1577/93/94 224

You also asked whether a review of Driving Standards Agency locations is being undertaken. The Driving Standards Agency has a continuing responsibility to deliver its service in the most cost-effective way. In this context, I have a responsibility to keep the number, status and distribution of its operating locations under constant review.

I recently wrote to Members of Parliament with a constituency about the planned closure of 22 of DSA's 486 driving test centres. No further closures are planned, although the Agency must continue to review its network to meet business and demographic changes.

The principal activity of its ten regional offices is booking driving tests. This operation is currently the subject of a market testing exercise. It is not possible at this stage to anticipate the result of the market test, but a possible outcome could be a change in the number and location of the offices required to deliver the service.

Driving Standards Agency—Regional Staff in Post as at 31 December 1993

Grade	*North East*	*North West*	*West Midlands*	*East Nottinghamshire*[1]	*East Cambridgeshire*[1]	*Wales*	*West*	*South East*	*Scotland*	*Metropolitan*
SBO	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
HBO	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1·5
BO	4	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	5
AO	13·5	6	5	3·5	3	5·4	4	8	5	18
AA	28·5	18	13	10	6·5	11·2	6·25	15·5	11	39·5
Typist	1	0	0	0·5	0	0	0	0	0	1·5
Support	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
P. Keeper	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Telephonist	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	51	28	21	17	11·5	19·6	12·25	27·5	19	69·5

[1] A further 22 staff located in the headquarters office in Nottingham are partially engaged in providing finance services for the driver test booking services in Nottingham and Cambridge.

Flights (Poland)

Mr. Keen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the situation regarding the resumption of flights to and from Poland by Lot and British Airways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I am delighted that we have now settled the dispute in a way which is satisfactory to both sides. It has been agreed that direct services between the United Kingdom and Poland can resume from 13 March. The agreement creates enhanced opportunities for the airlines. It will, for instance, allow British Airways to phase in increased services over the next 12 months. This is good not only for the airlines: travellers will benefit, too, from greater choice.

North Circular Road

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing all correspondence between his Department and Barnet council regarding the proposed sale by the council to his Department of land adjacent to Coppetts wood in Finchley which is now proposed to be given as exchange land for

(a) widening the north circular road east of Falloden way and *(b)* widening the north circular at Regent's Park road and Great North way, showing (i) the date of each piece of correspondence, (ii) the sender and recipient and (iii) the nature of each piece of correspondence; whether it was his Department or the council which first suggested the sale of the land to his Department; on what date the sale was completed; and how much was paid to the council for the land.

Mr. Norris: The exchange land at Coppetts wood is the subject of compulsory purchase orders and exchange land certificates. The orders were made and the certificates were issued after consideration by an independent inspector at public inquiry.

I am placing the information requested in the Library. I also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 10 February 1994, at columns *466-69*.

The suggestion that land adjacent to Coppetts wood be acquired for use as exchange land was made first by my Department in 1985.

Purchase of the land adjacent to Coppetts wood forms part of a larger transaction between the Department and Barnet council and completion has not taken place. The price to be paid is the subject of negotiations between the council and the district valuer who is acting for the Department.

Departmental Property

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what property, leased or owned for the purposes of his Department, is not currently occupied.

Mr. Norris: The position is as follows:

Her Majesty's Coastguard:
30 properties are vacant pending disposal as a result of estate rationalisation.

Driving Standards Agency:
One building is vacant and for sale.

Ports:
Two buildings are vacant and will be sold shortly.

Transport Research Laboratory:
Two buildings are vacant.

Highways Safety and Traffic Command: at 31 December 1993, 815 properties acquired for the national roads programme were vacant. Of these 204 were classified as lettable. The rest were awaiting demolition or in the process of being sold or otherwise not suitable for letting.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he is to have with Wandsworth borough council on the proposed increase in aircraft traffic flying into Heathrow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: On 10 November 1993 we issued a consultation paper on night flights at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports for summer 1994 and for winter 1994-95 to summer 1998. A written response has been received from Wandsworth borough council and will be taken into account, along with all other responses received, in reaching a decision on the restrictions to apply from winter 1994-95 onwards. No discussions have been requested by Wandsworth borough council.

Airport Runways

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the length of the runways at *(a)* Leeds Bradford and *(b)* Humberside airports.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is as follows:

Leeds Bradford airport
Runway 10/28—1,100 metres
Runway 14/32—2,250 metres

Humberside airport
Runway 03/21—2,230 metres
Runway 09/27—1,054 metres

Source: Pooley's Flight Guide 1994.

Coaches

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the checks that are made to ensure that coaches of 18 or 19 tonnes registered in other European countries are not operating on United Kingdom roads.

Mr. Key: Only coaches with three axles may operate legally on British roads at weights over 17 tonnes. The Vehicle Inspectorate has powers to weigh and prohibit coaches operating on British roads in excess of the weights permitted by British regulations. During 1993 the Vehicle Inspectorate carried out a special weighing exercise targeting international traffic. A total of 482 vehicles were stopped, of these 80 were foreign. Of the 13 foreign vehicles prohibited, 10 were registered in EC states.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions in the last year for which figures are available coaches of 18 or 19 tonnes registered in other European countries were found to be operating on United Kingdom roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My Department does not collate statistics on the number of foreign coaches of 18 or 19 tonnes operating on British roads. Only coaches with three axles may legally operate over 17 tonnes on British roads. Two-axle coaches are restricted to 17 tonnes.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice his Department has given to licence applicants in the restricted HGV taxation class.

Mr. Key: Since September 1993 all operators of vehicles licensed in the restricted HGV taxation class have been given advice on relicensing procedures with their licence renewal reminders. Trade associations have also been kept informed of changes in procedures.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the prohibition orders issued and the dates they were issued in respect of licence No. OB19 5660 in Pudsey; if he will provide details of the latest licence issued; and what are the outstanding requirements the operator must comply with; and what further monitoring has been undertaken;

(2) who made representations against the issue of a licence to heavy goods vehicle operator licence No. OB19 5660 in Pudsey.

Mr. Key: Decisions on, and advice given about, individual operators' licences are the responsibility of the Traffic Commissioners. I have asked the Traffic Commissioner for the North Eastern traffic area to write to the hon. Member.

Aircraft Landing Charges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing, for a number of typical aircraft, the landing charges expressed per passenger, on the assumption that the aircraft are 80 per cent. full at peak times at *(a)* Leeds Bradford and *(b)* Humberside airports.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is shown in the tables.

All landing charges include aerodrome navigation services charges.

All passenger charges include security charges. Charges are shown for both domestic and international passengers.

The charges apply at any time of day throughout the year since there is no peak/off-peak charging structure at either airport.

There are no noise rebates available at either airport.

The following aircraft assumptions apply:

	Maximum take off weight (tonnes)	*Seats*	*Passengers at 80 per cent. load factor*
Boeing 737-200	53	109	87
Fokker 27	19	44	35

Comparison of airport charges
Total charges F27

	Landing £	*Pax dom flight* £	*Pax intl flight* £	*Total dom flight* £	*Total intl flight* £
Humberside	251	247	399	498	650
Leeds Bradford	236	219	405	455	641
Total charges B737-200					
Humberside	700	613	1,313	1,313	2,013
Leeds Bradford	659	545	1,007	1,204	1,666

Charges per passenger F27

	Landing £	*Pax dom* £	*Pax int* £	*Total dom* £	*total int* £
Humberside	7·17	7·05	11·40	14·22	18·57
Leeds Bradford	6·75	6·27	11·57	13·02	18·32
Charges per passenger B737-200					
Humberside	8·04	7·05	15·09	15·09	23·13
Leeds Bradford	7·58	6·27	11·57	13·85	19·15

Source: Civil Aviation Authority.

Late Night Trains (Midlands)

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what subsidy would be required to continue to operate late night trains between Euston and Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton as at present;

(2) what representations he has received concerning the proposed removal of late night trains between Euston and Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton;

(3) what study he has undertaken into the impact of the withdrawal of late night trains between Euston and Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that BR intends to discontinue the late night 23.40 service between Euston and Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton on the grounds of low patronage. The subsidy required to continue the service cannot be accurately assessed because British Rail does not generally establish the net costs of operating individual services. At present, the InterCity service to the west midlands is not in receipt of subsidy.

I have received one representation about the removal of the train.

The assessment of the impact of this change is a matter for BR.

Motorways

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of motorway are currently *(a)* open, *(b)* under construction and *(c)* planned in England either (i) as new motorway or (ii) as existing motorway being widened.

Mr. Key: There are 1,724 miles of motorway in England.

At 31 January, there were 39 miles of new motorway under construction, and 27 miles of motorway widening.

The Department is currently reviewing all the schemes in preparation in the trunk road programme to determine their priority. The results of the review are expected to be announced shortly.

Bus Lanes

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has to encourage London local authorities to extend and develop bus lanes in the Greater London area.

Mr. Norris: The Department has allocated £6·25 million in 1994-95 to the London authorities for bus priority schemes in London which will include the

provision of bus lanes where they are appropriate. This includes £2·5 million towards the design of a comprehensive London-wide bus priority network.

A56

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the capability and capacity of the A56 to handle any increased traffic flows following completion of the M65-M6 link.

Mr. Key: None. This is a matter for Lancashire county council as highway authority for the A56. However, our studies have shown that the M65-M6 link could increase traffic on the M65 east of Blackburn by some 11 per cent. We estimate, from the transpennine study, that between 9,000 and 11,000 vehicles per day will use the A56 east of Colne after the link road is opened.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what request he has received from British Nuclear Fuels plc to permit the transport of radioactive wastes from the Drigg site to Sellafield in transport containers that do not meet the International Atomic Energy Agency standards; and if he will make a statement on the conditions under which his Department is able to grant the equivalent of Crown immunity to the movement of radioactive cargoes.

Mr. Key: The Department has received an application for a special arrangement transport operation to move this material and is assessing it.

Special arrangement transport operations are permitted under the International Atomic Energy Agency regulations when all of the applicable requirements of the regulations cannot be met. Such arrangements may be approved by a competent authority provided that the overall level of safety in transport is at least equivalent to that which would be provided if all the applicable requirements had been complied with. It is not a question of Crown immunity or any equivalent.

Grants

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of all grants paid in the last 12 months *(a)* under the freight facilities grant scheme and *(b)* in respect of the new track areas grant scheme; how much is available for grant; and how applications are to be made.

Mr. Freeman: Payments totalling £2 million have been made to five companies during the last 12 months. In addition, two new grants have been awarded on which no claims have yet been submitted. No payments can be made under the track access grant scheme until it is introduced next month. The provisional budget for the next three years for both grants is £43 million. Guidance for applicants will be published shortly.

A11

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of the A11 Wymondham bypass.

Mr. Key: The tender figure for the A11 Besthope to Wymondham improvement contract is £16,506,805. The cost of the whole scheme including land etcetera VAT and ancillary works, is likely to be in the order of £26 million at today's prices.

M62 Relief Road

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will make a decision on the application by Mr. and Mrs. Whitehead for the advance purchase of 45 Glen avenue, Worsley, Salford, which is affected by the proposed M62 relief road.

Mr. Key: As soon as our consideration of the case is complete.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to reply to the letter dated 21 January from Mr. L. A. Brock, 12 Hawthorne drive, Worsley, Salford.

Mr. Key: A reply, on behalf of my right hon. Friend, was given on 28 February.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many applications he has received for the advance purchase of houses in Roe Green, Worsley, Salford, affected by the proposed M62 relief road.

Mr. Key: Fourteen applications from Roe Green, 18 applications from Worsley and 10 applications from Salford.

Motorway Tolls

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether it will be a condition of the grant of a license to operate a private motorway that vehicles driven by disabled people and exempt from vehicle excise duty shall travel toll free.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The only current legislation under which any new motorway could be subject to tolls is the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, which inter alia provides that vehicles in this category are exempt from tolls. New powers would be needed to toll existing motorways; it would be for Parliament to consider whether any vehicles should be exempt from tolls.

Airports (Crime)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing, for each standard region, separately for men and women and as an overall total, the number of incidents of *(a)* violent crime and *(b)* sexual assault at United Kingdom airports for 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not available centrally.

DEFENCE

Defence Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *383*, if he will state the month and year that each memorandum of understanding was signed for as many years since 1979 as are available.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 9 February, *Official Report*, column *254*.

River Class Minesweepers

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the River class minesweepers.

Mr. Hanley: The Royal Navy's River class vessels retain only a very limited mine countermeasures capability as a result of significant advances in mine technology. Consequently, over the last year, these vessels have been either re-roled or withdrawn from service as surplus to requirements. Under current plans, five River class vessels will remain in operational service with the Royal Navy, four as patrol craft and one as a training ship. The remaining seven vessels in the class will be sold.

Trident

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the costings for the Trident facility at Devonport; to what extent these are on target; and how they have altered since the refitting decision was made.

Mr. Aitken: The project to develop the Trident facility at Devonport is in its early stages but progressing satisfactorily as to time and cost. The costings have not altered since the decision was made to concentrate nuclear refitting at Devonport.

RAF Strike Command, High Wycombe

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the expenditure from public funds to refurbish the homes of the Commander-in-Chief and Deputy Commander-in-Chief of RAF Strike Command, High Wycombe.

Mr. Hanley: On 1 July 1994, the present Commander-in-Chief RAF Strike Command takes up the full-time appointment of Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces Northwest, a new NATO command replacing Allied Forces North. As is normal in these circumstances it is a United Kingdom responsibility to provide him with appropriate accommodation, and he will continue to occupy his present official residence. This change of appointment creates a need for a suitable residence for his successor, as Commander-in-Chief RAF Strike Command, the present deputy Commander-in-Chief RAF Strike Command, and a married quarter at RAF High Wycombe is being upgraded for this purpose. At the same time a United Kingdom-maintained residence in Oslo for the United Kingdom officer holding the post of Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces North will be given up. It is my Department's practice to provide service officers in senior command appointments with residences which allow them to offer official hospitality and entertainment commensurate with their status.

Military Reaction Force

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Military Reaction Force was established; what is its purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Military Reaction Force was a small military unit which, during the period 1971 to 1973, was responsible for carrying out essential surveillance tasks in Northern Ireland in those circumstances where soldiers in uniform and with Army vehicles would be too easily recognised.

RAF Hendon

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that when his Department disposes of its interest in the land at east camp RAF Hendon it will be a condition of the sale that any new owner will be required to dismantle and reconstruct the listed Grahame-White hangar on adjacent land set aside for the RAF museum by his Department in accordance with the written undertaking given to the hon. Member for Hendon, North by his Department on 8 September 1989.

Mr. Hanley: An MOD-commissioned survey by an architectural consultant, Mr. Graham Savage, ARIBA, concluded that it would not be practicable to dismantle and reassemble the Grahame-White hangar without destroying many of its original features. My Department is therefore proposing, subject to the necessary listed building consent being obtained, that it is taken down carefully to ensure as much as possible of the structure, including the Belfast roof trusses, is preserved and transferred to the RAF museum.

Copia

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning the loss of the fishing vessel Copia; what help he is able to provide with the recovery of the bodies of the crew; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence wrote on 14 March in response to the hon. Member's earlier representation about the loss of the fishing vessel Copia on 14 December 1993. Responsibility for investigating fatal accidents in Scotland rests with my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate, through his local representative, the procurator fiscal.

The investigation into the loss of the fishing vessel Copia is being conducted on the procurator fiscal's behalf by Strathclyde police and it is a matter for the procurator fiscal to decide upon what action is necessary to pursue his inquiries. The marine accident investigation branch of the Department of Transport is also investigating the incident. We are willing, in this, as in other cases, to provide assistance should we be asked to do so.

D-day

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Ministers are participating in the steering group responsible for co-ordinating the United Kingdom's

involvement in D-day commemorations; how often the group plans to meet; and in what form the group's deliberations will be published.

Mr. Hanley: The ministerial steering group directing the Government's official 50th anniversary of D-day commemorative events is chaired by my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence. The deputy chairman is my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage. At present, the group meets every two weeks; as its deliberations are often informal they are not published.

Service Personnel (Location)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the current location, by country and as between the United Kingdom, the United Nations and NATO Command, of all personnel in *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Navy and *(c)* the Air Force.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The table lists the locations of British armed forces personnel as at 14 March 1994:

British Armed Forces Deployments by Location

Armed Forces deployments (as at 14 March 1994)	*(a) Army*	*(b) Royal Navy/ Royal Marines*	*(c) Royal Air Force*
Ascension Island			•
Baltic Sea		•	
Belize	•		•
Brunei	•		
Canada	•		•
Caribbean		•	
Central Atlantic		•	•
Channel		•	•
Cyprus[3]	[1]•	•	•
Denmark			•
Diego Garcia		•	
Eastern Atlantic and North Sea		•	•
Falkland Islands	•	•	•
Germany	•		•
Gibraltar	•	•	•
Great Britain	•	•	•
Gulf	[1]•	•	•
Hong Kong	•	•	•
Kenya	•		
Malaysia			•
Mediterranean Sea		•	
Northern Ireland	•	•	•
Norway/Norwegian Sea	•	•	•
North Sea		[2]•	
Sardinia			•
Italy[4]			•
South Atlantic (Antarctic)	•	•	
Turkey			•
USA			•
Western Atlantic		•	
Former Republic of Yugoslavia	[1]•	[12]•	[12]•

Notes:
[1] Forces deployed on United Nations operations
[2] Forces deployed on NATO operations
[3] Elements of the British Army presence are deployed in support of United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNFICYP).
[4] RAF deployment in support of UNPROFOR/United Nations Security Council resolutions is under "Former Republic of Yugoslavia".
General Notes:
[1] and [2] can apply simultaneously to a deployment in support of both NATO and United Nations operations. Eg: elements of the Royal Navy are deployed in the Adriatic both in support of United Nations operations in the former Yugoslavia and as part of NATO/WEU operation SHARP GUARD.
Loan Service Personnel and Training Teams are not included.

SCOTLAND

Protection Orders

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all applications for protection orders which have still to be considered by him under the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976; if he will list in each case, the applicant or applicants; and if he will place in the Library full details of each of the applications.

Sir Hector Monro: Two applications for protection orders under the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976 are under consideration. One, from the United Clyde Angling Protective Association, is in respect of the main stem of the River Clyde. The other, from the Reay forest estate, is in respect of lochs in part of north-west Sutherland.

I have arranged for copies of each of the applications, as advertised, to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the protection orders which have been granted under the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976.

Sir Hector Monro: The following protection orders have been made under the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976:

The Rivers Tweed and Eye Protection Order 1980;
The Upper Spey and Associated Waters Protection Order 1982;
The River Luman Catchment Area Protection Order 1983;
The River Tummel Catchment Area Protection Order 1983;
The River Tay Catchment Area Protection Order 1986;
The West Strathclyde Protection Order 1988;
The River Earn Catchment Area Protection Order 1990;
The River Don Catchment Area (Part) Protection Order 1990;
The Loch Morar and River Morar Protection Order 1992;
The Loch Awe and Associated Waters Protection Order 1992.

Pupils (Unit Costs)

Sir Harold Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the unit cost per pupil in each Scottish local education authority for 1992-93 for *(a)* nursery-primary and *(b)* secondary pupils.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the table. It excludes the cost of home-to-school transport, school meals, education authority central administration and loan charges.

Net current expenditure per pupil in 1992-93

Region	*Nursery and primary* £	*Secondary* £
Borders	1,839	2,857
Central	1,736	2,801
Dumfries and Galloway	1,752	2,957
Fife	1,711	2,636
Grampian	1,861	3,031
Highland	1,917	2,896
Lothian	1,698	3,047
Strathclyde	1,812	2,842
Tayside	1,733	3,036

Region	Nursery and primary £	Secondary £
Orkney	2,103	3,827
Shetland	2,393	4,489
Western Isles	2,429	4,297

Notes:

1. These figures have been compiled from local authority financial returns.
2. Figures for Borders, Strathclyde, Shetland and Western Isles are provisional.

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Lang: There are no agency chief executives in my Department who are currently paid more than £82,925 per annum, excluding performance bonuses.

Copia

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations have been received by the Lord Advocate concerning the loss of the fishing vessel Copia; what consideration has been given to arrangements for recovery of the ship and its crew; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has been made aware of the circumstances of the sinking of the fishing vessel Copia so far as they are known. He is also aware of the difficulties surrounding the investigation because of bad weather and the depth of the water in which the vessel now lies.

Police divers, working at the limit of their operational capabilities, have managed to reach the wreck, but, regrettably, have been unable to locate the bodies of the crew, which may or may not be on board. The procurator fiscal is considering what further actions may be required in connection with his responsibilities and will report in early course to my noble and learned Friend.

Consultancies

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list for each of the past five years and as a total over the same period *(a)* all political consultants, *(b)* public relations companies, *(c)* management consultants, *(d)* survey organisations and *(e)* other outside bodies or individuals employed by the Scottish Office together with the date on which the contract was awarded, the length of the contract and the total amount spent by the Scottish Office on each contract; whether the contract was based on a fixed fee or fee plus man hours basis; what was the name of the individual or organisation to whom the contract was awarded; what are the services which were required by the Scottish office; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list all *(a)* political consultants, *(b)* public relations companies, *(c)* management consultants, *(d)* survey organisations and *(e)* other outside bodies or individuals currently employed by his Department, together with the date on which the contract was awarded, the length of the contract and the total amount spent by the Scottish Office on each contract, whether the contract was based on a fixed fee or a fee plus man hours basis; what was the name of the individual or organisation to whom the contract was awarded; what are the services which were required by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 February 1994]:* I notified the hon. Member that a reply would be made as soon as possible.

Detailed records of all work commissioned from external consultants are not available centrally. The information requested could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost. Details of external consultants engaged by my Department in the current financial year to date have, however, been obtained. As this is a fairly lengthy list, I have arranged for it to be placed in the Library of the House.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 4 March 1994]:* The information sought is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

School Leavers

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a ranking by region of the percentage of female school leavers leaving school with five or more standard grades—levels 1 to 3.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 March 1994]:* The available information is set out in the following table. Many pupils who left from the 1991-92 session would have sat their fourth year examinations in 1991 or 1990, before the standard grade fully superseded ordinary grade. O-grade qualifications have therefore also been included in the analysis.

Female school leavers from the 1991-92 session with 5 or more O/S Grades (1-3)

	Number	As Percentage of all female leavers
Scotland	29,820	45·5
1 Shetland	123	65·9
2 Orkney	126	62·7
3 Borders	566	54·2
4 Dumfries and Galloway	881	52·1
5 Highland	1,245	51·0
6 Central	1,684	50·3
7 Tayside	2,394	49·5
8 Grampian	3,110	47·7
9 Western Isles	230	47·4
10 Fife	2,094	46·4
11 Lothian	4,149	44·5
12 Strathclyde	13,218	42·1

Sea Birds

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *441*, regarding sea bird fatalities in Scotland, what is the proportion of fatalities of *(a)* adult birds and *(b)* juvenile birds.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* Exact figures are not available, but from post mortem samples it is estimated that of dead guillemots, the species most affected in the recent losses, 50 per cent. of birds found in the Shetlands are adults while in other areas the proportion is about 20 per cent.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the possible connection between overfishing and the death of sea birds in the recent incidents on the east coast of Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* There is at present no evidence that current levels of fishing are having an adverse effect on sea birds which feed on sea fish.

The sea birds which have been washed ashore in recent weeks feed on pelagic species such as sprat and sand-eels. There is no significant United Kingdom fishery for these species in the North sea. Scientific advice on the state of sand-eel and sprat stocks does not suggest that they are at low levels. Nevertheless, the European Union has established a working group consisting of marine ecologists and fisheries biologists to study the impact of fishing for sprat and sand-eels on the marine ecosystem. This follows pressure from the United Kingdom at last December's European Fisheries Council meeting.

It is clear that recent bad weather has been a major cause of sea bird mortality and that the prevailing easterly wind will have washed birds ashore that would otherwise have remained at sea.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the use of freephone and freepost facilities currently being operated by his Department; how much these facilities are costing; for what purposes these facilities are being used; and how much his Department has spent on operating freephone and freepost facilities in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* Only one freephone service is operated by the Scottish Office—"Drugline Scotland", which opened in March 1992, providing a 24-hour telephone advice, information and referral service for people who have concerns about their own or someone else's drug use. In the year 1992-93, it cost £11,776. As part of the initiative to make the Scottish Office more accessible, people are now able to telephone the Scottish Office from over 20 offices throughout the country without charge. Cost figures are not yet available, as the service has been operating only since October 1993.

The Scottish Office uses both business reply and freepost response facilities, mainly to encourage people to provide information to Departments or to respond to Government initiatives or campaigns. The costs of the two services are not separately recorded but the total costs of items returned through the Department's central postal services for each year from 1983-84—the earliest year for which figures are available—are shown in the table. The cost of operating the services cannot be isolated from other mail handling costs.

Year	*Expenditure on Business Reply/ Freepost* £	*Year*	*Expenditure on Business Reply/ Freepost* £
1983-84	43,596	1988-89	55,953
1984-85	19,958	1989-90	66,551
1985-86	51,295	1990-91	44,092
1986-87	51,522	1991-92	65,222
1987-88	62,550	1992-93	26,762

Fishing

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement setting out the view of Her Majesty's Government on enlargement of the European Union and its consequences for the Scottish inshore fishing fleet.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* Fisheries have been an important element of the recent negotiations on enlargement of the European Union, particularly with Norway. The negotations with Norway will resume on 15 March, and the Government will continue to defend the interests of the United Kingdom fishing industry.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement setting out the view of Her Majesty's Government on access of the Spanish fleet to the North sea and its consequences for the Scottish inshore fishing fleet.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* Conclusions have not yet been reached in the review of the fisheries aspects of the Spanish and Portuguese Acts of Accession. The Government have made clear their determination to protect British interests in the North sea fisheries, as in other fisheries around the United Kingdom coastline.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the name, size, type and home port of all Scottish inshore fishing vessels accepted to date as being eligible for decommissioning.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* Final payments have still to be made to all the vessels for which conditional offers of decommissioning grant were made. A list of vessels receiving grant will be published in due course.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider introducing a policy of scrap and build for the Scottish inshore fleet.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The fundamental imbalance between fishing effort and available fishing resources must be resolved if we are to ensure a secure future for the fishing industry. Limited public resources will yield the best value for money if they are targeted at this objective.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what effect he expects the current market price of

white fish pressure stocks landed from the North sea to have on the long-term future of the Scottish inshore fishing fleet.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* Market prices fluctuate markedly during the winter months owing, among other reasons, to the impact of the weather on the level of fishing activity. In those circumstances, there seems to be little to suggest that current market prices will have any long-term effects on the fleet.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals his Department has to deregulate any aspects of the current legislative provisions as they apply to the catching sector of the Scottish inshore fishing fleet.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* Fisheries departments are currently reviewing the licensing system for fisheries with the aim of simplifying and reducing the burden on the industry.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what discussions he has recently had with representatives of the European Union on the consequences of the suspension of the days at sea regulations; and what he now proposes as an alternative management regime for North sea white fish pressure stocks;

(2) what steps he is taking to protect white fish stocks in the North sea;

(3) if he will make a statement outlining the current proposals being considered by Her Majesty's Government on alternative methods of fishery management to be applied to the Scottish inshore fleet fishing in the North sea.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I met Commissioner Paleokrassas on 24 January to discuss conservation measures for fisheries in the light of the suspension of our days at sea scheme. Discussions are now being undertaken with the industry on these matters and a further statement will be made in due course.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the most recent estimates of the average age of the fishing vessels in the Scottish inshore fleet.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* There is no formal definition of vessels that comprise the Scottish inshore fleet. The table shows the average age of vessels based in Scotland in selected length bands. Age is not recorded for approximately one third of vessels of length 10 m or under.

Average age of vessels in the Scottish fishing fleet at 31 December 1993 for which the age is known

Registered length	*Average age (years)*
10 metres or under	16·22
10–	19·22
15–	23·39
20–	17·78
25 metres or over	15·82
All vessels	18·06

Common Fisheries Policy

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations have been made by Scottish Ministers to the representations of the European Union on the equal enforcement of CFP regulations throughout member states; and what steps they are taking to secure sanctions against member states that fail to enforce the regulations.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* Scottish Office Ministers regularly press the case within the Council of Ministers of the European Union for proper and effective enforcement of the common fisheries policy by all member states. The United Kingdom Government actively supported the new fisheries control regulation adopted by the Council in October 1993. This places specific obligations on member states to enforce common fisheries policy rules and increases the powers of the European Commission to monitor enforcement.

Officials of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department are playing a full part in discussions with the Commission and other member states on implementation of the control regulation. This regulation should bring about a substantial overall improvement in standards of enforcement.

Scottish Ambulance Service

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the expenditure on the Scottish ambulance service for each of the past five years; what is the budget for the current year and for the next financial year; what representations have been made to him by the ambulance service about the adequacy or otherwise of such expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The information on expenditure and budgets is as follows:

Year	*£*[1]
1988-89	37,195,685
1989-90	41,227,960
1990-91	47,665,465
1991-92	57,294,250
1992-93	66,042,161
1993-94	67,008,000
1994-95	70,141,000

[1]The figures include capital.

Like other public services, funding for the Common Services Agency, of which the Scottish ambulance service is a division, is considered as part of the public expenditure survey programme.

Funding for the Scottish ambulance service has been increased from £12,865,100 in 1979 to £70,141,000 in 1994—an increase of 82·75 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the position of the Scottish ambulance service in relation to the citizens charter; what is the response time expected for an emergency call; and what arrangements are made for the monitoring of the speed of response to emergency calls.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The position of the Scottish ambulance service under the

citizens charter is set out in its charter standard statement. The target response times given for an ambulance to respond to an emergency call vary according to population density and are:

	95 per cent. of calls within minutes
Dense population (more than 3 people per acre)	14
Medium population (between 0·5 and 3 people per acre)	18
Sparse population (less than 0·5 people per acre)	21

The time taken for each response is recorded and analysed by the Scottish ambulance service. This information is made available on a regular basis to the board of the Common Services Agency of which the Scottish ambulance service is a division.

Limb Defects

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what work the Medical Research Council is undertaking into clusters of babies born with limb defects; which local health authorities are undertaking investigations of their own; and when he expects the results of those inquiries.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The Medical Research Council is not currently undertaking any studies on clusters of babies born with limb defects. We are not aware of any current investigations into this subject by health boards in Scotland.

School Repairs

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the estimated amount of outstanding repairs required to schools in each local education authority area in Scotland.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The overall management of their school building stock is a matter for individual education authorities. Detailed information of the kind requested is not held centrally.

Voter Registration

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funds are being made available to electoral registration officers in each of the nine regions and three island authorities to publicise information to EU citizens from outwith the British Isles on voter registration; and in which of the official languages of the European Union versions will be provided.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* No additional funds are to be made available to electoral registration officers for this exercise. An information sheet printed in English has been issued to electoral registration officers, to political parties in Scotland, to consular offices of member states in Scotland, to the French, Danish and Italian Institutes and to citizens advice local offices.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will lay before Parliament an order to extend the period to allow late registration to vote by EU citizens from outwith the British Isles.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for publicising the procedure, and deadline of 29 March, to allow EU citizens from outwith the British Isles to register to vote; what Scottish newspapers will carry such advertisements; in how many languages; and how often.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has no plans for newspaper advertising.

My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State has issued a statement encouraging European Union citizens resident in Scotland to register to vote at the European parliamentary elections in June 1994 and has emphasised the need for them to act quickly.

In addition, the Scottish Office Home and Health Department has sent information sheets in the English language to electoral registration officers, political parties in Scotland, consular offices of other member states in Scotland, citizens advice local offices and to specialist bodies such as the French, Danish and Italian Institutes. A notice has been placed in the *Edinburgh Gazette.*

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) by what date he expects all applications for sheep annual premium in the current year to be paid out;

(2) how many applications for payment of sheep annual premium he has received in the current year from *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Orkney and *(c)* Shetland; and what proportion in each category remained unpaid on 1 March.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The number of eligible applications received under the 1993 sheep annual premium scheme and the proportion of claims for which the advance payment had not been made at 10 March are set out in the table.

	Number	*Proportion (per cent.)*
Scotland	16,687	11·0
Orkney	482	12·0
Shetland	1,470	7·0

The applications for which advance payments have still to be made are those where claims for premium are not matched by quota. Payments will continue to be made over the coming weeks, but a number of claims cannot be paid until after allocations from the national reserve have been completed and the additional period for transferring and leasing quota has taken place in the early summer.

School Repairs

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the amount spent on the repair and maintenance of school buildings by local education authorities in Scotland in each financial year since 1989-90.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The available information is given in the table. The capital figures include expenditure on new building work as well as on repairs and maintenance, information on which is not recorded separately.

Current expenditure on repair and maintenance of school buildings and capital expenditure on school buildings

£ million at outturn prices

	Current	*Capital*
1989-90	76·630	66·884
1990-91	77·665	67·305
1991-92	86·485	72·572
1992-93	84·402	89·679

Note:

The figures for current expenditure have been compiled from local authority financial returns and for capital expenditure from capital payments returns submitted by local authorities to the Scottish Office.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 16 March 1994

HOME DEPARTMENT

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Mr. Howard: Such information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Library of the House.

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up since 1979; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment; and what it was last year and two years ago.

Mr. Howard: No self-financing self regulatory authorities have been set up by my Department since 1979.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Howard: The number of sets of rules and regulations signed by me or by previous Home Secretaries in each of the years 1991 to 1993 is as follows:

Calendar year	*Rules*	*Regulations*	*Total number*
1991	1	19	20
1992	9	25	34
1993	6	15	21

Criminal Justice

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions under section 31 of the Criminal Justice Act 1948 have been undertaken in each year since 1979; in what countries the defendants were serving; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Information on procedures instituted under section 31 of the Criminal Justice Act 1948, as amended by schedule 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967 are not collected centrally by my Department.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the statutes concerning the welfare of captive animals in terms of *(a)* circuses, *(b)* zoos, *(c)* pet shops, *(d)* breeding establishments, *(e)* kennels, *(f)* residential homes and *(g)* other.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Protection of Animals Act 1911, as subsequently amended, governs the welfare of all captive and domestic animals. The following statutes provide additional safeguards in the individual sectors mentioned:

The Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925
The Zoo Licensing Act 1981
The Pet Animals Acts 1951 and 1983
The Breeding of Dogs Acts 1973 and 1991
The Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963

The Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 regulates the keeping of such creatures in the home. Other principal animal welfare statutes are:

The Cinematograph Films (Animals) Act 1937
The Docking and Nicking of Horses Act 1949
The Cockfighting Act 1952
The Abandonment of Animals Act 1960
The Animals (Cruel Poisons) Act 1962
The Riding Establishments Acts 1964 and 1970
The Farriers (Registration) Acts 1975 and 1977
The Protection Against Cruel Tethering Act 1988

West Midlands Police

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the approved strength of the West Midlands police force in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The establishment of the West Midlands police was 6,509 on 1 April 1979 and 6,977 on 1 April 1993.

Italy (Extradition)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations Her Majesty's Government have received since 1980 from the Italian authorities to extradite suspected criminals and terrorists; what has been his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Since 1980, the Italian Government have requested the extradition of 67 people from the United Kingdom, for a wide range of offences.

Of these, 61 were accused of the offences for which their extradition was requested and six had been convicted. Sixteen of those sought have been returned to Italy, eight requests have been refused and 12 remain outstanding. Of the remainder, either the requests were subsequently withdrawn, or the person sought could not be traced here or was arrested in another country or was deported from this country. In one case, the person sought committed suicide before the conclusion of the proceedings.

Fines (Non-Payment)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were imprisoned for non-payment of fines and other debts who were legally represented at the hearing at which they were imprisoned in the most recent year for which records are available.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the number of people legally represented at specific types of hearings is not collected centrally.

Forensic Psychiatric Service

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what considerations underlie the timing of the changeover of funding of the forensic psychiatric service in Doncaster to the Prison Service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 16 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, to reply to your recent Question about Prison Service funding of psychiatric services in Doncaster.

There are no plans to change the way in which the Forensic Psychiatric Service for prisoner patients is funded. Medical treatment of prisoners transferred to an outside hospital is funded by the District Health Authority in whose area the prisoner resided before imprisonment.

The three establishments in the Doncaster area, Lindholme, Moorland and Hatfield, contract in and pay for a visiting consultant psychiatrist. The Prison Service receives no funds from the District Health Authority in support of this service.

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Howard: One, who was recruited directly from outside the civil service.

Management Systems

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department's computer-aided facilities management systems cost; from whom they were purchased; how many person hours were required to commission them; what the estimated and actual saving has been from their operation; and to what extent the use of such systems accounts for the apparent rise in theft noted in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *804*.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Department has no computer-aided facilities management systems in place.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Sex Discrimination Tribunals

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make legal aid available to women appealing to industrial tribunals in cases of sexual discrimination.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are no plans to extend full civil legal aid to any type of case before an industrial tribunal. However, legal advice and assistance under the green form scheme is available to those who are financially eligible.

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Neither of the chief executives of HM Land Registry and the Public Record Office, the agencies for which the Lord Chancellor has responsibility, is paid more than £82,925 per annum excluding performance-related bonuses.

The current chief executive of HM Land Registry was appointed from within the registry after open competition. The current chief executive of the public Record Office was formerly director of special collections at the British Library.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Dividend Stripping

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if the Commissioners have been involved in dividend stripping as distinct from any gilt stripping activities; and if he will list the gains from such activity in each of the last five years?

Mr. Alison: The amounts shown in my answers of 25 February and 4 March on the subject of gilt stripping represented the differences between interest on gilts calculated on the receipts basis and interest calculated on the accruals basis. No such alternative bases apply to dividends from equities: in common with other investment funds, the Church Commissioners account for dividends on the receipt basis and consider it impractical either to account for dividends on the accruals basis or to recalculate with hindsight what the dividends would have been if calculated on this basis.

While the Commissioners continue to manage their investments with the intention of generating a high level of income, this is achieved in relation to their equities portfolio through the selection of appropriate investments.

TREASURY

Ways and Means Advances

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the interest currently paid on ways and means advances; and for what reason he needs to pay any interest.

Mr. Dorrell: Most ways and means borrowing takes the form of surplus Exchequer moneys, which are used to minimise Government borrowing overnight. No interest is paid on such borrowing, though interest must be paid at market-related rates to attract ways and means advances from other sources.

Taxation

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number and percentage of basic rate and higher rate taxpayers in *(a)* Lancashire, *(b)* Cambridgeshire and *(c)* the United Kingdom for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The table provides estimates for 1991-92, the latest available year for which information can be provided below the United Kingdom level.

Basic and higher rate taxpayers 1991-92

	Taxpayers liable at only basic rate		*Taxpayers liable at higher rate*	
	000s	*Per cent.*	*000s*	*Per cent.*
Lancashire	601	95·2	30	4·8
Cambridgeshire	326	94·2	20	5·8
United Kingdom	24,800	93·9	1,620	6·1

Sub-Saharan Countries (Debt)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his Department's plans for assisting sub-Saharan countries in meeting debt repayments to multilateral agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The poorest countries benefit from the IMF's enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF), which provides highly concessional long-term assistance at an interest rate of only 0·5 per cent. in support of economic reform in the poorest countries. The United Kingdom has just announced that it will provide an extra £50 million to subsidise the interest rate of the ESAF successor facility, on top of our earlier contribution of up to £327 million; over time the United Kingdom will contribute about one ninth of the subsidy required by ESAF.

These countries also benefit from concessional credits from the World Bank's International Development Association, to which the United Kingdom contributed £620 million at the last replenishment, which concentrates on lending to the poorest countries. They also have help meeting interest repayments on non-concessional loans to the World Bank through the bank's fifth dimension facility.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Charges

21. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he is having with regard to future methods of paying for water.

Mr. Atkins: The basis of charging for water is a matter for the water companies. It is among the topics discussed at meetings with the Director General of Water Services and representatives of water companies.

Liverpool

22. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the standard spending assessment and revenue grant provision as proposed for the city of Liverpool in 1994-95; and if he will undertake a complete review of the city's financial situation in consultation with Liverpool city council.

Mr. Curry: Standard spending assessments are calculated on principles applicable to all authorities, taking account of each authority's social, demographic and physical characteristics. Liverpool's SSA of £419 million for 1994-95 is equivalent to £875 per head, the third highest of any metropolitan district. The total external support for Liverpool that year, which includes revenue support grant, SSA reduction grant and redistributed non-domestic rates, will be £363 million, equivalent to £758 per head, again the third highest.

We look each year at the calculation of standard spending assessments. In the forthcoming round we will certainly bear in mind the points made by the city of Liverpool and by the hon. Member. It is for the city council to manage within the resources available to it: it would not be appropriate for me to intervene in the way implied in the question.

Homelessness

23. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to stop further categories from jumping the homelessness housing queue.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady O. Maitland).

Municipal Housing Policy

24. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on developments in Government policy on municipal housing.

Sir George Young: The Government are extending the benefits of competition in the provision of local authority services to council housing management, consulting on new proposals for access to local authority and housing association tenancies and introducing important new rights for council tenants.

Council Tax

25. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average increase in council tax bills for 1994-95.

Mr. Curry: The average headline council tax based on those authorities for which my Department has actual or provisional information shows an increase of 2·4 per cent. over the 1993-94 average.

30. **Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the top and bottom 10 council taxes so far declared.

Mr. Curry: The top and bottom 10 headline council taxes (band C, two adults) based on actual and provisional information where available are:

	1994-95 headline council tax (band C)
Highest 10 authorities	
Liverpool	770
Manchester	691
Newcastle upon Tyne	686
Coventry	669
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	658
Salford	658
Bristol	652
Middlesbrough	645

	1994-95 headline council tax (band C)
Hartlepool	643
Kirklees	635
Lowest 10 authorities	
Westminster	218
Wellingborough	261
Wandsworth	306
Isles of Scilly	358
City of London	368
Hambleton	396
Tewkesbury	398
Rochester upon Medway	402
South Cambridgeshire	408
Teesdale	409

Rents

27. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce legislation to limit the amount that property companies and private landlords can charge in residential rents.

Sir George Young: None.

Bathing Water Directive

28. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his current proposals for re-negotiating the EU Bathing Water directive.

Mr. Gummer: We will be examining the proposal for revision announced by the EC Commission on 16 February to assess how far it concentrates on essential quality and health parameters and is a framework directive meeting the requirements of subsidiarity, up-to-date science and cost-effectiveness.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

29. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his correspondence with his opposite number in the European Commission in relation to the Cardiff bay barrage and the EC Habitats Directive.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 1 March at column *643*.

Local Government, Staffordshire

31. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the review of local government in Staffordshire.

Mr. Curry: The Local Government Commission began its review of Staffordshire in December 1993, and interested parties have until 8 April to submit their initial proposals to it. The commission will then publish draft recommendations for consultation. In preparing its final report, the commission will take account of any representations made about the draft recommendations. The commission proposes to submit its final report and recommendations for Staffordshire to my right hon. Friend in the autumn.

Single Regeneration Budget

32. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations were undertaken in the development of the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen).

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

33. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about his plans for the application of CCT to housing management.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answers I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on 26 November 1993 at columns *264-65;* to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 15 December 1993 at columns *733-34;* and to my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) on 21 January 1994 at columns *871-73.*

Community Stadium, Southampton

34. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to determine the appeal on the planning application for a new community stadium at Stoneham, Southampton.

Mr. Baldry: The appeals will be decided as soon as possible.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

35. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites of special scientific interest there are in England and Wales; and how many of these were created in the last 12 months.

Mr. Gummer: In England, at 3 March 1994 there were 3,775 SSSIs. This includes 45 sites notified or re-notified to date in the current financial year. I am advised by my hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, that there were 882 SSSIs, at 31 December 1993, in Wales. This includes 32 sites newly notified between 1 January and 31 December 1993.

Local Government Finance

36. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take to secure an independent inquiry into the comparative fairness of the standard spending assessment from one region to another; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Standard spending assessments are calculated on a consistent basis using the same formulae for each authority. We carried out a thorough review of the SSA system for 1994-95 in partnership with the local authority associations.

The Audit Commission published a study of the SSA system in May 1993. The Environment Select Committee published its own report on SSAs earlier this year. The Government will publish their response to the Select Committee's recommendations later this month.

Water Quality

37. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet representatives of the water companies to discuss water quality.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend meets regularly with representatives of the water companies to discuss a variety of issues including water quality.

38. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on United Kingdom compliance with EU water quality directives.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom is committed to fulfilling its obligations under these directives.

Fraud and Corruption

39. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about fraud and corruption in local government.

Mr. Curry: It is the responsibility of local authorities themselves, both members and officers, to take measures to prevent and detect fraud and corruption in their affairs. The Audit Commission's recent report on probity in the public sector concluded that

"probity in local government is generally in good order".

There is no room for complacency, however; fraud and corruption are always to be condemned, wherever they occur.

City Pride

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken in relation to City Pride.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the oral answer I gave earlier to the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme).

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what actions have been taken in relation to City Pride.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what actions have been taken in relation to City Pride; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The partners in the three City Pride cities, Birmingham, London and Manchester, have all formed partnerships to take forward the preparation of prospectuses for their areas, and are making good progress.

Rural Housing

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new houses have been completed with Housing Corporation funding in rural areas in each of the last three years.

Sir George Young: The Housing Corporation's capital programme provided 98 new homes in rural areas—defined as settlements with a population of 3,000 or less —in 1990-91, 491 in 1991-92, 1,665 in 1992-93 and 1,701 this financial year up to the end of February 1994. These figures exclude completions of new homes which were approved before 1989-90, since the Housing Corporation did not collect such information on rural schemes approved prior to this date.

Waste Water

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportions of waste water in each member state of the European Union are treated.

Mr. Atkins: The percentage of population in each member state served by sewage treatment works is given in the table:

Member State	*Percentage of population served by sewage works*
Belgium[1]	33
Denmark	100
France	52
Germany (West)	92
Greece	76
Ireland	44
Italy	60
Luxembourg	92
Netherlands	90
Portugal	45
Spain	47
United Kingdom	88

[1] Wallone region only

Source: 10th Report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities, Municipal Waste Water Treatment, volume I, May 1991.

Water Analyses

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in which member states of the European Union there are available for public inspection analyses of water and waste water.

Mr. Atkins: In England and Wales analyses of water and waste water carried out by water companies, local authorities, and the National Rivers Authority, are made available for public inspection. The drinking water inspectorate publishes annually the results of the analyses of drinking water. So far as we are aware, comprehensive information is not available on the position in other member states.

Domestic Consumers

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial means he will employ to encourage efficiency and conservation for domestic consumers.

Mr. Atkins: My Department uses a number of financial means to encourage domestic energy efficiency.

The home energy efficiency scheme provides grants for basic energy efficiency measures for vulnerable members of society. On 1 April funds for the scheme are to be almost doubled and the scheme extended to elderly and disabled people. Local authorities run substantial council housing repair and improvement programmes which include energy efficiency measures. The new single regeneration budget will incorporate energy efficiency work currently covered in the estate action programme. VAT on domestic fuel and power will also contribute to improved efficiency and conservation.

Acid Batteries

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment United Kingdom authorities are able to make of the health effects on battery recycle workers in industrialising third world nations which import acid batteries from the United Kingdom for recycling.

Mr. Atkins: There is no requirement under present legislation for United Kingdom authorities to make assessment of the type suggested. When the EC Waste Shipments Regulation applies in May, the export of waste for recovery will be prohibited if a competent authority of dispatch has reason to believe that a shipment will not be managed in accordance with environmentally sound methods in the country of destination. Guidelines for environmentally sound recovery operations are being prepared by a working group under the Basel convention.

Sustainable Development Strategy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evaluation he has made of the relevance to the United Kingdom sustainable development strategy of the report to the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection on the monitoring by the EC of the implementation of Agenda 21 of the UN Conference on Environment and Development by Mrs. Guadalupe Ruiz-Giminenez Aguilar, MEP.

Mr. Atkins: None yet. The report by the Committee on the Environment was tabled in the European Parliament on 3 January and so far as I am aware remains subject to discussion.

Water Disconnections

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of domestic water disconnections in each London borough for 1993.

Mr. Atkins: Data on disconnections by local authority district are not available centrally.

Local Records

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to abolish the county records offices.

Mr. Baldry: As my right hon. Friend considers the recommendations of the Local Government Commission in each of the shire counties, he will be looking to ensure that they enable adequate provision to be made for all existing local government functions, including records and archives.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy on the level of public expenditure on *(a)* the collection and maintenance and *(b)* the availability locally for public inspection of local records.

Mr. Baldry: These are matters for local authorities to decide.

Energy Saving Trust

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he proposes to allow the Energy Savings Trust to offer a lower rate of support to eligible owner-occupiers than to social housing; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to exclude low-rise flats from the Energy Saving Trust grant schemes; and if he will consider including *(a)* low-rise owner-occupier flats and *(b)* low rise social housing flats that are an integral part of housing layouts in energy savings trust schemes.

Mr. Atkins: The Energy Saving Trust is an independent organisation. The terms of its schemes are for the trust to establish in consultation with the bodies providing the funds.

Government Offices

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 7 March, *Official Report,* columns *38-39,* if he will provide the total cost of each listed refurbishment where such figures are available, an analysis of the nature and cost of each refurbishment where it is available on an economic basis and the total cost of all refurbishments in *(a)* the SW1 postal district of London and *(b)* the remainder of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Baldry: As advised in my answer of 7 March, *Official Report,* columns *38-39,* the detailed information requested on the nature and cost of the 77 refurbishment schemes listed cannot be provided at an economic cost.

Hazardous Wastes

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the reason for the proposed increase in expenditure between 1993-94 and 1994-95, on hazardous wastes, as set out in figure 10 of his annual report and expenditure plans 1994-95 to 1996-97, Cm. 2507.

Mr. Atkins: The expenditure represents contributions to trust funds established under the UNEP Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous waste and their disposal. Until this year, the United Kingdom made voluntary contributions of United States $50,000 to support the work of the convention. From 1994, the United Kingdom is required to make a mandatory contribution as a party to the convention of United States $119,930. The United Kingdom also makes additional voluntary contributions to the Basel technical trust fund which assists developing and other countries in need of assistance to implement the convention.

Since the figures in Cm. 2507 were finalised, it has been agreed that the United Kingdom should pay its mandatory contribution at the start of the relevant calendar year. As a result the first mandatory payment will now fall in 1993-94 and total payments in 1993-94 will be £131,807.

Lancashire (Capital Receipts)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority in Lancashire the capital receipts held by them resulting from the sale of land, property and other assets.

Mr. Baldry: The available information is as follows:

	Usable capital receipts at 1 April 1993 £'000
Lancashire county council	3,427
Blackburn	0
Blackpool	6,561
Burnley	1,184
Chorley	982
Fylde	458
Hyndburn	0
Lancaster	619
Pendle	1,391
Preston	1,823
Ribble Valley	1,097
Rossendale	12
South Ribble	243
West Lancashire	1,434
Wyre	371

Tenant Participation

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of section 16 and section 87 funding for tenant participation initiatives.

Sir George Young: Support in the form of grants is available both directly and indirectly to tenants to encourage and develop greater tenant participation in the management of local authority and housing association housing. The powers to pay grant derive from section 429A of the Housing Act 1985—as inserted by section 16 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986—and from section 87 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 respectively.

With the introduction of the right to manage on 1 April 1994, section 16 grant will be focused increasingly on the development of tenant management organisations. Grant provision of £6·4 million is available during 1994-95.

Housing association tenant participation is sponsored by the Housing Corporation. In 1994-95 the corporation expects to spend £2·4 million in providing grants under section 87. The emphasis of this programme is on the establishment of tenants groups and for aid to housing associations wishing to involve tenants in the management of their homes.

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Mr. Baldry: Information on the numbers, funding and staffing of non-departmental public bodies is published annually in "Public Bodies," copies of which are available in the Libraries of the House.

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up since 1979; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment; and what it was last year and two years ago.

Mr. Baldry: Only one relevant authority has been set up since 1979. The Office of Water Services—OFWAT—was established in 1989 by the Water Act.

The figures for its running costs over the last three financial years are:

	£ million
1991-92	5·7
1992-93	6·1
1993-94	[1]8·2

[1] Estimate.

Staff figures for those years are respectively—

	Number
1991-92	116
1992-93	131
1993-94	153

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Baldry: The number of statutory instruments laid before Parliament by my Department in each of the last three years was as follows:

	Number
1991	149
1992	181
1993	174

Environmental Health Officers

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many environmental health officers there were in each of the last five years; how many support staff they have; what they cost in each year; what mileage allowances were offered to environmental health officers; and whether they get cars supplied.

Mr. Baldry: The information is not available centrally.

Integrated Government Office for London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state *(a)* the location of the new integrated Government office for London and when it will commence operations, *(b)* the numbers of civil servants attached to, or related to, specific Government Departments to be posted to it, *(c)* the number of any other employees located there, *(d)* the date when he expects to announce the name of the services' regional controller and *(e)* the date that post will be taken up.

Mr. Baldry: The principal regional offices of the Departments of Employment, Environment, Trade and Industry and Transport responsible for London are

currently located at 236 Grays Inn road, Millbank tower, Bridge place and 2 Marsham street respectively. In the short term, the functions of the new office will continue to be performed from those offices. The Government Office for London will open for business in April, staffed by some 320 civil servants from existing regional offices and related divisions. We hope to announce the appointment of the regional director in the near future and the successful candidate should take up their post shortly thereafter.

Shopping Centres

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his current planning guidance in respect of out-of-town shopping centres.

Mr. Gummer: Planning policy guidance note 6 contains our current policy. It encourages retail development that respects town centre vitality and viability, in locations that are accessible by a choice of means of transport and which encourage economy in fuel consumption. PPG 13, published yesterday, underlines the importance of these policies.

Bradford City Centre Project

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the funding of Bradford's city centre project; what funding applications from the project he has received in the past year; how many have been *(a)* approved, *(b)* refused and *(c)* how many are still being considered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* The Department is currently funding the Bradford city centre project under the urban programme and under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985. We have received no representations about the project's funding. The Department has offered BCCP section 73 grant to expand the organisation's outreach scheme in 1994-95.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Aid and Trade

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the reasons for the dates of approval of individual aid and trade provision projects not being given in the list to which he referred in his answer to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) of 28 October 1993, *Official Report*, column *732*; and if he will now make it his policy to provide the approval dates to Parliament.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The aid and trade provision scheme was established in 1978 and has been successful in securing over 270 overseas projects for Britain. In many of these projects the extended period of negotiation has meant that the project has been submitted for approval on more than one occasion. The list of successful ATP projects placed in the Library of the House is based on the dates when the formal Government-to-Government agreements or exchanges were signed for each project; this is the operative date for project commencement. Details of the dates of each individual approval is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. There are no plans to maintain such records centrally.

Malaysia

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answers of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *800*, on what basis the payment to Antah Biwater JV is consistent with his answer on payments to Malaysian companies.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My answers in the *Official Report*, column *800* are consistent. The status of the rural water supply project had changed from that of a proposed project to that of a project formally agreed between the two Governments before the payment referred to was made.

Pergau Dam

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons the ODA appointed a temporary rock expert to the Pergau design review panel; what is the cost likely to be of further steel lining for the power tunnels; what assessment the ODA has made of whether the contractors had an adequate geological evaluation of the cost of the project when they were given the work; if he will place in the Library the relevant documents explaining the geological reasons requiring an increase in Balfour Beatty—Cementation costs; and if he will make it his policy that any extra cost should be borne by the contractor.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: ODA appointed a rock mechanics expert for 2 weeks in early 1993 to advise Tenaga Nasional Berhad Malaysian power authority and ODA whether the design of the power tunnel and power cavern proposed by the contractor would ensure long term satisfactory and safe operation of the completed project. The cost of the additional steel lining in the power tunnel is the subject of a claim by the contractor for extra payment; this is currently being discussed by the contractor and Tenaga Nasional Berhad. Geological information available to the Contractor was taken into account in the price submitted to DTI and ODA in March 1989 and at the time of contract signature in 1991. Under the terms of the contract it is the contractor's responsibility to deliver the completed project for a fixed basic price subject only to (i) the application of agreed indices for cost escalation of certain items and (ii) for specified geological risks, the cost of which is to be shared between the Contractor and the client. The geological reasons for the likely cost increase for further steel lining are the concern of the contractor and Tenaga Nasional Berhad. ODA is not a party to the contract between them. ODA will not meet any of the additional costs.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which international relief organisations have been forced to evacuate their humanitarian activities and in which locations in Sudan; and what representations he has made to the Sudan Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Information provided by Operation Lifeline Sudan indicates that a number of agencies have

been affected by the fighting. World Vision has reduced numbers in Thiet; GOAL and AICF have taken people out of Ame, Aswa and Atepi camps, as has IRC; and AAIN has been forced to reduce its staff in Maridi and evacuate its staff from Mundri, as has Oxfam from Mundri. Relief workers have also withdrawn from Ulang, Kier and temporarily from Akobo.

The United Nations has, with our support, made direct representations to the Government of Sudan about the indiscriminate bombing of civilians and the effects of the hostilities on the distribution of relief aid.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of United Kingdom gross national product was spent on overseas aid in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The figures are as follows:

United Kingdom net official development assistance as a percentage of GNP 1979—1992

Year	Percentage
1979	0·52
1980	0·35
1981	0·43
1982	0·37
1983	0·35
1984	0·33
1985	0·33
1986	0·31
1987	0·28
1988	0·32
1989	0·31
1990	0·27
1991	0·32
1992	0·31

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Brooke: The cost of such receptions is included in the running costs for my Department, which are published in the annual report.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Brooke: None.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Brooke: Such purchases are included within my Department's overall administration expenditure, which is published every year in the annual report.

Arts (Business Sponsorship)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action he proposes to take over the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts current management difficulties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts—ABSA—is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. As part of its activities, ABSA administers on behalf of my Department the business sponsorship incentive scheme. In that regard, my Department maintains a close working relationship with ABSA. I am not aware of any current management difficulties related to the scheme which would require action on my part.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the management arrangements at the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts in respect of handling Government grant aid; when the organisation was last evaluated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: In July 1993 the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts reported to my Department on the outcome of an independent, external review of its financial and management arrangements for the Government-funded business sponsorship incentive scheme. In the light of that detailed review, I am satisfied that efficient and effective systems are in place.

National Lottery

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what instructions have been given to the Director General of OFLOT about how he discharges his responsibilities under section 5.6 of the invitation to apply to run the national lottery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: None.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) whether the article by Mr. Richard Branson in the *Sunday Times* of 20 February, constitutes a breach of section 5.6 of the invitation to apply; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what constitutes a breach of section 5.6 of the invitation to apply to run the national lottery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: This is an operational issue and therefore a matter for the director general of the national lottery.

TRANSPORT

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Mr. Norris: The information which my hon. Friend seeks is contained in "Public Bodies 1993" and previous editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Libraries of the House.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Norris: The Department passed 91 statutory instruments in 1993, 115 in 1992 and 100 in 1991. A significant proportion of these set fees and charges only.

Seat Belts

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information is available to his Department about the range of costs of fitting seat belts to minibuses and coaches.

Mr. Key: The diversity of vehicle types and the way in which they are constructed are such that it is not possible to estimate the full range of costs involved in fitting belts to individual vehicles.

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up since 1979; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment; and what it was last year and two years ago.

Mr. Norris: Four relevant authorities have been established since 1979.

The Rail Regulator was appointed and the office of the Rail Regulator was established as a non-ministerial Government Department on 1 December 1993. However, the majority of the Rail Regulator's statutory functions will not be exercisable until the remaining provisions of the Railways Act are commenced at the beginning of April 1994. The Rail Regulator's running costs for 1994-95 are estimated to be £5·2 million. The average planned staffing establishment for 1994-95 is 55.

The executive agencies of the Department of Transport listed in the table have regulatory functions and are required to recover total costs through fees and charges. Information given is taken from agencies' annual reports.

	Launched as agency	*1990-91*		*1991-92*		*1992-93*	
		Total expenditure (£ million)	*Staff*	*Total expenditure (£ million)*	*Staff*	*Total expenditure (£ million)*	*Staff*
Driving Standards Agency	1990	50·0	2,105	52·5	2,192	51·3	1,898
Vehicle Certification Agency	1990	2·5	80	2·6	84	2·7	75
Vehicle Inspectorate[1]	1988	40·3	1,653	41·2	1,879	50·5	1,861

[1] Traffic examiner staff passed to the Vehicle Inspectorate's establishment in 1991-92, but the inspectorate became formally responsible for their costs in the following financial year.

Vehicle Licensing

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport into which vehicle licensing category mechanical organs fall which are permanently fixed to the vehicle and used for display purposes only.

Mr. Key: Vehicles used to transport mechanical organs for solely private purposes, for example use at charity events, fall to be licensed in the private and light goods —PLG—tax class. The HGV rate would apply only where there was a commercial purpose.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the names of those consulted in respect of proposals on passengers and goods vehicle operating licences circulated on 27 May 1993.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to my previous answer of 14 December 1993 at column 592. In addition the Department sent copies of the consultation document to a wide-ranging number of bodies and individuals with an interest in operator licensing.

"O" Licences

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to implement the proposals for continuous "O" licensing included in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill; how the annual fee for the renewal of the "O" licence is to be paid and collected; what provision there will be to bring to the attention of the licensing authority any misdemeanour committed by an operator during the previous year; how and how often the licensing authority will check an operator's licence; on what basis the licensing authority will decide to hold a public inquiry following objections to an "O" licence proposal or transfer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Continuous operator licensing will be introduced as soon as possible after Royal Assent, consistent with the need for a smooth transition from the current system. Details of changes to fee arrangements are currently the subject of separate consultation. Any further changes as a consequence of continuous licensing will also be the subject of prior consultation. The enforcement of the requirements on vehicles subject to operator licensing will be unaffected by the change to continuous licensing. Checks on the details of an operators business will continue to be made at the same five year intervals as provided by the present five year licensing system and operators will continue to be required to notify the licensing authorities about changes whenever they occur. The licensing authorities will continue to hold public inquiries as at present when they need to be satisfied about a matter arising out of an application for a licence or a variation of a licence. In addition, at the five-yearly review point, they will also be able to hold inquiries to consider objections to the operating centre of an operator.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect the proposal to end the requirement for "O" licence operators to prove to

the Traffic Commissioner that they have adequate maintenance facilities for their vehicles, set out in his Department's 1993 consultation document, will have on *(a)* road safety and *(b)* general vehicle maintenance standards.

Mr. Key: This proposal is not being taken forward. Operators will continue to be required to satisfy traffic commissioners that they have adequate maintenance arrangements for their vehicles.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many public inquiries have been held in each traffic region in each of the last three years in respect of *(a)* HGV operator licences and *(b)* PSV operator "O" licences; and, in each case, if the operator licence was revoked or retained; and, in the latter case, what conditions were applied.

Mr. Key: The appendices to the annual reports of the licensing authorities and traffic commissioners published for the last three years, 1990-91 to 1992-93, contain information on the number of public inquiries held in each traffic area. Specific information about disciplinary inquiries is in the main text of each licensing authority's report.

Of those cases heard at public inquiry, the number of goods vehicle and public service vehicle operator licences revoked or retained, or where conditions were applied to PSV operator licences is in some instances mentioned in the reports and appendices to the reports. More detailed information on the action taken by each traffic commissioner and licensing authority against operator licences could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Copies of the "Annual Reports of the Licensing Authorities" and "Annual Reports of the Traffic Commissioners" are available in the Library of the House.

Road-rail Transport

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the current capacity of combined road-rail transport operations.

Mr. Freeman: Table 5.14 of Transport Statistics Great Britain 1993 contains statistics on "other traffic" which includes intermodal road-rail traffic. A copy of this publication has been placed in the Library.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what documentary evidence will be required relating to the destination of the loading unit used in a combined transport operation from or to a rail terminal; and what enforcement measures will be implemented.

Mr. Freeman: The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1994, which were laid in the House on 25 February exempt from the 38 tonne maximum weight limit a vehicle carrying a loading unit as part of a combined transport operation either *(a)* to a railhead pursuant to a contract for the transport of that unit by rail, or *(b)* from a railhead to which the unit has been transported by rail. The regulations require a document to be carried in the cab of the vehicle which specifies, in the case of *(a)*, the railhead, the date of the relevant contract and the parties thereto or, in the case of *(b)*, the railhead and the date and time at which the unit was collected from the railhead.

Enforcement of lorry weight limits is carried out by the vehicle inspectorate, the police, and local authority trading standards departments. The 44 tonne weight limit will apply only to vehicles carrying containers and swap-bodies and therefore vehicles not carrying these weights will be unable to operate legitimately above 38 tonnes.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details and locations of the rail terminals he has identified for use by 44-tonne lorries in combined road-rail transport operations.

Mr. Freeman: Any rail terminal with facilities for the transhipment of containers and swap-bodies will qualify as a railhead for the purposes of the relevant regulations. It will also be necessary for the loading units in question to travel, or to have travelled, by rail on a network operated by British Rail or under a network licence.

Tickets

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to replace the limitless journey travel card with a stored-value ticket limiting the number of journeys that can be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Government have made clear their commitment to continuation of the London travel card and have no plans to replace it by a stored-value ticket. The stored-value ticket which London Transport will shortly be introducing as part of its current trial of smart card technology on buses in Harrow will be in addition to, not a replacement for, the present travel card.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations have been held with existing traffic area staff about his proposals to turn the existing traffic areas into executive agencies.

Mr. Key: Traffic area office staff have been kept informed about the proposal for executive agency status and will be consulted as proposals are developed.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations have been held between his Department and the Council on Tribunals about his proposals to turn the existing traffic areas into executive agencies; and whether agreement to such a proposal would need to be given by the Council on Tribunals.

Mr. Key: The Council on Tribunals views will be sought before any decision is taken on whether to give the traffic area network executive agency status.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the future responsibilities of traffic commissioners under his proposals to turn the existing traffic areas into executive agencies;

(2) what will be the relationship as regards decision making at traffic area office level between the traffic commissioner and the chief executive if his proposals to turn the existing traffic areas into executive agencies are implemented.

Mr. Key: The responsibilities of the traffic commissioners for the licensing and disciplining of operators and drivers would remain unchanged if it were decided to

establish a traffic area network executive agency. The chief executive or director of the executive agency would be responsible for the management and performance of the traffic area offices, whose staff would continue to provide support for the traffic commissioners.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations have been held with the road haulage industry about his proposals to turn the existing traffic areas into executive agencies.

Mr. Key: The proposal for executive agency status is concerned with improving management and will not affect the operator licensing regime; nevertheless, any views expressed by the road haulage industry will be given careful consideration.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations have been held with traffic commissioners about his proposals to turn the existing traffic areas into executive agencies.

Mr. Key: Traffic commissioners are being consulted through the senior traffic commissioner and are represented on the steering group that has been established to develop the proposals for agency status.

Air Misses

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many air misses there have been in each of the last four years involving aircraft *(a)* taking off and *(b)* landing at (i) Leeds-Bradford and (ii) Humberside airports.

Mr. Norris: The responsibility for the safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority—CAA.

All air miss reports in United Kingdom airspace, involving civil or military aircraft, are investigated initially by the joint air miss section of the National Air Traffic Services, which is a joint CAA/Ministry of Defence organisation. They are then examined by the joint air miss working group—JAWG—an independent committee drawn from a wide cross-section of responsible aviation bodies.

The records held by the joint air miss section, of air miss reports submitted by pilots show that for the period in question, no air miss reports were submitted for Leeds airport, while for Humberside airport only two such reports have been submitted. The first incident occurred on 23 May 1991 and involved a civilian aircraft in the final descent phase of its flight, which came into conflict with a military aircraft. The second incident took place on 13 October 1992 and also involved a loss of separation between a military aircraft and a civilian aircraft. The latter was in the landing phase of its flight. In both cases the incidents were subsequently judged by the JAWG to have involved no risk of collision.

Drink Driving

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *83*, if he will set out the terms of reference of the sociological study of hard-core drink-drivers being carried out with the assistance of the Portman Group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The study is designed to give a better understanding of the circumstances surrounding drinking and driving offences. The contract for this research was let by the Portman Group, which is funding the study, and it would be for it to decide whether to release any details at this stage.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce a discount for those purchasing in advance electronic tags for crossing the Severn bridge.

Mr. Key: Discounts of 20 per cent. for cars and light vans and 10 per cent. for heavy vehicles are already available on electronic tags valid for one month or three months, based on the assumption of 22 and 66 return trips respectively. These are the only discount requirements on the concessionaire, Severn River Crossing plc, under its concession agreement with the Secretary of State. Any further discounts are a matter for SRC's commercial judgment.

Copia

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he has about the sinking of the fishing vessel Copia; what consideration he has given to recovering the ship and crew; what representations he has received on the subject; and if he will make a statement;

(2) where responsibility lies for the recovery of bodies on fishing vessels sunk in inland waters; what arrangements are made for such a recovery in the case of the Copia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* The marine accident investigation branch inquiries into the accident are in progress. No representations have been received by this Department on the subject, other than the letter of 7 March from the hon. Member.

The Department will not contemplate salvaging a wreck except where there are firm grounds for surmising that raising a wreck would establish the nature and cause of the accident and there are no other means of achieving this.

There is no general requirement on the part of any official organisation to recover bodies in such circumstances. Nevertheless, immediately after the accident when police divers located the wreck they looked for the bodies of the crew, but unfortunately without success.

Shipping Register

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the representations he has received for Liverpool to be the base for a national open register of shipping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* Since the Baltic Exchange's proposals for a British open register for shipping were received in early December, the Liverpool chamber of commerce and industry has written to reaffirm its support for it and for the proposal that the registry should be located in Liverpool.

As I explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) on 24 January, *Official Report*,

column 78, the proposal raised complex issues which required careful study. An announcement will be made shortly.

Road Franchising

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to franchise local roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We have no such plans.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Self-Financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up since 1992; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; and what was the staffing establishment at the latest available date, last year and two years ago.

Mr. David Davis: There are no self-financing regulatory authorities in the departments for which the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has responsibility.

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last two years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago for the comparable bodies.

Mr. David Davis: Such information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Libraries of the House.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last two years.

Mr. Waldegrave: Rules and regulations made by my Department during this period are as follows:

Chessington Computer Centre Trading Fund Order (1993)
Race Relations (Prescribed Public Bodies) Regulations (1994)
Research Councils (Transfer of Property etc) Order (1994)

Citizens Charter

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will give a full report of progress on the citizens charter since the publication of the first report in November 1992.

Mr. Waldegrave: "The Citizen's Charter Second Report: 1994" setting out progress in fulfilling citizens charter commitments across the public service is published today. Copies of the report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

WALES

Management Systems

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much his Department's computer-aided facilities management systems cost; from whom they were purchased; how many person hours were required to commission them; what the estimated and actual saving has been from their operation; and to what extent the use of such systems accounts for the apparent rise in theft noted in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 16 February, *Official Report*, columns *884-85*.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office does not have a computer-aided facilities management system. However, a computerised system holding information relating to the Department's information technology assets is in place and a project is under way to provide by the end of the year a system which will cater for the Department's real estate, property management and asset inventory requirements.

The existing system was purchased from Workgroup Systems at a cost of £7,500 and commissioning is estimated to have taken 150 person hours. It was installed in order to provide a secure record of assets rather than in the expectation of direct savings. There is no evidence to suggest that it has influenced the level of reported theft and losses.

Public Bodies

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many persons responded to press advertisements inviting applications for positions on non-departmental public bodies in Wales in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many persons who responded to press advertisements for positions on non-departmental public bodies have been appointed by him in the last 12 months.

Mr. Redwood: More than 2,500 people made inquiries following the advertisements in Welsh newspapers in July 1993 inviting nominations to the Welsh Office register of candidates for public appointments. Of these, 959 returned completed nominations. Most of the nominations were received between September 1993 and January 1994. The new names have been added to those considered as and when vacancies arise.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which non-departmental public body chairman and board members will be required to hold their annual review meeting with Ministers in the first quarter of the year 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* My ministerial colleagues and I hold meetings with all the NDPB chairmen to consider their targets for the forthcoming year. Some of these will take place during the first quarter of this year.

Equal Pay

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the 1975 equal pay directive as it refers to Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The 1975 Equal Pay Directive is implemented in Great Britain by means of the Equal Pay Act 1970 as amended by the Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations 1993.

Female Workers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the part-time earnings of female workers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: According to the New Earnings Survey, in April 1993 average gross earnings for part-time females on adult rates in Wales were £71·30 per week for manual employees and £101·90 for non-manual employees. These averages are similar to those of most other regions.

F. L. Steelcraft

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much grant aid has been paid out from public funds in the past to *(a)* F. L. Steelcraft or *(b)* F. L. Steelcraft Ltd. of Borth, Aberystwyth, Wales; and on what dates.

Mr. Redwood: To comment on the Department's relationship with individual companies would be a breach of commercial confidentiality.

Farm Workers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will undertake a tour of Wales meeting farm workers to discuss wages, conditions of work and the future of the Agricultural wages board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: No. The future of the Agricultural wages board is currently being considered in the light of the responses to the consultation exercise completed last year.

Earnings

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he will take to improve the wages of female workers.

Mr. Redwood: My strategy is based on the continued success of United Kingdom macroeconomic policy; improving standards of education and training in Wales; improving access to markets; and ensuring a good supply of development land and facilities for industry and commerce. The continuing success of this strategy should enable average earnings for both men and women in Wales to increase still further.

Documents

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the titles of all items published during the last three years by his office and by all public bodies to which he makes appointments, which were available for sale, and which were published in the English language only indicating the price, reference numbers, and dates of publication in each case;

(2) if he will list the full titles of all publications issued during the last three years by his office and by public bodies to which he makes appointments, which were available for purchase, and which were printed in both the Welsh and English languages, indicating the prices, reference numbers, and dates of publication in each case.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information as requested is not centrally available but details of documents published by the Department indicating the price, reference numbers, year of publication and whether available in Welsh are contained within the "Welsh Office Publications List 1992". It is published annually and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Disabled People

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives or schemes he has launched in Wales to compensate disabled people for the additional value added tax costs being imposed.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the package of assistance announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his statement on 30 November 1993 at columns 922-24.

Cardiac Surgery

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *595*, regarding cardiac surgery in Wales, what level of additional resources is being made available and to which health authorities for purchasing purposes; in which trusts and directly managed units for provider purposes new facilities are being developed; and what are the relevant dates for commencement and completion of such developments.

Mr. Redwood: In addition to their discretionary allocations, from which cardiac services are also purchased, £6·5 million is available in 1993-94 to assist health authorities move towards the target level of cardiac surgery in Wales. I shall announce provision for 1994-95 in due course.

We have completed the development of cardiac facilities at the University Hospital of Wales which can now deliver 800 adult cardiac operations a year. New facilities, which will deliver the balance of need in South Wales, are to be developed at Morriston Hospital NHS Trust. Planning is currently underway and the centre is expected to become operational in 1997.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Redwood: The number of rules and regulations made by statutory instrument for Wales alone by the Secretary of State for Wales during the past three years is as follows: 1991—73; 1992—131; 1993—84.

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what is was five years ago.

Mr. Redwood: Such information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Library of the House.

Health Service Costs

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of administration costs for family health service authorities for Wales as a whole for each year since 1989-90, indicating the percentage increase in constant prices which has taken place since 1989-90 and the latest available year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Revenue expenditure of family health service authorities in Wales on administration was £4,242,000 in 1989-90, £6,910,000 in 1990-91, £8,265,000 in 1991-92 and £9,150,000 in 1992-93.

This represents an increase over the period of 81 per cent. at constant prices. In 1992-93 the cost of this administrative expenditure represented 1·9 per cent. of the total spent on family health services in Wales.

Source: FHSA White Paper Accounts.

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up since 1979; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment; and what it was last year and two years ago.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office has not set up any self-financing regulatory authorities since 1979.

Welsh Economic Council

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what decision he has reached on the proposal to establish a Welsh Economic Council.

Mr. Redwood: I have carefully considered the responses to the Government's consultation paper on this proposal and have decided to proceed with the establishment of a Welsh Economic Council.

The Welsh Economic Council, which will be classified as an advisory non-departmental public body, will provide a forum for discussing with wealth-creators and interest groups the economic and industrial progress of Wales. Its role will be to advise on areas like improvements in training and education and to discuss how to boost enterprise, jobs and development further.

The council will comprise between 10 and 20 members from the private and public sectors, appointed by me on an individual, rather than representational, basis. It will usually meet no more than three times a year, with the first meeting to be held on Wednesday 30 March.

Health Service Funding

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what decisions he has now reached about the allocation of resources for hospital and community health and related services for Wales in 1994-95.

Mr. Redwood: I announced on 17 December my decision on the overall allocation to the national health service in Wales for 1994-95. Within the £2,076 million cash available I now propose to allocate £1,536 million to hospital and community health services—H and CHS—and the cash-limited element of the family health services—FHS—in Wales.

The funds will be distributed as follows.

Health authorities will receive £1,295 million for current purposes—an increase of £53 million or 4·3 per cent. over 1993-94 plans. Health authorities will receive £113·5 million for capital investment. The sum of £67·4 million will be provided for education and training of NHS staff and as contributions toward the running costs of England and Wales bodies, and family health service authorities will receive £14 million for their management and administration costs and £45·8 million for general medical service practice support costs.

In addition, authorities and trusts will be expected to generate efficiency savings of 2·25 per cent. and to achieve a further 5 per cent. reduction in their management, administrative and clerical costs. These savings will be available to meet the cost of pay settlements next year and for further investment in patient care.

Details of the allocations to health authorities and family health authorities and the provisional external financing limits for NHS trusts is contained in a statement which has been placed today in the Library of the House.

Cathedrals

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what conclusions he has reached on the provision of grant aid for cathedrals.

Sir Wyn Roberts: After careful consideration of detailed information presented to us by the cathedral authorities and on advice from our independent advisers, the Historic Buildings Council for Wales, we have decided to help underpin the architectural needs of Welsh cathedrals.

Over the next three financial years we will set aside some £675,000 towards the restoration costs faced by Welsh cathedrals.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Entry Clearance Officers

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guidance is given to entry clearance officers overseas regarding answering queries from solicitors about their clients' applications for visas; if he will publish this guidance; and what plans he has to issue revised guidance.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Entry clearance officers overseas are advised that posts should reply direct to letters from solicitors in the United Kingdom on routine matters unless they have reason to believe that the Home Office or the FCO has already become involved. In that case, the letter should be briefly acknowledged and a copy sent to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London, with a memorandum containing relevant information.

There are no plans to revise this advice.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people currently work as entry clearance officers in British embassies and high commissions; where they are situated; what grades they work at; what number and percentage are women; and what is the ethnic breakdown of officers.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1993, 259 man-years were spent at British posts overseas on entry clearance officer—ECO—work. This figure includes staff who have other responsibilities as well as entry clearance work.

Most ECOs are grade DS9 or equivalent—immigration officer in the case of immigration service staff serving on secondment, or LEII in the case of locally engaged ECOs.

A list of posts designated to receive applications for entry clearance is available in the Library of the House.

A precise breakdown of the gender and ethnic background of those officers currently serving as ECOs could be furnished only at disproportionate cost, but 50 per cent. of the FCO's DS9 complement are women, and 1·6 per cent. are from ethnic minorities. I understand that the corresponding figures for immigration officers overseas are 22 per cent. and 4 per cent.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training entry clearance officers receive.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All diplomatic service officers receive induction and other vocational training. Those appointed as entry clearance officers also attend a three-week training course in London before taking up their appointments. Locally engaged ECOs also attend these courses.

Home Office staff seconded as entry clearance officers attend a short pre-posting "conversion" course.

Like other staff, ECOs also receive on-the-job training, in the light of their posts' workload and resources.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many requests he received from hon. Members in *(a)* 1993, *(b)* 1992, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* 1990 to exercise ministerial discretion over visa applications; in how many in each year the decision of the entry clearance officer was overturned; to how many in each year he replied personally; and to how many in each year the migration and visa unit replied.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The table shows the number of representations on visa matters received during 1990-93 inclusive and the number which received ministerial replies. The others were replied to by the migration and visa correspondence unit, except in cases where no reply was necessary.

	Total	*Ministerial replies*
1990	4,561	884
1991	4,577	588
1992	5,069	287
1993	5,879	346

It is not possible to say how many of these representations specifically requested the exercise of ministerial discretion, but many of them did so, if only by implication.

Ministers overturn ECOs' decisions only in exceptional circumstances, as described in my letter to the hon. Member of 7 July 1993.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guidance is given to entry clearance officers overseas regarding answering queries from hon. Members about their constituents; if he will publish this guidance; and what plans he has to issue revised guidance.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Entry clearance officers at posts are instructed not to reply direct to letters received from Members of Parliament but to acknowledge them and return them to the migration and visa correspondence unit for reply.

The arrangements for handling enquiries on immigration were set out in the booklet "Representation by Members of Parliament on Visa and Immigration Cases—A Guide" which was circulated to Members under cover of my letter of 7 July 1993.

There are no current plans to update this guidance.

Belize

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place with the Belize Government for assistance consequent upon the withdrawal of the battalion from Belize; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We have made it clear to the Belize Government that we stand ready to participate in any consultations that they may request on Belize's future security and that we are prepared to play our part in any consultations which would lead to an appropriate response should the security of Belize be threatened in the future. We will also maintain our programme of assistance to the Belize defence force and Belize will continue to be a beneficiary under Britain's bilateral aid programme.

Jammu and Kashmir Document

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken to date with the Indian authorities in respect of Madam Speaker's statement of 21 February, *Official Report*, column 21, regarding the document from Jammu and Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have taken no action with the Indian authorities.

"National Security"

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide an explanation of the phrase "national security" used in the Intelligence Services Bill; and how this term relates to the use of the term "national security" in section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The term "national security" has been in general use for many years and is well recognised and understood in statute. It is used in both the Intelligence Services Bill and Data Protection Act 1984 in the same way as in the many other statutes in which it is included with no further definition.

"Serious Crime"

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the differences between the meaning of "serious crime", used in the Intelligence Services Bill *[Lords]* and the term "serious arrestable offence" used in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A detailed definition of "serious arrestable offence" is provided in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 for the particular purposes of that Act. The term "serious crime" is widely understood and in the context of the Intelligence Services Bill does not require further definition.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each year since 1990.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has signed two public interest immunity certificates since 1990. The first was dated 26 June 1991 and the second 26 January 1992. Both were signed in connection with the case of Andrew Balfour, who was dismissed from the diplomatic service.

Chemical Weapons Treaty

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to introduce legislation to ratify the chemical weapons treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We intend to introduce the legislation necessary to ratify the chemical weapons convention as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Korea (Military Manoeuvres)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on reports of the cancellation of team spirit military manoeuvres on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Goodlad: Exercise Team Spirit is a matter for the Governments of the Republic of Korea and the United States of America.

Pakistan

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to secure a report from the Pakistani authorities concerning the murder of Mohammed Afzal in Juarah village, Pakistan on 4 October 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British high commission in Islamabad continues to press the Pakistani authorities for a full report. However, as Mr. Afzal was a dual British-Pakistani national, they are not compelled to provide it.

EDUCATION

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up since 1979; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment; and what it was last year and two years ago.

Mr. Boswell: The Department has set up no self-financing regulatory authorities since 1979.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Boswell: The Department's records give the number of general statutory instruments passed in each of the last three years as follows:

Year	*Number*
1991	59
1992	68
1993	74
TOTAL	201

The number of local statutory instruments for each of the last three years is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1991	12
1992	9
1993	7
TOTAL	28

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Mr. Boswell: Such information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Libraries of the House.

Pupils (Exclusion)

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils are wrongly excluded *(a)* for a fixed term, *(b)* indefinitely and *(c)* permanently, in the (i) north, (ii) central and (iii) south districts in Manchester.

Mr. Forth: Such information is not held centrally.

Doncaster College

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what correspondence he has had with the principal of Doncaster college during the last three months in respect of *(a)* the appointment and *(b)* the ending of appointment of college governors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: There has been no such correspondence during this period between my right hon. Friend and the principal of Doncaster college. The Department has, however, received correspondence from a governor on a number of matters relating to the conduct of the corporation and this is being pursued with the chairman of governors of Doncaster college.

School Tuck Shops

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to recommend to the governing body of schools that only drinks which are sucrose-free should be stocked in tuck shops on school premises indicating from which manufacturers such drinks can be bought.

Mr. Forth: Local education authorities and, where appropriate, governing bodies of self-governing—grant-maintained—schools are responsible for providing meals and any other food, including drinks, at their schools. It is for them to decide what is provided, taking into account local circumstances.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost of prime ministerial receptions in 1993-94.

The Prime Minister: The cost to my office of ministerial receptions in 1993-94 is included in the overall administrative expenditure which is published every year in the Cabinet Office departmental report.

Iraq (Sanctions)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister following the meeting on 23 February between the head of the middle eastern department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Riad El Taher and the hon. Member for Linlithgow, if he will consider the case for urging the United Nations to lift sanctions before the summer heat arrives in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates; and what estimate he has made of the incidence of disease in the river valleys.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* I am looking into the specific point which the hon. Member put to me in the House on 8 March.

The Security Council decided on 18 January that there are no grounds for lifting sanctions but medical supplies have never been subject to sanctions. There is no authoritative estimate of the incidence of disease in the river valleys.

Renault

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *581*, whether he will urge the French Government to sell Renault to a German car manufacturer.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Paul Bennett

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister which Minister signed in July 1992 the public interest immunity certificate in relation to the prosecution of Paul Bennett.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary signed the certificate.

Royal Tour (Caribbean)

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Prime Minister what is the purpose of the royal tour of the Caribbean and the cost, including the use of the royal yacht Britannia; and under which expenditure heads the cost will be borne.

The Prime Minister: The purpose of Her Majesty the Queen's visit to Commonwealth countries and dependent territories in the Caribbean basin and to Bermuda was to reaffirm the close relationship which exists between the United Kingdom and those countries and territories. In each destination a number of specific objectives were achieved. These included demonstrating the importance we attach to our continuing responsibility for the dependent territories; and the Queen's continuing commitment to her realms. The visit to Guyana marked our recognition of the restoration of democratic government there.

Costs to the United Kingdom will be borne by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Metropolitan police and by Buckingham palace. Exact figures are not available: some bills have not yet been presented and the cost of diplomatic service staff who worked on the visit could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information on the cost of individual voyages by the royal yacht is not maintained.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 21 January, *Official Report*, column *850*, which treaty provisions will apply when deciding whether the European Parliament will be consulted on the ratification of GATT.

The Prime Minister: The European Parliament will be consulted in accordance with the provisions of article 228 of the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Maastricht treaty. The Foreign Affairs Council agreed on 21 February that the assent procedure, as set out in that article, will apply.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Management Systems

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much his Department's computer-aided facilities management systems cost; from whom they were purchased; how many person hours were required to commission them; what the estimated and actual saving has been from their operation; and to what extent the use of such systems accounts for the apparent rise in theft noted in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 16 February, *Official Report*, columns *857-59*.

Sir John Wheeler: The majority of the systems were developed in-house using existing equipment with the remaining six systems being purchased at a cost of £320,000 from the companies listed:

Britannia Information Business Systems Ltd.
BIS Ltd.
RMS Service.

It is not possible to estimate the time taken to commission the various systems.

The systems were not designed with the intention of producing savings, but as an effective and efficient means of providing proper asset management. Therefore no figures for savings are available.

At this stage the systems have not had any discernible impact on the identification of theft.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

	Statutory rules laid		*Statutory instruments made by the Secretary of State*	
	Regulations	*Orders*	*Regulations*	*Orders*
1991	12	25	3	3
1992	10	20	3	6
1993	19	17	Nil	4

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Sir John Wheeler: Such information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Libraries of the House.

Arts (Business Sponsorship)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what reports he has sought or received from the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts (Northern Ireland) on its recent sex discrimination admission; and if he will make a statement on the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts' capabilities to conform to the law and accepted standards of good practice in recruitment and selection policies and procedures;

(2) what action he proposes to take to ensure that the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts (Northern Ireland) designs and implements appropriate equal opportunities and fair employment policies, following its recent sex discrimination admission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My Department is aware of a settlement by the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts in a recent sex discrimination case. Senior appointments within the association are made by its headquarters office in London in consultation, as appropriate, with regional committees.

The Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts is an independent company and it is a matter for it to ensure that its recruitment policies conform with the law and with accepted standards of good practice.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of whether the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts (Northern Ireland) conforms to his recently promulgated policy appraisal and fair treatment guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: None. Northern Ireland Departments are still considering how best to apply the policy appraisal and fair treatment guidelines to services provided by or on behalf of the Government in the Province.

Ulster Young Militants

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will proscribe the Ulster Young Militants; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: The question of whether this and other organisations should be proscribed is kept under review. The fact that a particular organisation is not proscribed confers no immunity from prosecution in respect of criminal acts which it or its members may commit.

Victim Support

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the outcome of Victim Support Northern Ireland's request for additional funds to develop its services to victims of crime in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The Government acknowledge and commend the important work carried out by the staff and volunteers of Victim Support Northern Ireland to provide advice and support for the victims of crime. The organisation has been directly funded by the Northern Ireland Office since 1988.

Victim Support Northern Ireland recently submitted a request for additional funding to enable it to create an executive management structure and develop its services to people of Northern Ireland. The Government recognise the importance of these developments and have allocated an additional £60,000 to the organisation. This represents a 30 per cent. increase on current annual funding—which will

bring total funding to £267,000 in 1994-95, and underlines the Government's commitment to the provision of effective support for victims recovering from the distress caused by crime.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is not available.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Scott: The available information is in the tables.

	Number
Statutory instruments made	
1991	84(2[1])
1992	87(10[1])
1993	77(2[1])
Government Bills which became Acts	
1991	4
1992	1
1993	2

[1] Orders in Council which are included in the total.

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Hague: The cost of ministerial receptions and similar functions so far in 1993-94 is £4,990·60.

In addition, the annual reception for disabled people and representatives of disability organisations was held on 10 March at an estimated cost of £6,000.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of *(a)* council tenants, *(b)* housing association tenants, *(c)* private tenants and *(d)* owner occupiers were in receipt of housing benefit in the Doncaster area for the latest date for which he has figures available; and what were the figures (i) 12 months and (ii) 24 months ago.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the table.

Percentage of Tenants in Receipt of Housing Benefit in Doncaster

	1991	*1992*	*1993*
Local Authority	65	64	62
Housing Association[2]	not collected	40	47
Private[3]	58	not available	not available

Data Sources:
The housing benefit management information system quarterly caseload counts of the number of claims where housing benefit is in payment, and, 1991 census figures and the housing investment programme returns made to the Department of the Environment for 1992 and 1993 of the numbers of tenancies, by tenure type.

Notes:
[1] Because the information has had to be drawn from various sources, consistent data for the three years cannot be provided. The figures are, therefore, the best estimate based on the available information.
[2] The number of housing association tenants in receipt of housing benefit was not collected before May 1992.
[3] The information on private tenancies is not available for 1992 and 1993 because the data source of tenancy types cannot isolate owner-occupiers from non-housing association private tenancies. It also cannot identify unoccupied dwellings.
[4] Owner-occupiers in England and Wales have not been eligible for housing benefit (rate rebates) since April 1990 when community charge benefit was introduced.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement as to why the Child Support Agency's headquarters in Belfast refused to believe that the husband of Christine Joyce, the late Derek Joyce, had died four years ago, for the purposes of continuing to pay widow's benefit.

Mr. Burt: Owing to a clerical error, a maintenance application form was sent to Mrs. Joyce on 19 April 1993. An apology was sent to Mrs. Joyce on 4 May 1993 and the case was closed. The agency has had no further contact with Mrs. Joyce.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases referred to the Child Support Agency by hon. Members in 1993 have not yet resulted in a conclusive response being provided; and what action he is taking to ensure that such delays are avoided.

Mr. Burt: The chief executive of the Child Support Agency received more than 2,200 letters from hon. Members in 1993, of which 255 remain to be answered. Targets for answering letters are not currently being met, but necessary steps are being taken to ensure that letters from hon. Members are answered as promptly as possible.

Maternity Pay

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement concerning maternity pay in Wales and on the EC pregnant workers directive 1992.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) on 8 March at cols. *139-40*. The proposals outlined in the reply include maternity pay in Wales.

Prisoners

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) whether the Benefits Agency requests the Prison Service to inform it if a person is received into custody in England and Wales;

(2) how much benefit he estimates was claimed fraudulently by prisoners in England and Wales last year;

(3) how much he estimates to be the total amount of benefit fraudulently claimed by prisoners in England and Wales between 1987 and 1992;

(4) how many fraudulent claims from prisoners in England and Wales have been reported by staff or the inmates themselves to the relevant authorities since 1987;

(5) what action has been taken since 1988 to close loopholes which may contribute to fraudulent claims for benefit from prisoners in England and Wales.

Mr. Burt: As with all referrals of benefit fraud, individual reports of benefit claims continuing after people have entered prison are always followed up, investigated where necessary and benefit terminated where appropriate. We do not, however, keep statistics to enable us to separate this type of fraud referral from other categories and are not, therefore, in a position to quantify historical losses.

In response to the continuing problem of benefit fraud amongst prisoners new controls were introduced on 4 March. The Prison Service now provides the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service with a weekly list of all newly convicted prisoners in England and Wales. This will ensure that all benefit recipients have their cases reviewed on entry to prison.

Furthermore, an exercise is being carried out by the three agencies to identify all benefits payments being made in the name of people who are currently in prison. Investigations will follow, benefit will be terminated where appropriate and recoveries sought in all overpayment cases. Prosecutions will also be considered in each case.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the national insurance contributions unit informs the Benefit Agency following the receipt of form F1113 after a claimant is received into custody.

Mr. Burt: If a prisoner indicates on form F1113 that he was receiving a social security benefit immediately prior to his arrest the Contributions Agency informs the appropriate district office of the Benefits Agency or the Employment Services Agency, or both. However, new procedures now incorporate a full exchange of information between the Prison Service and the Benefits Agency so that all benefit claims will be reviewed on a person's entry to prison in England and Wales.

Information Technology Services Agency

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are *(a)* the staff numbers at each location of the Information Technology Services Agency and *(b)* the numbers of such staff at each location who are banned from transfer to other posts elsewhere within the Government service; what is the operative date of the ban; and on what date staff were made known of the ban.

Mr. Hague: The Information Technology Services Agency—ITSA—employs 4,500 permanent staff at locations in the north east, north west, Reading and London. ITSA's plans to transfer its day to day operations to the private sector, announced on 31 January, may affect up to 2,000 jobs mainly based in the north east and north west. Staff will be expected to transfer with the work under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

None of ITSA's staff has been banned from applying for posts elsewhere within the Government service.

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Mr. Hague: Such information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993", and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Libraries of the House.

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up since 1988; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment now; and what is was last year and two years ago.

Mr. Hague: None.

Social Fund

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the budget for his Department's district social fund in respect of the Doncaster area for the current year as set at 1 April 1993; whether the budget was subsequently increased; how much remains in the budget; how many applicants have been refused a grant, giving the reason for refusal; how many applicants have been refused a loan, giving the reasons for refusal; how many applicants refused made an appeal; and how many of these appeals were successful.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 15 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the Social Fund (SF) in the Benefits Agency's (BA) Doncaster District.

Details of the initial budget allocations for the Doncaster District for the 1993-94 financial year are in the Library. There has not been any subsequent additional budget allocation this year. The balance outstanding as at 28 February 1994, the latest date for which figures are available, was £100,544 for grants and £130,270 for loans.

You asked for the number of applicants refused a grant or loan in the District. Information on the SF is not kept by SF applicant but by SF application. At 28 February 1994 the numbers of grant and loan applications refused were 4,873 and 4,407 respectively. The reasons for refusal are given at Annex A.

The new Social Fund Computer System, introduced to Doncaster in September 1993, provides a more detailed record of the reason each individual item within an application is refused. This was not previously the case. Consequently, statistics from the two systems are not always compatible.

There is no right of appeal against discretionary SF decisions. Applicants dissatisfied with a decision may seek a review of the decision and this is initially conducted within the District. If still dissatisfied, the applicant can ask for a review by the Independent Review Service (IRS) which is independent of the Department and the Agency. For the period 1 April 1993 to 28 February 1994, 1,503 review applications were received by Doncaster District. These figures include those that requested a review by the IRS. Overall, 370 resulted in a changed decision.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Annex A

Details of grant and loan refusals for the Doncaster District— 1 April 1993 to 28 February 1994[1] by reason.

Reason for refusal	*Grants*	*Loans*
Not in receipt of income support (IS)	412	520
In receipt of IS for less than 26 weeks	—	1,959
Direction 4 not satisfied	8,694	—
Applicant excluded by Direction	1	3
No serious risk to health or safety	—	720
Requested amount below minimum allowable	12	100
Repeat application	156	474
Item excluded by Direction	94	158
Alternative item available	8	43
Help available from another source	25	80
Grant awarded on loan request	—	567
Savings over £500 meet cost	7	3
Savings over £1,000 meet cost (customer or partner over 60)	3	2
Enough money available to meet crisis	—	1
Total debt exceeds £1,000	—	10
Inability to repay	—	191
Insufficient priority	13	602
Other reasons	54	137

[1] Latest available data

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what restrictions are currently being imposed on payments from the social fund in Coventry;

(2) what extra provision has been made to meet the extra demand on the social fund as a result of Bosnian refugees taking up residence in Coventry.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Robert Ainsworth, dated 15 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about the Social Fund (SF) in Coventry.

Firstly, you asked what restrictions are currently being imposed on payments from the SF in Coventry. It might be helpful if I explain that it is the duty of the Area Social Fund Officer (ASFO) to manage the District SF allocation so that the highest priority needs are consistently met throughout the year. To do this the ASFO issues guidance to Social Fund Officers (SFO) on the high, medium and low priority needs within the District. It must be pointed out that whilst SFOs must take this guidance into account it is not binding on them. As such, a SFO may raise the priority of an application in order to make a payment.

I can inform you the ASFO at Coventry has decided that high and medium priority application can be consistently met from the District allocation. Other than the exclusions mentioned in the Secretary of State directions no restrictions are imposed on any Benefit Agency District with regard to making payments from the SF.

Finally, in answer to your second question, the District has been able to meet the SF expenditure as a result of applications from Bosnian refugees taking up residence in the Coventry area from their existing allocation.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Benefit Recipients (Hospital)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to clarify whether the item in social security form BR2215, referring to the need to inform the Benefits Agency if a recipient goes into hospital, applies to out-patient visits.

Mr. Hague: The administration of retirement pension and widows benefit, for which this form is used, is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 15 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about clarification of the wording in form BR2215.

Form BR2215 is used where a customer has their Retirement Pension or Widows Benefit paid direct into an account every four or thirteen weeks. The form comprises of a set of notes which advise the customer which changes in their circumstances should be reported; the form is issued every year at the time of the uprating. The note which refers to "going into hospital" does not apply to customers who are visiting a hospital as an out-patient. The wording of the note on the BR2215 is identical to the corresponding note that appears in order books.

We have no evidence to suggest that the present wording is misleading our customers into notifying us of out-patient visits. Therefore, at this stage, there are no plans to alter the wording of the note.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cold weather payments have been made in each region of Scotland since October 1993.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the cold weather payment scheme is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Malcolm Bruce, dated 14 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking how many cold weather payments have been made in each region of Scotland since October 1993.

Statistics relating to cold weather payments are not collated on a regional basis, however they are kept for each Benefit Agency District.

The attached appendix shows the number of cold weather payments made to people in the areas covered by each Benefits Agency District in Scotland from 1 November 1993, the date when the current cold weather payment season began, to 31 January 1994, the latest date for which figures are available.

I hope you find my reply helpful.

Cold weather payments in Scotland 1 November 1993 to 31 January 1994

Benefits agency district	*Number of payments*
Clyde Coast and Cowal	16,686
Clyde Valley	32,297
Coatbridge	24,157
East Lowlands	35,495
Fife	31,984
Forth Valley	28,354
Glasgow City	21,081
Glasgow East	37,892
Glasgow Laurieston	36,842
Glasgow South West	20,730
Glasgow West	22,794
Grampian and Shetland	43,815
Highlands and Islands	20,671
Irvine and Kilmarnock	25,848
Lomond and Argyll	8,538
Lothian Central	20,787
Lothian West	26,700
Renfrew	23,381

Benefits agency district	Number of payments
South West Scotland	26,107
Springburn and Cumbernauld	26,471
Tayside	48,538

EMPLOYMENT

Ministerial Receptions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in his Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The cost of receptions held by Ministers in the Employment Department in 1993-94 is £4,042.

Employment Policy

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what aspects of Government employment policy are subject to legal proceedings.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All actions, decisions or legal instruments by Government Departments are in principle subject to judicial review. The EC Commission may bring infraction proceedings under article 169 of the EC treaty where it believes the legislation of a member state is inconsistent with EC law. A member state may also bring proceedings in the European Court of Justice to challenge the legal basis on which EC directives or other instruments have been adopted.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for two areas of employment law which are currently subject to judicial review or infraction proceedings:

(i) The Unfair Dismissal (Variation of Qualifying Period) Order 1985, which introduced the two-year qualifying period for unfair dismissal, is being challenged as constituting indirect sex discrimination in the case of R. *v.* Secretary of State for Employment ex parte Smith and Perez;

(ii) proceedings against the United Kingdom under article 169 of the EC treaty, in respect of the acquired rights and collective redundancies directive, are currently before the European Court of Justice, where the outstanding issue is whether the United Kingdom must specifically provide for employee representatives for the purpose of consultation.

The United Kingdom has initiated proceedings in the European Court of Justice to challenge the health and safety legal basis of the recently adopted directive on working time.

Accidents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest annual accident figures for *(a)* the Doncaster area and *(b)* South Yorkshire, as a whole; and what are the corresponding figures for (i) five years and (ii) 10 years ago.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The available information is provided in the following table. Due to changes in the reporting of major injury legislation, figures for 1983 are not directly comparable with those for later years.

Occupational injuries in Doncaster and South Yorkshire as reported to the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates and local authorities[1].

	Fatal	Major[2]	Over 3 days[3]
Doncaster			
1988-89	—	216	955
1992-93[5,4]	2	206	824
South Yorkshire			
1988-89	8	940	4,785
1992-93[5,4]	9	831	3,923

[1] Injuries at work to employees and self-employed people, and members of the public injured as a result of someone else's work activity. Figures based on reports made under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations for the calendar year 1983 and under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.
[2] Chiefly amputations, serious fractures and other injuries requiring hospitalisation for more than 24 hours. The definition was extended by the introduction of RIDDOR in April 1986 and therefore later figures should not be directly comparable with those for 1983.
[3] Injuries causing incapacity for normal work for more than three days.
[4] Includes injuries reported to HSE's quarries inspectorate.
[5] Provisional.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in the number of *(a)* full-time male employees and *(b)* part-time female employees since May 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: Estimates of part-time and full-time employees are available only for quarter months. The available information is shown in the table:

Employees in employment: Great Britain (Seasonally adjusted)

Thousands

	Male Full-time	Female Part-time
June 1979	[1]12,390	3,837
September 1993[2]	9,405	4,794
Change	-2,985	+957

[1] June 1978. Male full-time estimates are not available for 1979.
[2] Latest available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of people were shown as out of work or seeking it in the labour force survey, in each quarter since 1979; what was the percentage of official unemployment as measured at the time and the percentage on the unemployment count as now calculated; and if he will make a statement explaining trends in the differences between the figures.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The official measure of unemployment from the labour force survey is shown for the period requested in the table. These figures have remained the same as when first published. For comparative purposes, the claimant unemployment figures on the consistent seasonally adjusted and unadjusted bases are also given. Since the introduction of the internationally comparable International Labour Organisation measure of unemployment in 1984 both official measures of unemployment have shown broadly similar trends.

Comparative Great Britain unemployment rates 1979-1993 (seasonally adjusted)

Period[1]	ILO unemployment rate (per cent.)[2]	Claimant unemployment rate (per cent.)[3]	Unadjusted unemployment rate (per cent.)[4]
Spring 1979	[5]5·6	4·0	[5]5·4
Spring 1981	[5]9·5	7·6	[5]10·4
Spring 1983	[5]11·0	10·3	12·9
Spring 1984	[5]11·1	10·4	11·3
Spring 1984	11·7	10·4	11·3
Spring 1985	11·1	10·8	11·6
Spring 1986	11·1	11·0	11·7
Spring 1987	10·6	10·3	10·8
Spring 1988	8·6	8·3	8·7
Spring 1989	7·1	6·3	6·4
Spring 1990	6·6	5·4	5·5
Spring 1991	8·2	7·4	7·6
Spring 1992	9·5	9·5	9·6
Summer 1992	9·9	9·7	9·7
Autumn 1992	10·2	10·1	10·0
Winter 1992-93	10·6	10·5	10·7
Spring 1993	10·3	10·3	10·5
Summer 1993	10·3	10·3	10·3

[1] From 1979 to 1983 the labour force survey was carried out biennially, and between 1984 and 1992, annually. Since spring 1992 the LFS has been conducted quarterly.

[2] The labour force definition of unemployment applied for the years 1979-1984. Thereafter, the internationally agreed ILO definition of unemployment has been used. This definition counts as unemployed those people without paid jobs who were available to start work within the next two weeks and had either looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained. The LF definition of unemployment used prior to 1984 is essentially the same as the ILO version, except for the fact that it is based on looking for work in the single week prior to interview rather than four weeks as with the ILO definition. The ILO unemployment rate is the percentage of economically active people who are unemployed on the ILO measure.

[3] Seasonally adjusted unemployment consistent with current coverage. This series is based on the count of those claiming unemployment related-benefits at Employment Service local offices, formerly unemployment benefit offices—"the claimant count"—who on the day of the count were out of work, available for work, and actively seeking employment. The denominator used to calculate the rate consists of the unemployed, employees in employment, the self-employed, those on work related Government training schemes and Her Majesty's forces. The claimant count figures are the weighted averages of the published figures for the months of each LFS quarter.

[4] *(a)* "Claimant" or "Registrant" count figures that have not been adjusted for seasonal influences or for changes in the coverage of the monthly count.

(b) From 1981 onwards the figures are from the claimant count. The 1983 rate uses the same denominator as the registrant count. Thereafter the denominator as described in (3) above.

[5] The 1979 and 1981 figures are from the "registrant count", a count of those registered as out of work. This count was abandoned in October 1982 when registration at a jobcentre became voluntary and threatened the integrity of the count. The denominator used to calculate the rate consisted of the unemployed and employees in employment.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the Race Relations Employment Advisory Group.

Mr. Forsyth: The members currently appointed to the Race Relations Employment Advisory Group are: Mr. S. Azam, Ms K. Carberry, Mr. R. Cochrane, Mr. E. Cotter, Mr. R. Gilbert, Dr. A. Hirmis, Ms M. Lai, Ms G. Mills, Mr. H. Ouseley, Mrs. K. Siviter, Ms S. Sootarsing, Mr. G. Taylor, Ms J. Tomlin, Mr. S. Ward and Mrs. C. Wells.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the committees for the employment of people with disabilities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given. Employment Service regional directors and directors for Scotland and Wales appoint members of these committees on behalf of the Secretary of State. However, Ministers appoint their chairmen, and I am attaching a list of the current chairmen. All current appointments to CEPDs expire on 31 March 1994. The committees will be reconstituted for a term of three years, and all appointments considered afresh, from 1 April 1994.

Committees for the employment of people with disabilities Current chairmen (to 31 March 1994)

	Name
London and South East	
Essex	Mr. Maurice Austin
Hampshire	Mrs. Jennifer Anderson
Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and North Buckinghamshire	Mr. Peter Banton
Isle of Wight	Mr. David Guy, MBE
Kent	Mr. Robin Carver, MBE
London North	Mr. Geoffrey Busby, OBE
London south	(vacant)
Oxfordshire, Berkshire and South Buckinghamshire	Ms Anne Dreydel, OBE
Surrey	Mrs. Heather Sheppard
Sussex	Mr. Martin Long
North West	
Cumbria	Mr. Brian Porter, MBE
Cheshire	Dr. David Robertson
Lancashire	(vacant)
Greater Manchester	(vacant)
Merseyside	Mrs. Linda Morris
Scotland	
Ayrshire, Inverclyde and Argyll	Mrs. Helen Ostrycharz
Central Scotland	Mr. Ian Sneddon
Dumfries and Galloway	Mr. John Henderson
Glasgow, Renfrew and Dunbarton	Mr. Alan Malcolm
Grampian	Mr. Keith White
Highlands and Western Isles	Mr. Donald Mackay
Lanarkshire	Mr. Arthur Bell
Lothian and Borders	Mr. John Denholm
Orkney and Shetlands	Mr. Peter Malcolmson, OBE
Tayside and Fife	Councillor Charles Farquhar
Wales	
Clwyd and Powys	Mr. John Ashton Edwards, OBE
Gwent	Miss Nina Shields
Gwynedd	Mr. Hugh Williams
Mid Glamorgan	Mr. Anthony Arnold, MBE
South Glamorgan	Mr. Lawrence Johnson
South West Wales (covering West Glamorgan and Dyfed)	Mr. William Gareth Davies
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Bradford, Calderdale, and Kirklees	Professor Mark Baker
Humberside	Mrs. Wendy Witter, MBE
Leeds and North Yorkshire	Dr. Patrick Nuttgens, CBE
Sheffield and Rotherham	Mr. Donald Fleet
Wakefield, Barnsley and Doncaster	Mr. Paul Jagger
South West	
Avon	Mrs. Susan Marshfield
Cornwall and Plymouth	Mrs. Margot Berry

	Name
Devon	Mr. Peter McDonald
Dorset	Mr. Andrew Child
Gloucestershire	Mr. Neil Prewer
Somerset	Major General Tony Palmer
Wiltshire	Mr. Tim Papé
Northern	
Cleveland	Mr. Ted Fuller
Durham	Mr. Michael Smith
North Tyne	Dr. Graham Grant, MBE
South Tyne and Wear	Mr. Ian Armstrong
East Midlands and Eastern	
Derbyshire	Mr. Peter Broxham
Leicestershire	Mr. Philip Dawson Smith, MBE
Lincolnshire	Mrs. Katie Phillips
Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire	Mr. Paul Newton
West Midlands	
Birmingham and Solihull	Mrs. Jane Harrison
Coventry and Warwickshire	Mrs. Jennifer Gove, OBE
Dudley and Sandwell	Mr. Michael Garrett
Hereford and Worcester	Mr. Michael Price, CBE
Shropshire	Mrs. Kate Moore
Staffordshire	Mr. Douglas Garvie
Wolverhampton and Walsall	Mr. Harold Canning

Letter from M.E.G. Fogden to Mr. Peter Kilfoyle, dated 16 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question asking who are the members appointed to the Committees for the Employment of People with Disabilities.

There are 60 CEPDs, each with an independent chairman, and up to 14 members. Chairmen are appointed by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Employment with special responsibility for the employment of people with disabilities, on behalf of the Secretary of State. Members are appointed by my Regional Directors and Directors for Scotland and Wales, on behalf of the Secretary of State.

CEPDs were established under the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944. Their statutory role is to advise and assist the Secretary of State for Employment on matters related to the employment and self-employment of people with disabilities in their areas. In practice they work closely with my people within their areas, particularly with Placing, Assessment and Advisory Teams, in promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Each Committee includes equal numbers (either two or three) of members appointed after consultation with organisations representing employers and workers—to represent employers and workers generally. The other members are appointed as independents on the basis of the personal contribution they can make to work of their Committee. They usually include the manager of a local sheltered workshop, a member of the medical profession and other with a direct interest in the employment of disabled people locally.

Because members are appointed at regional level, and the Committees work primarily with PACTs locally, we do not maintain an up to date national list of the 800 to 900 members of the Committees.

I hope this is helpful.

Youth Unemployment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new initiatives he plans to reduce youth unemployment in the Doncaster area.

Miss Widdecombe: The local employment service and training and enterprise council deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help young people in the area find the best and quickest route to employment. The number of young people who have waited for more than eight weeks for a youth training place in the Doncaster area has fallen by 98 per cent. in the last year. The Government intend to improve the range of opportunities available to school leavers still further in Doncaster and elsewhere by introducing modern apprenticeships in 1995.

European Regional Funding

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how his Department assesses applications made for European Union objective 3 funding from Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The European social fund is very heavily subscribed and highly competitive. Initially, project selection criteria are applied by each of the sectors responsible for managing ESF applications. These criteria reflect the priorities set out in the objective 3 plan to use ESF resources throughout Great Britain for 1994 onwards. They ensure that sector managers recommend to the Employment Department those projects which provide high quality and best value for money. The Department then considers the applications and issues approval letters where appropriate. This assessment process applies to applications across the whole of Great Britain, including Wales.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a list of all applications made for EU objective 3 funding to his Department in respect of areas of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Until the negotiations on the objective 3 plan to use European social fund resources throughout Great Britain have been concluded, it is not possible for the Employment Department to invite or approve any applications for ESF assistance. Meanwhile the sector managers involved in objective 3 have already applied selection criteria to prospective projects. This will minimise delay in submitting recommended applications to the Department once the Commission has approved the plan. I advised the hon. Member in the reply I gave to him on 14 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *643*, that we continue to press upon the Commission the need to have an urgent decision.

Social Charter

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will itemise *(a)* the key elements of policy listed in the principal items of the existing European Community's social action programme and *(b)* the principal items in the proposed social charter provisions restricted to the other 11 EU member states.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: For the complete list of items included in the social action programme, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 19 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns *116-20*.

The only item to have been taken forward so far under the agreement on social policy by the other 11 member states is the proposal for a Council directive on mechanisms for informing and consulting employees.

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Such information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Library.

Outdoor Education Centres

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all outdoor education centres, giving their location and the frequency of visits made by the Health and Safety Executive over the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not collected in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HEALTH

Ambulance Services

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the percentage response by each ambulance service in England meeting the minimum standard within the patients charter; what are the comparable figures for meeting the ORCON standard; what were the comparative figures for the previous two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is included in "Patient Transport Services 1992-93", copies of which are available in the Library.

Ambulance emergency response time standards, commonly referred to as ORCON standards, were first introduced in 1974. Revised standards, introduced following a 1990 review, are in the patients charter.

Health Visitors

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health visitors are now being trained; and how many in 1984.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Year Ending 31 March	*Entries to Training*
1984	848
1992	694

Source: English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting Annual Report Table 5.3.

The number of whole-time equivalent health visitors in 1994 was 9,700 and in 1992 was 10,250—an increase of 5·6 per cent. over the last eight years.

Counterfeit Medicines

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many manufacturers of counterfeit medicines have been detected in the United Kingdom this year; and what steps are being taken by the Medicines Control Agency to protect NHS patients from counterfeit medicines, particularly in respect of those that are entering the country under the guise of parallel imports.

Mr. Sackville: Two. All reports of possible counterfeits are immediately investigated by the enforcement unit of the Medicines Control Agency, MCA, and any subsequent investigation given a high priority. The MCA also assesses the degree of hazard to the public and if necessary alerts relevant organisations and the public accordingly.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many reports her Department has received of counterfeit medicines being *(a)* detected and *(b)* distributed in the United Kingdom in each year since 1990 and to date in 1994; and if she will name the products involved and the source of the products.

Mr. Sackville: Information in this detail could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The Department of Health receives between 20 and 30 such reports each year, the products involved are usually major brand leaders or—more recently—anabolic steroids. Eighty per cent. of the reports are related to "diverted" products. These products are legally manufactured within product specification but diverted to the United Kingdom from other markets.

Greater London Health Authority

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money was allocated to Greater London health authority purchasers in each year since 1990; and what percentage this represents of all revenue funding for hospitals and community health services in each year.

Mr. Sackville: Allocations to district health authorities as purchasers of health care were made for the first time in the 1991-92 financial year. It is the responsibility of regional health authorities to allocate resources to districts and this information is not separately identifiable in the information collected by the Department.

Expenditure by district health authorities in Greater London in 1991-92 and 1992-93 is shown in the table; it excludes expenditure by general practitioner fund holders. The figures for individual authorities over the two years are not directly comparable in every case because of boundary changes.

Figures for 1993-94 are not yet available.

Greater London district health authorities' expenditure accounted for 18·1 per cent. of total expenditure by district health authorities in England in 1991-92 and 18·0 per cent. in 1992-93.

	1991-92 (£)	*1992-93 (£)*
Barnet DHA	130,730,177	132,241,755
Harrow DHA	88,397,307	90,006,782
Hillingdon DHA	83,518,302	86,111,744
Hounslow and Spelthorne DHA	107,625,179	112,230,351
Ealing DHA	103,110,478	109,108,576
Riverside DHA	186,629,392	194,018,538
Parkside DHA	238,303,679	247,777,479
Barking, Havering and Brentwood DHA	153,568,011	159,857,405
Hampstead DHA	60,483,821	62,510,951
City and Hackney DHA	107,363,560	99,429,552
Newham DHA	99,756,200	103,351,059
Tower Hamlets DHA	80,426,175	78,932,970

	1991-92 (£)	1992-93 (£)
Enfield DHA	96,196,452	101,677,262
Haringey DHA	92,736,373	99,423,594
Redbridge DHA	88,194,556	92,187,298
Waltham Forest DHA	96,763,754	100,435,238
Bloomsbury and Islington DHA	178,471,140	191,942,037
Bexley DHA	71,303,254	77,543,500
Greenwich DHA	91,659,692	99,359,709
Bromley DHA	110,819,831	119,819,385
West Lambeth DHA	88,371,499	471,547
Camberwell DHA	84,269,767	482,703
Lewisham and North Southwark DHA	145,155,564	365,351,088
Croydon DHA	109,082,512	116,944,624
Kingston and Esher DHA	68,653,248	75,032,766
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton DHA	96,517,808	99,424,758
Wandsworth DHA	104,631,717	111,878,599
Merton and Sutton DHA	132,302,204	141,25[illegible]768
Total, DHAs Greater London	3,095,041,652	3,268,802,038
Total, DHAs England	17,114,662,189	18,182,143,979

Source: Annual accounts of health authorities (England).
Notes:
1. Figures shown are for total revenue expenditure.
2. Figures for 1992-93 are provisional.

Private Beds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each district health authority in the Trent regional health authority the private bed income for each financial year since 1988-89 and for the current year to date.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Authority name	1992-93[1] £	1991-92 £	1990-91 £	1989-90 £	1988-89 £
North Derbyshire DHA	1,174	364	65,691	133,139	86,340
South Derbyshire DHA	300,615	272,887	332,618	260,008	206,840
Leicestershire DHA	132,907	343,566	199,517	486,702	550,638
North Lincolnshire DHA	33,106	63,260	67,243	116,566	58,369
South Lincolnshire DHA	505,789	400,036	275,659	238,824	280,774
Bassetlaw DHA[2]	—	122,903	52,677	49,560	46,758
Central Nottinghamshire DHA[2]	—	61,576	30,522	25,842	27,395
Nottingham DHA	256,491	315,829	202,942	252,601	172,033
Barnsley DHA	96,461	51,293	46,239	51,051	35,182
Doncaster DHA	0	0	43,246	44,584	41,742
Rotherham DHA	0	0	0	0	0
Sheffield DHA	0	204,081	453,053	412,272	295,469
North Nottinghamshire DHA[2]	67,282	—	—	—	—

Source: Receipts and payments returns for district health authorities.
[1] Latest figures available are for 1992-93 and are provisional.
[2] Bassetlaw and Central Notts merged to form North Nottinghamshire in 1992-93.

Powered Wheelchairs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost of including powered wheelchairs for occupant control out of doors in the artificial limb and appliance centre service; and what plans she has to provide this service.

Mr. Bowis: Decisions about the issue of wheelchairs, including powered indoor-outdoor wheelchairs, are matters for arrangement between district health authorities and national health service trusts. No estimate of the cost of providing these wheelchairs on a national basis has been made. In 1991-92 total expenditure on the wheelchair service was £46·93 million.

Nursing and Residential Homes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the changes in the number of places in staffed residential care homes catering primarily for people who are mentally ill or have learning difficulties in *(a)* the Doncaster health authority area and *(b)* Trent regional health authority in each of the last four years, divided into (i) publicly owned, (ii) privately owned and (iii) voluntary sector owned.

Mr. Bowis: The information requested is shown in the table.

Number of places in staffed residential care homes for people who are mentally ill or have learning disabilities[1]

	Doncaster DHA			Trent RHA		
	Local authority	Private	Voluntary	Local authority	Private	Voluntary
1989	168	0	73	1,530	1,440	470
1990	168	0	73	1,550	1,640	580
1991	183	0	75	1,520	1,780	880
1992	220	0	93	1,550	1,940	910

[1] Includes places in homes primarily for elderly mentally infirm people.

Cornwall Health Trust

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date the non-executive directors of the Cornwall health trust requested assistance towards the cost of their defence on charges of libel; and what is her Department's response.

Dr. Mawhinney: Officials of the National Health Service Management Executive received a letter dated 26 January from the chief executive of the Cornwall Healthcare NHS trust asking that consideration be given to meeting the cost of the legal action against the trust's non-executive directors from central funds. Mr. J. H. Askham has recently been appointed as chairman of the Cornwall Healthcare NHS trust: officials will shortly be discussing with him the way forward for the trust.

Limb Defects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what investigations or research her Department is carrying out in respect of children who have been born in England and Wales during the last 10 years with missing or defective limbs; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) on 1 March at column *678*.

Disciplinary Procedures

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what procedures her Department has to collect information from NHS trusts in regard to disciplinary action taken under the new procedure HC(90)9.

Dr. Mawhinney: We do not collect such information.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors accused of personal misconduct under the new procedure have appealed to the Secretary of State under paragraph 190(d) procedures, for each year since 1990; and of these how many cases were *(a)* dismissed, *(b)* settled through premature retirement and *(c)* reinstated.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received representations from two doctors under paragraph 190(d) of the "Terms and Conditions for Hospital Medical and Dental Staff (England and Wales)" to refer to a panel the question whether their appointment was terminated on the sole ground of personal misconduct. These representations were made in 1993 and the cases are still under consideration.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many doctors suspended from duty under the new procedure HC(90)9 for each year since 1990 have been suspended for *(a)* personal misconduct, *(b)* professional misconduct, *(c)* professional incompetence or *(d)* some other substantial reason;

(2) how many doctors suspended from duty under the new procedure HC(90)9, for each year since 1990, have had *(a)* internal hearings only and *(b)* full independent professional hearings under annex B HC(90)9 procedures; how many cases were dismissed; in how many cases settlements were made out of court involving premature retirement of the doctor; and how many were reinstated;

(3) how many doctors were suspended from duty under the new procedure HC(90)9 for each year since 1990 in each region.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. Decisions on disciplinary action for hospital doctors or dentists rest with the employing authority or trust. This includes the decision as to whether to suspend a practitioner.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors suspended from duty under the new procedure HC(90)9 have been refused a request for a paragraph 190 hearing because the original ground for dismissal was personal misconduct.

Dr. Mawhinney: Doctors who are suspended from duty cannot request a paragraph 190 hearing unless they are subsequently dismissed.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors dismissed under the new procedures HC(90)9, for each year since 1990, have appealed to the Secretary of State under paragraph 190 procedures; and of these how many cases were *(a)* dismissed, *(b)* settled through premature retirement and *(c)* reinstated.

Dr. Mawhinney: A total of 11 appeals have been lodged by doctors eligible to appeal under paragraph 190 of the terms and conditions of service since the new procedures set out in HC(90)9 were introduced in March 1990. None of these appeals arose from the application of the procedures in HC(90)9.

Of these 11 appeals two were upheld, two were dismissed and one was withdrawn. The outcome of the remaining six appeals is not yet known.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sums she has expended in each of the last five years for research into *(a)* the causes and *(b)* the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department is funding a resarch project to investigate long-term progression in rheumatoid arthritis and to study aetiology and prognostic factors. Departmental funding for this ongoing project began in 1980 at the clinical operational research unit—CORU—at University college London. The project is being funded in collaboration with pharmaceutical companies. The central funding is approximately £15,000 per year although this forms only part of the £327,975 allocated to CORU in 1993-94 to undertake its remit of studying applications of operational research and information technology to clinical aspects of health care.

The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council—MRC—which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The MRC is an independent body deciding what research to support on its own expert judgment

Psychiatric Care (Women's Wards)

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will direct that health authority purchasers must ensure that women who are admitted to psychiatric hospitals are guaranteed care on a women-only ward if they request it.

Mr. Bowis: Our advice to health authorities contained in the "Mental Illness Key Area Handbook", copies of which are available in the Library, is that one of women's particular concerns is the choice of a single sex ward or single sex area. In addition the patients charter requires health authorities to provide services which respect patients' privacy, dignity and religious and cultural beliefs.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ask the Mental Health Act Commission to monitor arrangements made for the aftercare of patients covered by section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983, as recommended in the Ritchie report.

Mr. Bowis: We will consider this in consultation with the Mental Health Act Commission.

Abortions

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions were performed on women who were less than 13 weeks pregnant *(a)* in each regional health authority and *(b)* in each district health authority, in England and Wales in 1992 and 1993; and how many of these operations involved admission and discharge of the patient on the same day.

Mr. Sackville: The information for 1992 will be placed in the Library. For reasons of confidentiality, statistics for district health authorities are presented by DHA of woman's usual residence, not by DHA of termination. Information for 1993 is not yet available.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fee-paying private bed abortions were performed in NHS hospitals in each regional health authority in England and Wales in 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Sackville: Information on private abortions carried out in national health service hospitals is collected as part of the hospital episode statistics system. The quality and completeness of this data is at present inadequate to provide regional level data but analysis conducted so far indicates that in both 1991-92 and 1992-93 the proportion of all abortions carried out in NHS hospitals that were performed privately was approximately 1·5 per cent.

Osteoporosis

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funding has been made available in each of the past five years to regional health authorities in London for screening osteoporosis; how many women in London have been screened for osteoporosis in each of the past five years; how many clinics exist in London for the specific purpose of screening for osteoporosis; and how many women in London have been diagnosed as suffering from osteoporosis in each of the past five years.

Mr. Sackville: There is no national population screening programme for osteoporosis and therefore no central funding as there is not yet evidence to show that such a programme would be effective. District health authorities are responsible for assessing need and for ensuring that suitable diagnostic services for individual women are made available.

Medical Product Licences

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the licensing authority responsible for granting product licences for parallel imports of medicines is currently subject to a legal challenge in the courts.

Mr. Sackville: On 26 January a pharmaceutical company in the United Kingdom was granted leave for a judical review of a decision by the Medicines Control Agency, on behalf of the licensing authority, to grant a parallel import product licence to a company to market a product imported from Belgium. The hearing is expected in April.

Blue-green Algae

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has concerning the number of people in the North West Water region who are allergic to blue-green algae.

Mr. Sackville: None. The numbers of people with allergies are not available centrally.

Illnesses including skin rashes, eye irritation, vomiting, diarrhoea, fever and pains in muscles and joints have occurred in people who swam through or swallowed water with an algal scum. Very few reports of such occurrences have come from the United Kingdom. There have been no reports of long term effects or deaths in humans from such exposures.

In 1990, the Department advised that although algal scum is not always harmful, it is a sensible precaution to avoid contact with the scum and the water close to it.

Accommodation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the tenure of the Trent regional health authority headquarters' premises;

(2) what is the tenure of the Doncaster health authority headquarters' premises.

Mr. Sackville: Trent regional health authority headquarters is freehold. Doncaster health authority headquarters is leasehold for 125 years from 4 December 1992.

GP Fundholding

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the average savings made by each fundholding practice in 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 17 January at column *387*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the resources of fundholding general practice is being used to purchase health provision from the private sector; what is her policy in respect of such purchasing; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 7 February at column 52.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those health authorities which have indicated to general practitioners an inability to fund extra-contractual referrals during the current financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for individual district health authorities. The National Health Service Management Executive has issued guidance to district health authorities who are expected to work closely with general practitioners in managing their budget for extra contractual referrals. Copies of the guidance contained in FDL(93)07 are available in the Library.

NHS Information

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will announce the results of the review of her Department's requirements for information from the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: We are anxious to do all we can to reduce further the number of forms which currently have to be filled in by national health service units and returned to the Department, as part of our statistical database.

We have already reduced and rationalised the contents of 21 different forms. A further five returns are being abolished, because the information they contain is now available from other sources.

In addition, I am pleased to announce that from 1 April this year the Department will no longer require returns giving the following information:

Form KH10—Radiotherapy Machine Activity;
Form KH13—Diagnostic Departments—Physiological Measurements;
Form KO39—Hospital Eye Services.

There is clearly a limit to the amount of information required by the Department and the NHS Management Executive on a national service regionally and locally administered. Moreover, release from the burden of filling in forms will give NHS units more time for activities which have a greater bearing on direct patient care.

All statistical returns from the NHS are being continually reviewed.

Michael Buchanan

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who are the members of the inquiry team set up by the North West London mental health trust to investigate the care and treatment of Michael Buchanan, convicted of manslaughter after discharge from Shenley psychiatric hospital; and whether the report will be published.

Mr. Bowis: The membership of the independent inquiry panel is:

Mr. C. Heginbotham, Chief Executive, Riverside Mental Health Trust (Chairman);
Dr. R. Hale, Consultant Psychiatrist, Tavistock Clinic;
Mrs. L. Warren, Non-Executive Member, Brent and Harrow Health Authority;
Mr. T. Walsh, Assistant Director of Commissioning, Brent and Harrow Health Authority;
Mrs. J. Carr, Non-Executive Director, Parkside Health NHS Trust.

The report of this panel will be made public.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of food poisoning of all types were recorded monthly in each year since 1988, by health authority.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available in the form requested. Data are published weekly, quarterly and annually by regional health authority, standard regions and local authority areas in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys MB2 series—Communicable disease statistics, copies of which are available in the Library.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many rules and regulations her Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the tables.

Statutory Instruments Made

	Number
1991	122
1992	147
1993	141

Government Bills which became Acts

	Number
1991	1
1992	0
1993	0

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of quangos for which she is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Mr. Sackville: This information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Library.

Peto Institute

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, (1) pursuant to her answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column 597-98, what study her Department has made of the extent to which families and institutions in the United Kingdom now require the services of the proposed International Peto Institute in Budapest;

(2) what assessment her Department has made of whether the proposed International Peto Institute will deliver training to meet United Kingdom standards and requirements;

(3) when she will issue new briefing on conductive education;

(4) what assessment she has made of whether the Government's policy that conductive education should be

available as an option within the system would be more effectively achieved by supporting the development of an equivalent facility in this country.

Mr. Bowis: The demand for the services of the proposed new International Peto Institute will become apparent when it comes into operation. Under the agreement between the United Kingdom and Hungarian Governments, the proposed new institute has to provide training in accordance with the standards established by the present Peto Institute. The Department of health has already provided funding under its section 64 scheme to the Birmingham Foundation for Conductive Education and the Hornsey centre. There are no current plans to issue guidance on conductive education.

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many self-financing regulatory authorities her Department or its predecessors has set up since 1979; what is the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; and what was the current staffing establishment at the latest available date, last year and two years ago.

Mr. Sackville: Since 1979, the Department has set up the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting as a self-financing regulatory body.

The total gross expenditure for 1992-93 was £8·657 million. Information on running costs for 1991-92 and 1990-91, and staffing for the last three years is detailed in "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Library.

London Health Authorities

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been treated by each health authority in *(a)* Inner London and *(b)* Greater London since March 1993; and what were the figures in each of the three previous years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is not yet available for the period since March 1993. Information for previous years is published in "Ordinary and Day Case Admissions for England", copies of which are available in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Support

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of total agricultural support through direct payments is secured annually by *(a)* the largest 20 per cent. of farmers and *(b)* the smallest 20 per cent. of farmers.

Mr. Jack: I regret that the information is not available. While the farm business survey collects details of direct agricultural support payments from a sample of farms, it does not provide us with farm by farm returns which would be required to answer this question.

Horticultural Imports

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received about damage to United Kingdom growers caused by the importation of foreign horticultural produce, with particular reference to lettuces, tomatoes and cucumbers, at prices below the cost of production, packaging and transport; and what powers exist either in the United Kingdom or the European Community to prevent such market distortions whether caused by EC or non-EC member states.

Mr. Jack: The Department has received representations from the NFU and growers about difficulties in the markets for salad crops. Market management of horticultural crops is a matter for the Commission. However, under the transitional terms provided for in the treaty of accession, the Commission may take measures in the event of exports from Spain to the rest of the Community disrupting markets. Some horticultural produce, including tomatoes and cucumbers but not lettuces, are currently subject to a reference price system which establishes minimum import prices at certain times of the year for produce from third countries.

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many self-financing regulatory authorities her Department has set up since 1979; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment now; and what it was last year and two years ago.

Mr. Jack: Unfortunately this question could be answered only at disproportionate cost. I will write to the hon. Member to explain why this is the case.

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the number of quangos for which she is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Mr. Jack: Such information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Libraries of the House.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on parliamentary scrutiny of the use of public interest immunity certificates; what proposals he has to improve such scrutiny; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Scrutiny of public interest immunity certificates is a matter for the Courts in each case.

SCOTLAND

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Mr. Lang: Such information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Libraries of the House.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of statutory instruments, including orders, schemes, rules, and regulations but excluding instruments made jointly with other Departments, made by my Department in the years 1991, 1992 and 1993 are:

	Number
1991	307
1992	381
1993	346

Not all such instruments will have contained substantive regulatory provisions; information as to which instruments contained such provisions is not held centrally.

School Buildings

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the amount spent by each local education authority in Scotland on the repair and maintenance of school buildings in *(a)* 1978-79, *(b)* 1984-85 and *(c)* in each year since 1989-90 at constant 1993 prices.

Mr. Lang: The available information is given in the tables. The capital figures in table 2 include expenditure on new building work as well as on repairs and maintenance, information on which is not recorded separately.

Table 1
Current expenditure by education authorities on repair and maintenance of school buildings

£ million at 1992-93 prices

	1978-79	*1984-85*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Borders	0·825	0·941	1·233	1·215	1·226	1·240
Central	4·081	4·374	4·065	4·105	4·471	4·400
Dumfries and Galloway	0·850	2·216	2·889	1·966	2·875	2·851
Fife	4·679	5·878	5·845	6·359	4·889	5·697
Grampian	6·396	9·848	8·012	8·439	11·655	15·726
Highland	2·303	3·074	4·394	4·443	4·012	3·302
Lothian	12·949	11·477	8·182	7·420	7·309	11·964
Strathclyde	58·646	51·011	49·342	43·382	43·785	44·180
Tayside	4·351	5·895	5·705	6·066	6·844	7·433
Orkney	0·186	0·256	0·265	0·204	0·220	0·278
Shetland	0·325	0·502	0·574	0·966	1·322	1·711
Western Isles	0·797	0·500	0·927	1·166	1·196	1·001

Table 2
Capital expenditure by education authorities on school buildings

£ million at 1992-93 prices

	1978-79	*1984-85*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Borders	0·767	1·423	1·898	3·491	3·612	2·718
Central	9·757	1·688	5·956	5·175	3·984	5·877
Dumfries and Galloway	2·906	3·702	2·158	1·527	3·251	3·787
Fife	6·604	4·489	6·938	9·539	4·432	5·104
Grampian	19·942	9·046	4·671	6·413	7·624	6·725
Highland	8·243	1·273	4·656	3·437	3·818	5·119
Lothian	25·029	9·258	13·802	10·425	8·709	18·011
Strathclyde	64·691	31·117	31·590	25·984	31·037	29·226
Tayside	6·407	3·294	4·200	3·467	3·980	5·458
Orkney	1·159	1·953	1·181	1·422	0·431	1·154
Shetland	4·923	2·850	0·863	0·922	1·490	4·001
Western Isles	1·131	1·502	1·890	2·512	2·990	2·499

Notes:

1. The figures in table 1 have been compiled from local authority financial returns and in table 2 from capital payment returns submitted by local authorities to the Scottish Office. Both sets of figures have been adjusted to 1992-93 prices using the GDP deflator.
2. Generally capital expenditure (table 2) is less in later years compared with 1978-79. This reflects a substantial and progressive decline in school pupil numbers which has reduced the requirement for new school building.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has yet determined the level of fee remission grant which will be available to parents under the assisted places scheme in school session 1994-95.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend is making £10·251 million available for fee remission in 1994-95. Fifty-five schools across Scotland will participate in the scheme. This funding should enable the number of pupils currently benefiting to be maintained at slightly above 3,000.

Sea Birds

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest information he has on the number and species of birds found dead recently on the east coast of Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* The Institute for Terrestrial Ecology, under contract to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, is investigating levels of heavy metals and pesticide residues in samples of dead sea birds beached recently. Initial results indicate no significant level of contamination.

Surveys of beached birds are carried out by various organisations and I understand that post mortems have been carried out to determine the general condition of dead birds. In many cases birds have been found to have suffered starvation.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what investigations are under way on the causes of deaths of sea birds on the east coast of Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds organised a survey of dead birds on beaches in east Scotland on the weekend of 26 and 27 February. The number of dead birds recorded was nearly 6,400, which is four times higher than a similar count last year.

Eighty per cent. of birds found were guillemots, but other prominent species were shag and razorbill. The total number of dead birds will never be known exactly, but an estimate of 50,000 total fatalities is still valid.

Forestry Commission

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which forests have been sold by the Forestry Commission in each of the last five years; to whom they were sold; for how much they were sold; and to what use they were put after sale.

Sir Hector Monro: Lists giving details of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission from the start of the disposals programme in July 1981 to December 1992 are held in the Library of the House. The lists provide the name of the purchaser and the price paid where the purchaser has agreed that this information can be made public. The Commission is compiling a list of the areas sold in 1993 and a copy will be placed in the Library shortly. The Commission does not maintain records of the subsequent use of the woodlands it sells. However, woodlands cannot normally be converted to another use without planning permission.

Freshwater Fishing Rights

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list full details, including the price of the lease from the Forestry Commission, of the freshwater fishing rights, excluding salmon, on Loch Awe and Loch Avich; and for what reasons the lease was not put up for public auction.

Sir Hector Monro: The Forestry Commission's fishing rights on Loch Awe and Loch Avich are leased to the Loch Awe Improvement Association for three years from 1 May 1992. The rent is £1 per annum; the association manages the fishings on behalf of the commission and issues day permits to the public.

The lease was not offered on the open market because the commission considered that a lease to the association would be more successful in conserving the fish stocks and increasing the availability of authorised fishing for freshwater fish in the lochs, in accordance with the objectives of the Loch Awe and Associated Waters Protection Order 1992.

Motorways

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of motorway are currently *(a)* open, *(b)* under construction and *(c)* planned in Scotland either (i) as new motorway or (ii) as existing motorway being widened.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In Scotland there are 159 miles of trunk road motorway and a further 15 miles on non-trunk motorway, responsibility for which lies with local authorities.

Twenty-two miles of new motorway is currently under construction, with a further 58 miles of new motorway planned.

Much of the motorway network constructed in the 1960s and 1970s is reaching the end of its structural life and requires major maintenance or reconstruction. Some of this work may involve widening.

Health Care International

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what system he has to monitor adherence to the conditions of authorisation as set out in the annex of the letter of authorisation for the Health Care International hospital at Clydebank dated 6 October 1987 and signed by N. S. Munro, assistant secretary, Scottish Home and Health Department.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Office has regular contact with senior representatives of HCI. These discussions cover matters relevant to the development of the hospital at Clydebank, including those specified in the authorisation.

Outdoor Education Centres

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names, location and county of each of the outdoor education centres in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

GPs (Drug Sales)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will estimate the annual value of sales of Adifax, Tenuate, Dospan and Duromine direct to general practitioners;

(2) what plans he has to control the supply of dangerous drugs direct to general practitioners.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* This information is not available. The sale of medicinal products direct to GPs for private purposes is outwith the national health service.

The supply of dangerous drugs direct to general practitioners is already strictly regulated under the provisions of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and its subordinate legislation. Under regulations 9(4)*(a)* and 14(2) of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1985, an authorised supplier may supply schedule 3 drugs to a general practitioner only upon receipt of a written requisition.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will investigate allegations as to the sale of addictive dangerous drugs to general practitioners and their subsequent sale to customers for slimming purposes, without medical examination, at prices far in excess of the cost to the NHS;

(2) what safeguards are in place to protect patients from being given addictive, hallucinogenic drugs for slimming purposes, without prior medical examination or control and supervision.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* If an allegation is made that a GP working within the NHS has breached his/her terms of service, it would be for the health board to consider in the first instance. The subsequent disciplinary procedure may involve the Secretary of State or the General Medical Council—GMC—at a later stage. Allegations of professional misconduct against a medical practitioner, whether or not he/she is working within the NHS, should be directed to the GMC.

The safeguards in place to protect patients are as follows.

All practising doctors in the United Kingdom must be registered with the GMC. A doctor found guilty of serious professional misconduct such as the prescription or supply of dependence—inducing drugs other than in the course of bone fide treatment, can be struck off or suspended from the register of the GMC.

Also, detailed and specific guidance on the prescribing of drugs likely to cause dependence is provided in the British National Formulary—BNF—which is published jointly by the British Medical Association and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. The BNF is provided free of charge to all GPs within the NHS.

Glasgow development agency

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will investigate the withdrawal of Glasgow development agency funding from projects in the city; and if he will take steps to ensure the loss of this money is made up.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* The question of funding support from the local enterprise company for individual projects in the city of Glasgow is a matter for Glasgow development agency.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Glasgow development agency has to reduce funding to *(a)* the Glasgow regeneration fund, *(b)* Glasgow works and *(c)* the Glasgow education business partnership.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* This is a matter for the local enterprise company, which I am sure will be happy to discuss the matter with the hon. Member.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will investigate the reasons for Glasgow development agency's withdrawal of funding from Firhill business centre; and if he will take steps to save the project.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* The organisation, decision making and performance of Glasgow development agency are matters for the board of the local enterprise company itself, and for Scottish Enterprise.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will investigate the reasons for Glasgow development agency's withdrawal of funding from Firhill business centre; and if he will take steps to save the project.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* The level of support which Glasgow development agency provides for the Firhill business centre is a matter for the local enterprise company, but my right hon. Friend is not aware of any decision on its part to withdraw funding.

Dentistry

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the amount spent per child on general dental services, including in the calculation those not registered with a general dental practitioner.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

General dental service expenditure on children in Scotland: 1992-93

(a) Gross expenditure (£000)	*(b)* Number of registered children	*(c)* Number of children in the population	*(d)* Cost per registered child (£)	*(e)* Cost per child in the population (£)
29,626	702,037	1,153,147	42·20	25·69

Notes:

1. The gross expenditure on general dental services (GDS) in column *(a)* comprises capitation payments, weighted entry payments, child item of service payments for treatments given under capitation, and child item of service payments for treatments given on an occasional basis in the financial year 1992-93.
2. Column *(b)* is the number of children registered with a general dental practitioner (GDP) at September 1992.
3. Column *(c)* is for June 1992.
4. Children may also be treated in the community or hospital dental services as well as in the general dental service. Children who are not registered with a GDP may receive GDS treatment on an occasional basis.

5. There is also some non-fee expenditure on general dental services (eg, reimbursement of non-domestic rates, maternity payments, and employer's superannuation payments) which cannot be apportioned between child and adult treatments. In the financial year 1992-93, this represented approximately 4 per cent. of expenditure on the GDS.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department spends on child-care provision for the under-fives and out-of-school provision for children aged over five either directly, excluding provision for departmental staff, or indirectly through resources made available to local authorities or other organisations; what form of provision is thereby provided; how many places are thereby provided; and if he will make a statement on child care.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* Good quality day care has a valuable part to play in the development of young children. Out-of-school care can help older children to develop a broad range of interests and to adopt a positive approach to the use of their leisure time.

The Scottish Office supports the provision of various forms of day care through the urban programme and through grants under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. In 1993-94 almost £7 million has been made available from these sources. Grants for out-of-school care projects are also available through local enterprise companies under the initiative launched last year by the Secretary of State for Employment.

Within the local authority expenditure settlement for 1993-94 provision of £30·37 million was made for day care for children.

The latest available information about the form and level of day care provision in Scotland is contained in the Scottish Office Bulletin "Services for Children 1991 and 1992", a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public interest immunity certificates he has signed in each year since 1990.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* In 1993, I signed two public interest immunity certificates and in each of the other years none.

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* Such purchases are included within my Department's overall administration expenditure which is published every year in the annual report.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many bottles of *(a)* whisky and gin and *(b)* sherry and port were consumed by his private offices in 1993-94.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* Detailed information of this sort could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people have died each year in Scotland from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease over the past five years;

(2) if he will list the dates and locations of each death in Scotland from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease over the past five years and the respective dates on which the Department of Health's Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease surveillance units were first notified of each suspected case; and in any case where notification was not provided before death, if he will explain why notification was not provided earlier;

(3) what is his Department's procedure for notifying health authorities of suspected cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 March 1994]:* The number of people in Scotland who have died from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) in each of the past five years is as follows:

	Definite	*Probable*	*Possible*
1989	5	—	—
1990	3	—	—
1991	5	—	—
1992	4	—	—
1993	5	2	2

The location of deaths from CJD, both definite and probable, for the period 1 May 1990 to 30 April 1993 is given in figure 1 of the second annual report of the CJD surveillance unit. Of the cases notifed to the CJD surveillance unit before death, this occurred on average 61 days before death. However, in five cases diagnosis was made at post mortem by the CJD surveillance unit's dedicated pathology laboratory. This is an important source of data for the unit as there is no diagnostic test for CJD in life.

There is no departmental procedure for notifying health boards of suspected cases of CJD, since the information would already be known to the clinician involved in the case. Information on suspected cases is available from the unit's annual report, a copy of which is available in the Library.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Management Systems

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Attorney-General how much the Law Officer's Department's computer-aided facilities management systems cost; from whom they were purchased; how many person hours were required to commission them; what the estimated and actual saving has been from their operation; and to what extent the use of such systems accounts for the apparent rise in theft noted in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *783*.

The Solicitor-General: The Departments for which I am responsible have no computer-aided facilities management systems in place.

Mr. Paul Bennett

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Attorney-General (1) what representations he received from agencies of either the Government of South Africa, or the prosecution or judicial authorities of South Africa prior to committal proceedings against Mr. Paul Bennett;

(2) what representations he received from agencies of either the United States Government or the United States prosecution or judicial authorities prior to committal proceedings against Mr. Paul Bennett.

The Attorney-General: None.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Attorney-General why a public immunity interest certificate was originally applied in the case of Paul Bennett; in what circumstances; and for what reason it was subsequently lifted.

The Attorney-General: Paul James Bennett was committed for trial on 22 May 1991 at Southwark Crown court by the Horseferry Road magistrates court. He then sought judicial review of the committal on the ground that he had been brought within the jurisdiction in circumstances which were unlawful.

The applicant sought discovery of a number of documents relating to communications between police forces or prosecuting authorities, both in this country and abroad, in connection with the detention and investigation of crime and the apprehension of offenders. That is a class of document which ordinarily attracts public interest immunity and in July 1992 the then Home Secretary signed a public interest immunity certificate in respect of those documents. In the event the question of disclosure did not arise for decision at that stage because the divisional court dismissed the application for judicial review on the ground that it had no power to inquire into the circumstances by which a person had been brought within the jurisdiction.

That ruling was the subject of a successful appeal to the House of Lords, which remitted the case to the divisional court on 24 June 1993. That court considered the question of disclosure on 19 October 1993. The Crown agreed on the advice of counsel that the court should be invited to order discovery of the documents, on the ground that they went to the heart of a factual dispute which had by then been made material by the decision of the House of Lords. The court upheld the claim for public interest immunity, but accepted that, in the circumstances of the particular case, the balance of the competing public interests lay in disclosure.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Mr. Eggar: Such information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Libraries of the House.

Aid and Trade

Mr. Worthington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which aid and trade provision projects approved for Indonesia since 1979 could be used to support military activity; and what monitoring takes place of whether aid and trade provision projects are used to support Indonesian military activity.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply. The majority of the aid and trade provision allocations in Indonesia have been for civil infrastructure, e.g. for electricity generation, railways development and the provision of bridging materials. We have also supported projects for a wide range of other purposes, e.g. coal mining and improvement of university science facilities. None of the projects we have supported is designed to support military activity and we have no indication that any have been so used. Frequent monitoring visits to assess progress in implementation and ex-post project evaluation visits have not indicated any evidence of military use.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the Government's best estimates of the number of jobs created within the United Kingdom as a direct result of support provided to projects in developing countries under the aid and trade provision in each of the last five years; and if he will explain the method by which these estimates have been reached.

Mr. Needham: Projects supported by ATP have created a significant number of United Kingdom jobs since the scheme's inception in 1977-78. The precise number is difficult to estimate. This information could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which British firms have benefited from aid and trade provision assistance; by how much; and for what projects in Malaysia and Indonesia in each year since 1979.

Mr. Needham: For a detailed list of all ATP projects, I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary gave to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 28 October 1993, *Official Report*, column 732.

Malaysia (Contracts)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the estimated value of confirmed United Kingdom contracts and contracts presently under negotiation with Malaysian authorities; and how many British jobs are involved.

Mr. Needham: It is not possible to give precise figures. But exports worth hundreds of millions of pounds have been under discussion, involving thousands of jobs.

Ryrie Rules

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how the Ryrie rules are applied to each agency and enterprise for which he is responsible.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ryrie rules were abolished in 1989.

Mr. Asil Nadir

Mr. Darling: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column 575, what information he has as to whether the Official Receiver intends to apply for the suspension of the discharge of the bankruptcy of Mr. Asil Nadir.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Official Receiver is taking legal advice on matters relating to a possible application under Section 279(3) of the Insolvency Act 1986 for the suspension of Mr. Nadir's automatic discharge from bankruptcy. The Official Receiver expects to be able to make a decision in the light of that advice in the near future.

World Trade Organisation

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what powers the World Trade Organisation will have once the general agreement on tariffs and trade is ratified to require a country that refuses to bring its legislation into line with a GATT ruling to change its laws.

Mr. Needham: The proposed World Trade Organisation (WTO) will have no powers to compel members to bring domestic legislation into conformity with the adverse findings of dispute settlement proceedings. In such circumstances, the member would be able to choose between bringing measures into conformity with WTO rules, offering compensatory market access concessions—either temporary or permanent—or accepting retaliatory withdrawal of market access concessions by the aggrieved member. Both compensatory and retaliatory measures would be proportional to the impairment involved—there is no punitive or coercive element.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what role he envisages for the World Trade Organisation once the GATT is ratified.

Mr. Needham: The proposed World Trade Organisation (WTO) will organise and help give effect to the structure of rules and market access commitments agreed among its prospective members in the course of the Uruguay round, as well as providing a forum for future trade negotiations as its members see fit. Each member of the WTO will itself be responsible for following those rules and implementing its market access commitments, assisted by the WTO secretariat. The secretariat will be fully accountable to WTO members.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the World Trade Organisation will be democratically accountable.

Mr. Needham: The proposed World Trade Organisation (WTO) will provide an institutional structure to give effect to the rules and market access commitments agreed between prospective members of the WTO in the Uruguay round. As such it will be fully accountable to its members.

Engineering Products

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the United Kingdom output of engineering products in the fourth quarter of each year since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is provided in the following table:

United Kingdom output of Engineering Products[1]

Year	*Index of production Base year: 1990=100 (seasonally adjusted)*
1979-Q4	86·1
1980-Q4	74·8
1981-Q4	75·3
1982-Q4	73·5
1983-Q4	76·8
1984-Q4	78·9
1985-Q4	79·3
1986-Q4	85·2
1987-Q4	86·3
1988-Q4	95·7
1989-Q4	100·0
1990-Q4	98·5
1991-Q4	90·7
1992-Q4	91·5
1993-Q4	91·6

Source: Central Statistical Office
[1] Standard Industrial Classification (1992) Subsections DK, DL and DM

Manufacturing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the percentage change in imports of finished manufactures since 1973; what has been the change in United Kingdom production and exports of finished manufactures; and what has been the effect on manufacturing employment.

Mr. Needham: Between 1970 and 1993 the value of United Kingdom imports of finished manufactures increased by 1,450 per cent. Over the same period, the value of exports of finished manufactures increased by 985 per cent.

Due to major differences between the industrial and trade classifications, it is not possible to provide comparable information on United Kingdom production and employment.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if, on current trends, United Kingdom manufacturing output will exceed the 1989 level by the end of the century.

Mr. Sainsbury: On the basis of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95", manufacturing output is likely to pass its 1989 level within the next year and a half.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what figures for the terms of trade of manufactured goods from 1979 to date he is using for his study of the competitiveness of British manufacturing; and if he will publish these figures.

Mr. Needham: The terms of trade can be readily derived from unit value indices held on the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed from the Library of the House.

Single Market

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what evidence he has that United Kingdom manufacturers generally have gained more than they have lost as a result of the single market.

Mr. Needham: One year on from the completion of the single market framework, it is too early for a full assessment of its effect on United Kingdom manufacturers. It will take some time for companies fully to adjust to the single market changes and to exploit all the new opportunities. This is true for all member states: thus the European Commission will not be producing an assessment of the economic impact of the single market until 1996.

Nonetheless, a number of surveys indicate that British firms are already benefiting from the single market. For example, a CBI survey in November 1993 found that 68 per cent. of United Kingdom companies interviewed were experiencing greater opportunities for trade with the rest of the European Community now, compared with five years ago.

In 1992 Customs and Excise produced an analysis of the costs and benefits to business as a result of changes under the single market customs, VAT, excise and trade statistics regimes. They have recently, as part of a single market implementation review involving consultation with about 1,000 businesses, carried out an initial validation of the cost/benefit analysis. This confirms the original assessment that there should be an overall net benefit to United Kingdom business of at least £440 million during the first five years. Additional benefits, arising from increased trade opportunities and the scope for efficiencies in transport units and stock levels, which were not included in the initial analysis, were also identified.

Japan

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will urge the Japanese Government to reduce its export surplus by allowing the exchange rate to rise without imposing other impediments on trade.

Mr. Needham: The Japanese trade surplus is due to structural economic factors including the persistently high savings rate in Japan. Changes in the yen parity will be conditioned by market factors. We and our Community partners urge the Japanese Government to stimulate demand in the economy and to increase imports by macro-economic means such as the recent package of fiscal measures, and by introducing an effective programme of deregulation in the Japanese economy.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of United Kingdom overseas investment in 1979; and what it was in 1993.

Mr. Needham: Information for 1979 is published in table 8.2 of "The Pink Book 1990, United Kingdom Balance of Payments". Information for 1993 is available only up to the third quarter. I refer the hon. Gentleman to "First Release, Balance of trade with countries outside the EC November 1993, Central Statistical Office, (94)191", table G. Both publications are available in the Library of the House.

Post Offices

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for south Yorkshire the post offices currently being considered by the Post Office for franchising.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that no post offices in south Yorkshire are currently being considered for franchising.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which post offices in south Yorkshire are still under the authority of the Post Office.

Mr. McLouglin: I understand from the Post Office that there are four directly-managed Crown post offices in south Yorkshire at Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield. In addition there are some 380 post offices with agency status in the county.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many post offices in south Yorkshire have been franchised in each year since the introduction of the policy.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that the numbers of post offices which have been franchised in south Yorkshire are as follows:

	Number
1992	1
1993	2
1994 (to date)	1

Of these, three resulted from Crown office conversions and one from the transfer of an agency office to a franchisee.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many post and sub-post offices have been given agency status in south Yorkshire; and if he will list them.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that six Crown post offices have been converted to agency status in south Yorkshire. These are:

Wombwell
West street Sheffield
The Moor Sheffield
Mexborough
Hillsborough
Leopold street, Sheffield.

SL Homes Ltd.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list the directors of SL Homes Ltd. last notified to Companies house;

(2) what is the date of filing and the financial period covered by the most recent accounts filed by the company SL Homes Ltd.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Responsibility for the subject has been delegated to the Chief Executive of Companies House Executive Agency for which my Department is responsible. I have therefore asked Mr. Durham to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Durham to Mr. David Shaw, dated 14 March 1994:

The latest list of directors of SL Homes Limited notified to Companies House is as follows:

Morris Aitchison
William Drummond
William McCracken
Harry Sneddon Miller (resigned 20 August 1993)
James McLean Chalmers
John Davidson
Brian John Dempsey
William Paterson
John Scullion

The most recent accounts filed by SL Homes Limited cover the financial period 1 January 1991 to 31 December 1991 and were delivered to Companies House on 9 October 1992.

The accounts to 31 December 1992 were due to be delivered by 31 October 1993 but are still outstanding. A default letter was issued to the company at its registered office address on 5 November 1993 informing the company that the accounts were outstanding. As a response was not received, a second letter was issued to the same address on 8 March 1994 in which the company was asked whether it is still in business or operation, to date we have not received a reply to this letter either. We now propose to issue final reminders to each director at their homes addresses.

I hope this information is of help to you.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade following the letter to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent, from the Minister for Trade of 17 February, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a correction to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *228-29*.

Mr. Needham: My letter of 17 February to the hon. Member has already been placed in the Library of the House. It corrected an omission from the list of witnesses to have appeared before the Scott inquiry in open session, provided in my answer to the hon. Member of 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *228-29*. Mr. Stephen Day, formerly an official of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, appeared before the inquiry on 4 May 1993.

Haulage Contractors

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with insurance companies concerning the impact of increased insurance premiums on haulage contractors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: None. This is a matter for the commercial judgment of individual insurance companies, with which the Government cannot interfere.

Nuclear Review

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what undertakings were given in respect of the timing of the nuclear review in response to the first report of the Trade and Industry Select Committee of Session 1992-93 on the future of British energy policy and the market for coal; when he now expects the review to begin; with what remit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *759-60* to the hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant).

Energy Industries

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what resources are committed to the monitoring of the performance of the publicly owned energy industries, to which reference is made at page 50 of his departmental annual report 1994, and expenditure plans 1994-95 to 1996-97, Cm 2504.

Mr. Eggar: The information is contained within part 5 of MINIS 93, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's contribution to the jointly funded programme promoting research into waste recycling and cleaner technologies to which reference is made at page 33 of his departmental annual report and expenditure plans 1994-95 to 1996-97, Cm 2504.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department has committed £11·2 million under grant schemes which closed to new applications during 1993 to support research and demonstration of innovative environmental technology. On 7 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *149* my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced a successor joint programme with the Department of the Environment which would have the aim of encouraging the adoption by industry of best practice in environmental technology and techniques. The Department will be contributing £11 million to this £16 million programme which is due to run for five years.

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. McLoughlin: No agency chief executive in this Department is currently paid more than £82,925.

Coal Imports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the sources of coal imported in 1993 by volume.

Mr. Eggar: Imports of coal by country of origin in 1993 were:

	Thousand tonnes
USA	4,288
Australia	4,105
Colombia	2,453
Poland	1,712
South Africa	781
Russia	713
Canada	632
Other extra EC	694
Intra EC[1]	3,022
Total Imports	18,400

Source: HM Customs and Excise.

[1] Following the introduction of the "Intrastat" system for collecting data on trade with our EC partners, the figure for Intra EC trade involves some estimation of unrecorded imports. It also includes an estimated proportion of imports routed to the United Kingdom via other EC countries.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of coal imported in 1993.

Mr. Eggar: The value of coal imported in 1993 is estimated as £687 million this includes types of coal which are not mined in the United Kingdom.

Following the introduction of the "Intrastat" system for collecting data on trade with our EC partners, this value involves some estimation of unrecorded imports. It may, therefore, be subject to greater subsequent revision than figures collected on the previous basis.

Deregulation

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade in what ways he plans to amend the individual divisional objectives in each of his departments to reflect the Government's commitment to deregulation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* The reduction of regulatory and administrative burdens on business is one of the Department's overall objectives. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is using the management information for Ministers—MINIS —system to ensure that divisional objectives reflect this as appropriate.

Distillers plc

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to publish his Department's inspector's report on the takeover of Distillers plc by Guinness plc in 1986.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* The inspectors have not yet been able to conclude their enquiries and in consequence have not submitted a final report. When they do it will be considered for publication.

Office of Water Services, Yorkshire

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what indication he has received from Eric Wilson on his proposed appointment as the chairman of OFWAT's Yorkshire customer services committee; what representations he has received concerning the decision not to reappoint Dianne Scott to the chair of the committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* The appointment of the chairman of OFWAT's Yorkshire customer service committee is a matter for the Director General of Water Services after consultation with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. I understand that no representations have been received by the President following the announcement of the appointment of Mr. Eric Wilson to the chair of this committee.

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many members of OFWAT's Yorkshire customer services committee have, to date, tendered their resignation; what indications he has received from other members of their intention to resign from the committee; how many places on the committee are currently vacant; and what is the recommended total membership of the committee.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* These are matters for the Director General of Water Services.

Vehicle Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the percentage change in the levels of exports of buses, coaches and mini-buses between 1988 and 1992; what were corresponding figures for United Kingdom (i) imports and (ii) exports from Germany, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Spain and France; which countries accounted for the bulk of the change in United Kingdom exports; and when he expects United Kingdom exports to reach their 1988 level.

Mr. Needham: The available data are published by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Limited in the annual series of "Motor Industry of Great Britain, World Automotive Statistics". Data for United Kingdom exports of buses and coaches, defined as vehicles with 10 seats or more, in total and by country can be found in table 62; the equivalent for imports is in table 91. This publication is available in the Library of the House. My Department does not forecast the balance of payments.

DEFENCE

Management Systems

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department's computer-aided facilities management systems cost; from whom they were purchased; how many person hours were required to commission them; what the estimated and actual saving has been from their operation; and to what extent the use of such systems accounts for the apparent rise in theft noted in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *821*.

Mr. Aitken: Information on computer-aided facilities management systems in my Department is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, a computerised system known as the works information management system, is currently being introduced in MOD headquarters buildings in Whitehall, Bath and Glasgow, principally to provide a register of assets in accordance with Government accounting regulations. The system is operated under licence from Pierce Management Services and is being commissioned on behalf of my Department by Building and Property Facilities Management Ltd. at an estimated cost of £357,000, of which £253,260 has been spent to date. It is not possible to identify the hours spent on commissioning the system nor the savings from its operation, since it is not yet fully operational.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of the Defence Export Services Organisation; and what its annual expenditure was in each of the last five years.

Mr. Aitken: The Defence Export Services Organisation exists to help British defence manufacturers market and sell their products abroad, within the parameters laid down by Government policy, and to dispose of surplus MOD equipment. The net cost of the organisation in 1993-94 is expected to be some £16·3 million. Changes in accounting conventions make exact comparisons with earlier years difficult.

Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian agency chief executives in his Department are currently paid more than £82,925, excluding performance-related bonuses; and whether such chief executives were recruited directly to their present post from outside the civil service.

Mr. Hanley: The chief executive of the Defence Research Agency is the one chief executive in my Department who earns more than £82,925 per annum. He was recruited from outside the civil service.

Arms Sales

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arms or defence-related equipment have been sold to the Philippines in each year since 1986.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our policy to reveal details of arms sales to individual countries.

Military Training

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many fatalities occurred during static line training between 1970 and 1990; how many of them were head injury cases; and how many were reservists or Territorial Army members.

Mr. Hanley: There were five fatalities during the course of military static line training between 1970 and 1990, one of which resulted from injuries to the head. Four of these fatalities involved reservists or members of the territorial army.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many deaths there were at the military training drop zone at West-on-the Green in the period 1975 to 1983; and what were the dates of each incident.

Mr. Hanley: There were four fatal accidents in the course of military parachute training at the drop zone at Weston-on-the-Green during the period 1978 to 1983. These occurred on 30 March 1978, 13 June 1978, 20 June 1979 and 16 September 1981. Static line parachute jumps were being performed in all four cases.

RAF Finningley

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which is the largest civilian aircraft that could be landed at RAF Finningley in normal operating conditions.

Mr. Hanley: The runway, taxiways and parking area at Finningley are capable of normal use by aircraft of up to the size and weight classification of the Boeing 747. However, the operation of aircraft of this size is currently constrained by ground obstacles adjacent to the taxiways.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the length of the runway at RAF Finningley; and how many *(a)* civilian and *(b)* military aircraft have landed or taken off from RAF Finningley for each of the last four years and the current year to date.

Mr. Hanley: RAF Finningley has a single runway, RW 20/02, which is 2,744·5 m in length. Civilian and military aircraft movements to or from Finningley in the past three years and the current year to date are as follows; figures for 1990 are not available:

Year	*Civilian aircraft movements*	*Military aircraft movements*[1]
1991	17	45,000
1992	16	60,000
1993	20	61,000
1994[2]	4	9,300

[1] Approximate.
[2] To date.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what scope there is to extend the existing runways at RAF Finningley within the aerodrome's existing curtilage.

Mr. Hanley: There is 800 ft of land between the airfield boundary and the threshold of the runway at Finningley. However, the use of this space for a runway extension is not considered practical, partly because of the obstacle presented to aircraft taking off or approaching by the railway line immediately outside the airfield's northern boundary, and partly because the land in question is low-lying and would therefore require extensive works to render it suitable for a runway extension.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which is the largest *(a)* military and *(b)* civilian aircraft to have landed, or taken off, from RAF Finningley during the last 10 years.

Mr. Hanley: The largest military aircraft to have landed at, or taken off from, RAF Finningley during the last 10 years is a Lockheed C5 Galaxy, and the largest civilian aircraft to have done so is Concorde.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total annual cost of running the aerodrome at RAF Finningley.

Mr. Hanley: For financial year 1993-94 the estimated running costs for RAf Finningley are £30,700,000. This includes the operating costs of units based at or run from RAF Finningley, as well as the operating costs of the airfield.

Runway Capacity

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each of the airports and aerodromes in Yorkshire and Humberside that his Department owns or controls, other than RAF Finningley, what scope there is to extend the existing runways within the airports or aerodromes existing curtilage.

Mr. Hanley: The runways in question could in principle be extended by the following distances:

	Runway	Metres
RAF Leeming (only one operational runway)		1,000
RAF Linton-on-Ouse	RW 04	100
	RW 22	350
	RW 28	220
	RW 10	60
Church Fenton	RW 06	Nil
	RW 24	360
	RW 16	120
	RW 34	Nil
Dishforth	RW 34	150
	RW 16	Nil
	RW 28	(after levelling) 320
	RW 10	Nil
Topcliffe	No extension is possible at Topcliffe; the runways are due to be reduced in length to accommodate Army training requirements	

Apart from RAF Leeming, all figures assume that runway approach lighting could be placed on adjacent farmland.

Airport Running Costs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each of the airports or aerodromes that his Department owns or controls in Yorkshire and Humberside, other than RAF Finningley, the total annual cost of running them.

Mr. Hanley: For financial year 1993-94 the total running costs for RAF Leeming and RAF Linton-on-Ouse are estimated at £54,760,000 and £20,300,000 respectively. The figure for RAF Linton-on-Ouse includes the cost of running the relief landing grounds at Church Fenton, Dishforth and Topcliffe.

Airports and Aerodromes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the area of each of the airports or aerodromes that his Department owns or controls in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Hanley: The total area of each site is as follows:

Site	Area in hectares[1]
RAF Finningley	367
RAF Leeming	474
RAF Linton-on-Ouse	291
Church Fenton	206
Dishforth	191

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of his Minister of State for the Armed Forces' visit to south Yorkshire on 27 January; what locations he visited; with whom he had discussions; what notification of his visit was given to hon. Members who have constituencies in south Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I visited Menwith Hill station, in north Yorkshire, on 27 January 1994. I received briefings on the current role of the station from various United States and United Kingdom personnel including the chief of station. I gave advance notice of this visit to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), in whose constituency Menwith Hill station is situated.

United States Military Personnel

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of United States military personnel based in the United Kingdom; how many United States military personnel are at each base or facility operated by the United States forces in the United Kingdom; what is the total number of United States military personnel based in each local authority area in the United Kingdom; and what are the corresponding figures for November 1990.

Mr. Hanley: There are currently 15,954 United States military personnel based in the United Kingdom at the following locations. The breakdown, as of March 1994 and November 1990, is as follows:

Location	County	Numbers	
		March 1994	November 1990
RAF Alconbury	Cambridgeshire	2,159	2,759
RAF Bentwaters/Woodbridge	Suffolk	0	4,800
RAF Brawdy	Dyfed	340	340
Broughton Moor	Cumbria	0	0
RAF Burtonwood	Cheshire	0	250
RAF Caerwent	Gwent	0	6
RAF Chicksands	Bedfordshire	1,237	1,300
Chilwell	Nottinghamshire	0	0
RAF Croughton	Northamptonshire	420	420
RAF Daws Hill[1]	Buckinghamshire	724	724
RAF Edzell	Tayside	820	820
RAF Fairford	Gloucestershire	120	40
Felixstowe	Suffolk	30	30

Location	County	Numbers	
		March 1994	November 1990
RAF Feltwell	Norfolk	62	62
RAF Fylingdales	North Yorkshire	1	1
Glen Douglas	Strathclyde	0	19
RAF Greenham Common	Berkshire	0	2,000
Holy Loch	Strathclyde	0	2,100
RAF Hythe	Hampshire	2	2
RAF Kemble	Gloucestershire	0	19
RAF Lakenheath[2]	Suffolk	4,288	4,688
RAF Machrihanish	Strathclyde	74	104
Menwith Hill Station	North Yorkshire	360	360
RAF Mildenhall	Suffolk	3,033	2,650
RAF Molesworth	Cambridgeshire	423	16
RAF Nocton Hall	Lincolnshire	12	12
RAF Oakhanger	Hampshire	275	275
RAF Sculthorpe	Norfolk	0	0
RAF Spadeadam	Cumbria	5	4
RAF St. Mawgan	Cornwall	100	60
RAF Thurso	Highland	0	330
RAF Upper Heyford[3]	Oxfordshire	1,194	4,500
RAF Upwood	Cambridgeshire	175	181
RAF Uxbridge	London borough of Hillingdom	100	100
RAF Wethersfield	Essex	0	290

[1] Includes personnel at Dunstable, Eastcote, Hayes, Central London and West Ruislip.
[2] Includes RAF Feltwell and RAF Sculthorpe.
[3] Includes RAF Bicester (currently 0), RAF Little Rissington (currently 31) and RAF Welford (currently 37).

European Regional Development Grant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what use his Department has, or plans to, put the £1,000,000 allocated by the European regional development fund grant listed in table 1 on cash plans of his Department for 1993-94, in his departmental annual report and expenditure plans, 1994-95 to 1996-97, Cm. 2501.

Mr. Hanley: The EC grant listed at table 1—Cash Plans—of Cm. 2501 reflects the payment during 1993-94 of the sum of £1,375,000 to the Royal British Legion as a contribution towards the design and construction of their joint services training and resettlement centre at Tidworth. The purpose of this grant is to provide job-related training for ex-service personnel and the wives and dependants of service personnel based in the Tidworth area, and for civilians in the local community.

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up since 1979; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment; and what it was last year and two years ago.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has not set up any self-financing regulatory authorities since 1979.

Quangos

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of quangos for which he is responsible; how much in public funds has been given to each quango in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment of each quango; and what it was five years ago.

Mr. Hanley: Such information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993" and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies of all editions are available in the Libraries of the House.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has not been responsible for any secondary legislation with a regulatory impact on business in the last three years.

Sir Bedivere

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to invite tenders for the refitting of Royal Fleet Auxiliary Ship Sir Bedivere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: RFA Sir Bedivere is presently the subject of a competition for a ship life extension programme as opposed to a programmed refit. An invitation to tender for Sir Bedivere's SLEP was issued on 26 November 1993 and tender return date is 24 March 1994.

Landing Platform Dock

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the project definition studies for the landing platform dock began; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: There have been two phases of project definition studies for the landing platform dock replacement. Initial project definition studies began in November 1991 and were completed in early 1993. A second phase commenced in May 1993 and is due to complete this spring. We will then take a decision on the issuing of an invitation to tender for the design and build of the first of class.

Malaysia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence project team's advice under the Malaysian memorandum of understanding, on the reasonableness of prices quoted by United Kingdom suppliers was based on the final delivered price in Malaysia.

Mr. Aitken: The advice given was on a Government-to-Government basis and as such is confidential.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which activities of United Kingdom suppliers are being monitored by the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence project team under the Malaysian memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Aitken: The MOD project team monitors progress on those contracts designated under the MOU.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what elements within the designated contracts under the Malaysian memorandum of understanding the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence project team advised the Malaysian Government on how to negotiate most effectively.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has not been asked to provide advice on negotiations.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence project team set up under the Malaysian memorandum of understanding; how much of the cost will be covered by the management fee; and what are the component costs of the project team.

Mr. Aitken: The cost of the project team is funded entirely from the management fee.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 17 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Judicial Studies Board

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many advisory committees, in addition to the Ethnic Minorities Advisory Committee, operate under the auspices of the Judicial Studies Board; what are their terms of reference; and if he will list the members and chairpersons of each of these advisory committees, including the Ethnic Minorities Advisory Committee.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Ethnic Minorities Advisory Committee is the only advisory committee of the Judicial Studies Board.

The current membership of EMAC is:

Mr. Justice Brooke (Chairman)
Mr. Trevor Hall (Vice-Chairman)
Ms Kamlesh Bahl
Professor Michael Banton JP
Mrs. Jasu Chatwani
Judge Gerald Coles QC
Ms Shirley Daniel
Mrs. Sylvia Denman CBE
Mr. Navnit Dholakia OBE, JP
Mr. Peter Herbert
Dr. Zaka Ullah Khan OBE, JP
Judge Nicholas Medawar QC
Mr. Goolam Meeran
Ms Patricia Scotland QC
Professor Avrom Sherr
Mr. Ranjit Sondhi
District Judge Peter Wartnaby
Ms Anesta Weekes
Ms Cecilia Wells

Judges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many judges were educated at independent schools; and what proportion this is of the total in England.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Aggregated information relating to the schools attended by judges is not readily available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what statistics he has of the political allegiance of judges in England.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Statistics are not kept on political affiliation. Judges are appointed without regard to political affiliation and members of the full-time judiciary may not engage in political activity.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the average number of hours per week a judge works in court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps he has taken to implement *(a)* the progressive introduction of open advertisements for some judicial vacancies and *(b)* other reform measures he advocated in his Department's press notice 158.93 of 7 July 1993 on improvements in the judicial appointments system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In his speech to Her Majesty's Judges at the Guildhall on 7 July 1993 the Lord Chancellor said that because of the wide range of issues involved and the extensive preparatory work which his programme would entail, it would be some time before all the measures could be introduced over the whole field of judicial appointments. That work is currently in progress, and an announcement will be made as soon as practicable.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many magistrates in England have declared political allegiances; and if he will provide an analysis.

Mr John M. Taylor: This information can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has to allow those whose applications to become magistrates are rejected to know the reasons for their rejection.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No proposals are required. Candidates are informed of the result of their applications and it is open to anyone not satisfied to seek further reasons from the local advisory committee. The desirability of balancing benches in terms of age, gender, ethnic origin, political affiliation and occupation means that many otherwise suitable applicants are not appointed.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what considerations underlie the requirement on prospective magistrates to state their political allegiances.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor does not wish that any bench should become, or remain, unduly overweighted with the supporters of any one political party. It is for this reason that political allegiances are sought, but they are not a qualification or disqualification for appointment and candidates are not required to disclose this information. The key consideration for appointment is that a candidate should be suitable.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Details of the numbers of staff employed in each civil service grade are set out in the table. In column 2 of the table the total number of staff employed in each grade appears; column 3 shows the percentage of women in each grade.

Civil Service grades in post as at 14 March 1994

Substantive grade	*Staff in post*	*Per cent. of women in grade*
Grade 1	1	0·0
Grade 2	2	0·0
Grade 3	9	11·1
Grade 4	5	0·0
Grade 5	19	15·8
Grade 5 solicitor	14	21·4
Grade 6 senior principal	36	22·2
Grade 6 legal	35	31·4
Senior legal assistant	8	25·0
Grade 7 principal	154	29·9
Grade 7 legal	52	61·5
Legal assistant	2	0·0
Legal officer	1	100·0
SEO	326	34·4
Senior assistant statistician	2	0·0
Senior information officer	1	0·0
HEO	1,062	52·1
Information officer	2	50·0
Assistant statistician	1	0·0
Chief typing manager	3	100·0
Librarian	8	50·0
HEO D	8	62·5
Administration trainee	5	20·0
EO	2,046	65·5
Assistant information officer	1	100·0
Senior personal secretary	15	100·0
Typing manager	33	100·0
Assistant librarian	8	100·0
Support manager 2	5	0·0
Support manager 3	31	71·0
AO	4,432	76·4
Personal secretary	69	100·0
Interpreter	2	100·0
AA	635	71·0
Support grade band 1	146	61·0
Support grade band 2	1,426	59·5
Typist	737	99·9
Specialist typist	1	100·0
Trainee typist	4	100·0
Total	11,347	68·6

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will provide whatever information is available of those occasions on which he, or other Ministers in his Department, now or in the past, have signed public interest immunity certificates since 1979; and for what reasons.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No public interest immunity certificates have been signed either by me or by the Lord Chancellor since our appointments. Otherwise, the information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in how many cases since 1990 judges have been asked to consider a public interest immunity certificate.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Legal Aid

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps have been or may be taken against solicitors and counsel who do not ensure that an unsuccessful legally aided litigant is ordered to pay costs.

Mr. John M. Taylor: An unsuccessful legally aided litigant's liability to pay costs is provided for by section 17 of the Legal Aid Act 1988. Any solicitor or counsel acting for a litigant who is successful against a legally aided litigant would have to consider the question of costs against that background.

Legal Aid

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proportion of time and resources, on average, were spent on activities not directed to processing or furthering any individual cases *(a)* before and *(b)* after franchising and BS5750.

Mr. John M. Taylor: *(a)* All but a small number of the Legal Aid Board's central staff have been involved in the processing or furthering of individual cases. On average the staff not involved, excluding Legal Aid Board members, have numbered 60: approximately 4 per cent. of the work force.

(b) The board's management systems accredited under BS5750 are the mechanism by which it processes work and therefore are an integral part of the resources directed to processing and furthering individual cases. A small central team of three staff is responsible for maintaining the documentation of the management system and ensuring the necessary control systems are in place to monitor compliance. The number of full-time equivalent staff employed on franchising will be between 70 and 80; approximately 5 per cent. of the board's employees.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of *(a)* civil and *(b)* criminal legal aid applications were processed by the Leeds legal aid board within (i) two weeks, (ii) six weeks and (iii) over six weeks for 1992-93.

Mr. John M. Taylor: *(a)* In 1992-93 the Leeds area office of the Legal Aid Board processed 74·9 per cent. of civil legal aid applications within two weeks and 94·1 per cent. within six weeks; 5·9 per cent. took more than six weeks.

(b) The grant of criminal legal aid is for the most part the responsibility of the magistrates courts and the Crown court. However, in certain circumstances, area committees of the Legal Aid Board consider applications for review of refusal of grant by the courts. Information on the length of time taken to process applications for criminal legal aid or applications for review is not available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on what criteria the costs of successful legally aided litigants' costs are met out of the legal aid fund rather than by unsuccessful litigants; and what was the cost to the legal aid fund of the meeting of costs in this way in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The order as to costs is a matter within the discretion of the courts. The information requested about the cost to the fund of paying successful legally aided litigants' costs is not available.

Barristers

Mr. Martin Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what was the cost to public funds in 1992-93 of providing barristers *(a)* to prosecute cases and *(b)* to defend cases.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The cost of providing barristers to prosecute cases brought by the Crown Prosecution Service, the Serious Fraud Office, Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in 1992-93 was £81·7 million. Information on payments made by other prosecution agencies is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Payments to barristers in respect of criminal legal aid amounted to £136·5 million. Payments are also made from central funds in cases where a privately represented defendant is awarded a cost order on acquittal. However, it is not possible to identify payments made specifically to barristers from central funds since the information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Legal Aid

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how the practice of paying counsel directly who have been instructed by solicitors acting for the Legal Aid Board accords with the professional rules and practice which should apply to counsel receiving fees directly from clients.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There is no professional rule which requires payments to counsel to be made by the instructing solicitors rather than by the solicitor's client. It is customary for payment to be made by the solicitor but this is not a requirement, professional or otherwise. Direct payment to counsel by the Legal Aid Board, or by any client, avoids unnecessary work and delay.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is his latest estimate for 1993-94 of the percentage of *(a)* civil and *(b)* criminal legal aid applications processed by the Leeds legal aid board within (i) two weeks, (ii) six weeks and (iii) over six weeks.

Mr. John M. Taylor: *(a)* In the 11 months to the end of February 1994 the Leeds area office of the Legal Aid Board processed 81·2 per cent. of applications for civil legal aid within two weeks and 94·9 per cent. within six weeks; 5·1 per cent. took more than six weeks.

(b) The grant of criminal legal aid is for the most part the responsibility of the magistrates' courts and the Crown court. However, in certain circumstances, area committees of the Legal Aid Board consider applications for review of refusal of grant by the courts. Information on the length of time taken to process applications for criminal legal aid or applications for review is not available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proportion of time and resources are currently spent on franchising and BS5750.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The board's management systems accredited under BS5750 are the mechanism by which the Legal Aid Board processes work and therefore represent a central call on the resources directed to processing and furthering individual cases. Over 90 per cent. of the board's employees are involved in such work. A small central team of three staff has the responsibility of maintaining the documentation of the management system and ensuring necessary control systems are in place to monitor compliance. The number of full-time equivalent staff employed on franchising will be between 70 and 80; approximately 5 per cent. of the board's employees.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of *(a)* civil and *(b)* criminal legal aid applications processed by the Leeds Legal Aid Board for the years (i) 1992-93 and (ii) 1993-94 to date had to pay a contribution towards their legal aid costs.

Mr. John M. Taylor: *(a)* In respect of civil legal aid, the Legal Aid Board does not maintain separate figures for individual area offices on this point. Nationally the figures are as follows: (i) 14·1 per cent., and (ii) 14·2 per cent.

(b) The Legal Aid Board has only very limited involvement in the grant of criminal legal aid which, for the most part, is the responsibility of the magistrates courts and the Crown court. In 1992, the last year for which figures are available, about 5·8 per cent. of grants of criminal legal aid made by the courts were subject to a contribution.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on how many occasions the Legal Aid Board has sought to argue that a successful legally aided litigant's costs can be paid out of the legal aid fund in any event and so it does not make any difference to the successful legally aided litigant or his solicitors and counsel whether the costs of the successful litigation against the Legal Aid Board are paid out of the legal aid fund or out of the Legal Aid Board's own budget for conducting litigation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available. The decisions reached as to costs and costs orders made by the courts in proceedings involving the Legal Aid Board will, however, reflect all the circumstances of the litigation.

Pepper *v.* Hart

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *70*, on Pepper *v.* Hart, what estimate has been made of the additional cost of litigation arising from the case; and what issues regarding such cost are being taken up with the governing bodies of legal practitioners.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No formal estimate has been made of the additional cost of litigation directly attributable to the decision in Pepper *v.* Hart. The primary issues to which my earlier answer referred concern the availability of *Hansard*, the costs to those outside Government of tracing proceedings which might be relevant, and the ways in which such costs might be kept to a minimum.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *70*, on Pepper *v.* Hart, if he will list the practical steps which are being put into practice to correct mistakes in ministerial statements during the passage of legislation; and in what manner such corrections will be published.

Mr. John M. Taylor: If it proves necessary to correct any inadvertent ambiguity or error in a ministerial statement made during the passage of a Bill, the aim is to do this as promptly as possible at an appropriate point during the further consideration of the Bill. The best means of doing so and reading such a correction into the official record will depend on a number of factors, including the stage which the Bill has reached and the nature of the proceedings at that point.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Long Lartin Prison

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to the representations made on behalf of Mr. George Long (B2514), HM prison Long Lartin on 21 April 1992.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend's recent decision to refer Mr. Long's case to the Court of Appeal was notified to Mr. Long and to his solicitors on 10 March.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received and from whom, concerning the procedures by which he is seeking to reform the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. Maclean: Since announcing in November 1992 our intention to replace the present criminal injuries compensation scheme with a tariff scheme we have received representations and comments from 143 hon. Members, either writing on their own behalf or on behalf of constituents, six members of the public, and from the following bodies:

Association of Personal Injury Lawyers
General Council of the Bar
Faculty of Advocates, Scotland
Law Society of Scotland
London Common Law and Commercial Bar Association
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
National Association of Victim Support Schemes
Trades Union Congress
Transport Salaried Staff Association
British Security Industry Association
Police Federation
Barking and Dagenham Community Police Consultative Group
War Widows Association of Great Britain
Family Service Units
Changing Faces
Various barristers and solicitors
Various local victim support schemes

Ethnic Minority Funding

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what projects have been funded in the metropolitan borough council areas of *(a)* Barnsley, *(b)* Doncaster, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Sheffield under section 11 funding for ethnic communities; and what funding those projects will receive from his Department in 1994-95.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The titles of projects approved for funding under section 11 in Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield are shown in the table, together with budget allocation figures which have been notified as the basis for grant recipients' own expenditure in 1994-95:

Doncaster

English as a Second Language: Support 4 Schools Enhancement of Careers Education, Guidance and Placement for Young People in the Doncaster Minority Ethnic Communities 1994-95 allocation—£100,338.
Doncaster College of Further Education: Meeting the Needs of the Ethnic Minority Population 1994-95 allocation—£18,684.

Rotherham

Language and Curriculum Development (Schools) Rotherham Asian Youth 1994-95 allocation—£327,313.
Rotherham College of Arts and Technology—English Language Support 1994-95 allocation—£24,874.

Sheffield

Bilingual English as a Second Language—Primary and Secondary Schools.
African Caribbean Education—Primary and Secondary Schools.
Under 5s—African and Caribbean and Asian communities.
Special Educational Needs of Black Pupils.
Education Social Work Support.
Careers Opportunities Race and Education.
Field Support and Strategy.
Community Liaison—Asian communities.
Community Literacy.
Additional Work with African Caribbean Young People.
Additional Work with Asian Young People.
Ethnic Minority Mental Health.
Day Services for Ethnic Minority Elders.
Multi-lingual Communication and Community Access Team.
Children and Young People—Social Services Support.
Asian Womens Support.
Community Group Development.
Information and Welfare Rights.
Black Employment and Economic Development.
Information support and Development.
Ethnic Minorities Occupational Health Initiative.
1994/95 allocation—£1,697,662.

South Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority.

Community Fire Safety Education.
1994/95 allocation—£12,751.

There is currently no approved section 11 project in Barnsley.

DNA Genetic Fingerprinting

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate for the number of entries in the national DNA genetic fingerprint database; whether a DNA sample could be taken in relation to any individual convicted of a serious arrestable offence once the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill passes into law; and how many entries there are on the criminal names index of the police national computer that currently relate to serious arrestable offences.

Mr. Maclean: At present DNA records relating to some 3,000 offences are held by forensic science organisations in England and Wales. Under the provisions of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill the theoretical maximum size of the DNA database would be about the

same as that of the fingerprint record—about 5 million records—since the proposed power to take samples would be broadly the same as the present power to take fingerprints. Whether and how quickly the database reaches this size would depend upon the operational criteria which the police apply in taking samples for DNA analysis.

Under the provisions of the Bill samples for DNA analysis may be taken from any person convicted of a recordable offence, which includes a serious arrestable offence. Amendments will be introduced to ensure that this power applies only to those convicted after the coming into force of the provisions. The number of entries on the criminal names index of the police national computer which relate to serious arrestable offences is not readily available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to seek an order making powers to prohibit the use, by the police, of a DNA genetic fingerprint relating to those who have committed no crime.

Mr. Maclean: None. There are circumstances in which the police need to take samples of DNA analysis, with consent, from people who are not suspected of any crime: an example is the husband of a rape victim, for eliminating purposes. We shall be introducing amendments in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to regulate the use to which information from such analyses may be put.

Police

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of police officers per 100,000 population for each year since 1979 for *(a)* the Humberside, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* South Yorkshire and *(d)* the West Yorkshire police authority areas.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is contained in the following table.

Number of police officers per 100,000 population

Year	Humberside	North Yorkshire	South Yorkshire	West Yorkshire
1979	224	205	206	236
1980	233	207	221	247
1981	231	203	222	252
1982	232	204	223	253
1983	233	203	221	251
1984	227	199	222	248
1985	231	199	222	249
1986	235	197	222	253
1987	235	201	230	257
1988	237	197	231	258
1989	238	197	232	258
1990	236	195	234	260
1991	238	194	234	252
1992	235	199	234	247
1993	230	184	231	238

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration the Data Protection Registrar has given to the definition of "record" in subsection 4 of clause 43 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, in respect of each of the eight data protection principles.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The registrar has expressed his concern that the definition used in the Bill may throw doubt on the meaning of "record" in other statutory provisions, and for that reason the Government are considering tabling an amendment to delete the definition. The registrar has not expressed a view about the implications of the definition for the data protection principles.

Crime, South Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions there were in *(a)* the Doncaster area and *(b)* South Yorkshire as a whole in each of the last 14 years for (i) house burglary, (ii) theft from vehicles and (iii) robbery; and if he will give the total number of convictions for these offences for each year during this period as a proportion of all offences committed.

Mr. Maclean: Information for 1979, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990 and 1992 is given in the table. Data for other years would involve disproportionate cost.

Number and percentage of offenders convicted for certain indictable offences at Doncaster Petty Sessional Division[1] and South Yorkshire Police Force Area and England and Wales 1979, 80, 82, 84, 86, 88, 90 and 92

Year/Area	Burglary in a dwelling[2] Number	Burglary in a dwelling[2] Percentage	Theft from vehicles Number	Theft from vehicles Percentage	Robbery Number	Robbery Percentage	Total indictable [=100 per cent.]
1979							
Doncaster	113	4	36	1	24	1	2,690
South Yorkshire	507	4	159	1	80	1	11,466
England and Wales	19,310	5	7,368	2	3,188	1	412,346
1980							
Doncaster	128	5	32	1	25	1	2,801
South Yorkshire	524	4	171	1	61	1	11,704
England and Wales	22,808	5	8,559	2	3,470	1	455,425
1982							
Doncaster	196	6	69	2	29	1	3,224
South Yorkshire	668	5	254	2	86	1	12,609
England and Wales	24,827	5	12,918	3	4,375	1	475,131
1984							
Doncaster	165	5	79	2	29	1	3,439
South Yorkshire	717	5	276	2	107	1	13,399
England and Wales	25,842	6	10,970	2	4,282	1	449,449

Year/Area	Burglary in a dwelling[2] Number	Burglary in a dwelling[2] Percentage	Theft from vehicles Number	Theft from vehicles Percentage	Robbery Number	Robbery Percentage	Total indictable [=100 per cent.]
1986							
Doncaster	171	5	73	2	18	1	3,280
South Yorkshire	577	5	203	2	132	1	11,760
England and Wales	20,527	5	9,145	2	4,196	1	384,209
1988							
Doncaster	223	7	107	3	12	0	3,079
South Yorkshire	677	6	258	2	100	1	11,484
England and Wales	19,468	5	8,406	2	4,311	1	386,236
1990							
Doncaster	196	8	98	4	22	1	2,540
South Yorkshire	597	6	334	3	144	2	9,580
England and Wales	18,386	5	7,622	2	4,806	1	342,759
1992							
Doncaster	152	7	67	3	27	1	2,180
South Yorkshire	582	7	259	3	129	1	8,742
England and Wales	18,637	6	6,257	2	5,082	2	324,910

[1] Includes cases heard at the Crown Court where the committing court was Doncaster psd.
[2] Also includes 'aggravated' burglary in a dwelling.

Detainees (Self-harm)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many acts of deliberate self-harm there have been among those held in detention for immigration or asylum reasons in each of the last four years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of immigration detainees who have committed acts of deliberate self-harm in immigration detention accommodation, and in Haslar holding centre, in the last four years is as follows:

	Immigration Detention Accommodation	*Haslar*
1990	8	3
1991	15	0
1992	10	1
1993	16	2

Information about acts of self-harm in other Prison Service establishments did not identify immigration detainees separately until June 1993. Between June and December 1993 there were 13 such incidents.

Prison Numbers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of people imprisoned in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. Derek Lewis to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 17 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking what was the total number of people imprisoned in each year since 1979.

Information on the number of receptions into Prison Service establishments for the years 1979 to 1991 is published in the 1989 and 1991 editions of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (Table 1.14, Cm 1221 and 2157) copies of which are available in the Library of the House. The latest available provisional information for 1992 and 1993 is given in the attached table.

Receptions into Prison Service establishments, England and Wales by type of custody, 1992-1993[1]

Type of custody	Year 1992	1993
Males		
Untried[2]	47,593	51,047
Convicted Unsentenced[2]	19,099	30,038
Immediate custody[2]	48,968	49,530
Fine defaulters and non-criminal	21,917	25,646
Females		
Untried[2]	2,376	2,663
Convicted Unsentenced[2]	1,178	1,566
Immediate custody[2]	2,198	2,382
Fine defaulters and non-criminal	1,189	1,590

[1] Provisional figures
[2] A person initially received as untried and subsequently received as convicted unsentenced is counted in both sets of figures. A person subsequently received as a sentenced prisoner is counted separately in those figures.

Life Sentences

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female prison inmates were serving life sentences in prisons in England and Wales on 1 March.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 17 March 1994:

POPULATION OF LIFE SENTENCE PRISONERS

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the population of life sentence prisoners in Prison Service establishments.

The latest available information is for 31 January 1994 and shows that there were 3,148 prisoners in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales serving life sentences, of whom 3,040 were men and 108 were women.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the total amount of public money spent annually on crime prevention in England and Wales; and what percentage this represents of the cost of policing.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information available is as follows. Estimated expenditure on crime prevention in its widest sense across Government Departments in England and Wales in 1992-93 was £200 million. That figure is separate from and additional to public expenditure on the police which was £5·9 billion in 1992-93 and £6·2 billion in 1993-94, an increase of 87 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79. The prevention of crime is one of the key functions of the police. Local authorities also spend money on crime prevention, but information on this is not held centrally.

Rule 43 Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were being held on rule 43 in prisons in England and Wales on 1 March.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 17 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners held on Rule 43 in prisons in England and Wales on 1 March.

The table shows the number of inmates held on Prison Rule 43 and Young Offender Institution Rule 46 on 1 March 1994.

	Rule 43 and rule 46 (own protection)	*Rule 43 and rule 46 (good order and discipline)*
Men	1,284	248
Women	11	3
Total	1,295	251

The table does not include inmates held in vulnerable prisoner units. On 1 March, 1,773 inmates were being held in these units who were not on either Rule 43 or Rule 46.

Prisoners (Christmas Leave)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list by *(a)* HM prison, *(b)* HM remand prison the number of prisoners who applied for Christmas leave and the number of those who were granted Christmas leave; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what criteria he uses when deciding which prisoners may be granted Christmas leave; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 17 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the Office, to reply to your recent Questions about the criteria used to consider applications made by prisoners to be granted Christmas leave, and the number of prisoners who applied for and were granted Christmas leave last year. Figures for previous years are not available.

The criteria governing the grant of temporary release and home leave are set out in Circular Instructions 12/1988, 36/1989 and 43/1992, copies of which are in the House Library. Remand prisoners are ineligible to apply under either scheme.

In addition, specific advice was issued to governors in November last year setting out guidance on the arrangements for the grant of home leave and temporary release over the Christmas and New Year periods. A copy of this instruction (IG 29/1993) is also in the House Library.

The figures set out below show those establishments which received applications for home leave or temporary release, and the number of applications made and granted specifically to cover the Christmas period, including 25 and 26 December 1993. Some establishments have not retained records of the number of applications which were made, and these are indicated as not available (N/A) in the table.

Establishment	*Release applications*	*Releases granted*
Albany	3	1
Aldington	13	13
Ashwell	19	19
Askham Grange	64	58
Blakenhurst	0	0
Blantyre House	18	18
Brockhill	6	6
Camp Hill	20	18
Canterbury	9	9
Dorchester	1	1
Downview	n/a	21
Drake Hall	56	43
East Sutton Park	14	14
Elmley	25	13
Feltham	59	37
Finnamore Wood	1	1
Ford	104	104
Grendon	2	2
Haslar	4	4
Haverigg	16	15
Howell Grange	60	49
High Down	4	4
Hollesley Bay	22	22
Holloway	70	44
Kirkham	71	71
Kirklevington	62	62
Lancaster Castle	76	21
Lancaster Farms	9	1
Latchmere House	130	130
Leeds	10	0
Leicester	4	2
Littlehey	13	13
Liverpool	5	0
Low Newton	2	2
The Mount	73	36
New Hall	6	6
North Sea Camp	n/a	92
Norwich	21	18
Parkhurst	5	3
Pentonville	2	0
Risley	21	21
Rudgate	33	29
Send	21	6
Spring Hill	78	78
Standford Hill	64	59
Stocken	13	13
Styal	12	10
Sudbury	79	79
Swinfen Hall	28	13
Thorn Cross	34	34

Establishment	Release applications	Releases granted
Wakefield	8	8
Wandsworth	n/a	4
Wayland	17	17
Wellingborough	23	19
Werrington	60	30
Whitemoor	2	0
Winchester	n/a	6

Custodial Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were remanded in custody in (i) Humberside, (ii) North Yorkshire, (iii) South Yorkshire, and (iv) West Yorkshire for the latest year he has figures available, broken down by *(a)* sex, *(b)* racial category, *(c)* aged under 17 years, *(d)* aged 17 to 21 years, *(e)* aged over 21 and under 65 years and *(f)* aged 65 years and over.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Provisional information for remand receptions into Prison Service establishments in the areas specified in 1993 is given in the table.

Receptions of remand prisoners into Prison Service establishments in Humberside and Yorkshire—1993[1]

Age at remand	Male – Ethnic origin					Female – Ethnic origin				
	Total	White	Black[2]	South Asian[3]	Chinese and other[4]	Total	White	Black[2]	South Asian[3]	Chinese and other[4]
Humberside										
All remands										
All ages	2,267	2,154	76	22	15	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	295	281	7	7	—	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	1,968	1,869	69	15	15	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All untried										
All ages	1,917	1,823	61	21	12	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	245	232	6	7	—	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	1,669	1,588	55	14	12	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
First received as untried not subsequently received as convicted unsentenced										
All ages	1,285	1,219	40	17	9	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	144	133	5	6	—	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	1,139	1,084	35	11	9	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
First received as untried subsequently received as convicted unsentenced										
All ages	632	604	21	4	3	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	101	99	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	530	504	20	3	3	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
First received as convicted unsentenced										
All ages	350	331	15	1	3	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	50	49	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	299	281	14	1	3	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All convicted unsentenced										
All ages	982	935	36	5	6	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	151	148	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	829	785	34	4	6	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Yorkshire										
All remands										
All ages	143	135	4	1	3	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	23	23	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	120	112	4	1	3	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All untried										
All ages	133	125	4	1	3	—	—	—	—	—

Age at remand	Male – Ethnic origin					Female – Ethnic origin				
	Total	White	Black[2]	South Asian[3]	Chinese and other[4]	Total	White	Black[2]	South Asian[3]	Chinese and other[4]
Under 17	20	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	113	105	4	1	3	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
First received as untried not subsequently received as convicted unsentenced										
All ages	87	81	4	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	12	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	75	69	4	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
First received as untried subsequently received as convicted unsentenced										
All ages	46	44	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	8	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	38	36	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
First received as convicted unsentenced										
All ages	10	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	7	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All convicted unsentenced										
All ages	56	54	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	11	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	45	43	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Yorkshire										
All remands										
All ages	2,089	1,794	123	145	27	336	311	13	2	10
Under 17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	273	235	15	20	3	124	115	3	1	5
22-64	1,804	1,547	108	125	24	212	196	10	1	5
65 and over	12	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All untried										
All ages	1,706	1,464	107	115	20	290	269	12	2	7
Under 17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	209	183	12	12	2	103	95	3	1	4
22-64	1,485	1,269	95	103	18	187	174	9	1	3
65 and over	12	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
First received as untried not subsequently received as convicted unsentenced										
All ages	1,268	1,069	86	98	15	227	211	11	1	4
Under 17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	149	127	10	10	2	72	67	3	—	2
22-64	1,108	931	76	88	13	155	144	8	1	2
65 and over	11	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
First received as untried subsequently received as convicted unsentenced										
All ages	438	395	21	17	5	63	58	1	1	3
Under 17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	60	56	2	2	—	31	28	—	1	2
22-64	377	338	19	15	5	32	30	1	—	1
65 and over	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
First received as convicted unsentenced										
All ages	383	330	16	30	7	46	42	1	—	3
Under 17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Age at remand	Male – Ethnic origin					Female – Ethnic origin				
	Total	White	Black[2]	South Asian[3]	Chinese and other[4]	Total	White	Black[2]	South Asian[3]	Chinese and other[4]
17-21	64	52	3	8	1	21	20	—	—	1
22-64	319	278	13	22	6	25	22	1	—	2
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All convicted unsentenced										
All ages	821	725	37	47	12	109	100	2	1	6
Under 17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	124	108	5	10	1	52	48	—	1	3
22-64	696	616	32	37	11	57	52	2	—	3
65 and over	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Yorkshire										
All remands										
All ages	2,378	2,207	65	91	15	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	239	224	9	2	4	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	2,137	1,981	56	89	11	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All untried										
All ages	1,945	1,808	49	77	11	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	205	193	7	1	4	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	1,738	1,613	42	76	7	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
First received as untried not subsequently received as convicted unsentenced										
All ages	1,136	1,046	32	52	6	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	96	90	4	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	1,038	954	28	51	5	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
First received as untried subsequently received as convicted unsentenced										
All ages	809	762	17	25	5	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	109	103	3	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	700	659	14	25	2	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
First received as convicted unsentenced										
All ages	433	399	16	14	4	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	34	31	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	399	368	14	13	4	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All convicted unsentenced										
All ages	1,242	1,161	33	39	9	—	—	—	—	—
Under 17	143	134	5	1	3	—	—	—	—	—
17-21	1,099	1,027	28	38	6	—	—	—	—	—
22-64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] *Black:* African, Caribbean, Other.
[3] *South Asian:* Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani.
[4] *Chinese and other:* Asian (other), Chinese, Other.

Moorlands Prison

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the cell of the month bonus scheme began at HM prison Moorlands; how much has been paid out to date; which other HM prisons have a similar scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 17 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about Moorland Prison and Young Offender Institution.

The cell of the month scheme began on 19 December 1993. Since the scheme commenced, a total of £114 has been paid out. The scheme at Moorland is a local initiative. No central records of such initiatives are maintained and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Correspondence

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Caernarfon, dated 18 October 1993, concerning the case of the late Dewi Jones of Llanaelhaern in Gwynedd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I hope to respond to the hon. Member very shortly.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a breakdown, by race, for the latest date he has figures available, of the inmates held in each of the remand centres in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 17 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking if he will give a breakdown by race, for the latest date he has figures available, of the inmates held in each of the remand centres in Yorkshire and Humberside.

The latest available information is for 31 December 1993 and is given in the table. The ethnic breakdown of the population is based on the Census of Population ethnic coding classification which was introduced in prisons in October 1992.

Population in remand centres on 31 December 1993 in Yorkshire and Humberside by ethnic origin[1]

Establishment	*White*	*Black, African, Caribbean*	*Ethnic origin Southern Asian, Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani*	*Other Asian, other Chinese, not recorded (including refusal)*	*All persons in establishment*
Moorland	415	23	14	2	454
Northallerton	128	3	1	2	134
Total	543	26	15	4	588

[1] Provisional figures.

Mandatory Life Sentences

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently serving mandatory life sentences for murder; and how many of those have at all times denied their guilt.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available provisional information is for 31 December 1993 when there were 2,564 prisoners in Prison Service establishments serving mandatory life sentences for murder. Information on inmates who deny their guilt is not collected centrally.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. Michael Howard: The figures requested are given in the table, which sets out, by grade, the total number of non-industrial Home Office staff, including those in agencies, on outward secondment or on maternity or special leave, and the number and percentage of women in each grade. The information was generated from the Home Office personnel system on 15 March 1994.

	Total	*Women*	*Per cent.*
Administrative Assistant	2,167	1,577	73
Administrative Officer	4,420	3,105	70
Administrative Trainee	9	3	33
Assistant Chief Officer	2	—	—
Assistant Director	9	—	—
Assistant Divisional Officer	4	—	—
Assistant Immigration Officer	39	22	56
Assistant Information Officer	7	3	43
Assistant Insp. of Fire Services	29	—	—
Assistant Librarian	13	9	69
Assistant Scientific Officer	91	69	76
Assistant Statistician	1	1	100
Assistant Storeperson	102	8	8
C. of E./R.C. Chaplain (P/T)	128	26	20
C. of E. Chaplain	97	5	5
Chief Immigration Officer	361	52	14
Chief Inspector-Animals S.P. Inspec.	1	—	—
Chief Typing Manager	4	4	100
Commandant	1	—	—
Comms. Officer 2	1	—	—
Comms. Officer 3	15	2	13
Consultant Voluntary Services Unit	2	2	100
Divisional Officer 1	1	—	—
Divisional Officer 2	2	—	—
Executive Officer	2,122	1,179	56
Farm Manager	85	1	1
Fireground Supervisor	1	—	—
Foreman	1	—	—
Governor 1	39	—	—
Governor 2	86	7	8
Governor 3	117	14	12
Governor 4	313	38	12
Governor 5	440	30	7
Governor 5 (APS)[1]	25	6	24
Grade 1 (PUSS)	1	—	—
Grade 2 (DUSS)	8	—	—
Grade 3	28	7	25
Grade 4	3	—	—
Grade 5	95	23	24
Grade 6	102	13	13
Grade 7	615	159	26

	Total	Women	Per cent.
Graphics Officer	14	3	21
Graphics Technical Grade	1	1	100
Head of Department 3	1	—	—
Head of Department 4	1	—	—
Head of Department 5	1	—	—
Head of Department 6	1	—	—
Head Pharmacist	1	—	—
Higher Executive Off. (Development)	28	10	36
Higher Executive Officer	1,194	491	41
Higher Graphics Officer	1	—	—
Higher Instructional Officer	28	2	7
Higher Prof. and Tech. Officer	132	5	4
Higher Psychologist	44	32	73
Higher Scientific Officer	178	82	46
Higher Telecoms Tech. Off.	18	—	—
HM Chief Insp. of Fire Services	1	—	—
HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary	1	—	—
HM Insp. of Fire Services 1	2	—	—
Hm Insp. of Fire Services 2	7	—	—
HM Inspector of Constabulary	5	—	—
Immigration Officer	2,209	824	37
Information Officer	19	13	68
Inspector (Immigration Service)	70	1	1
Inspector—Animals S. P. Insp.	17	2	9
Instructional Officer I	1,031	145	14
Instructional Officer II	2	—	—
Interpreter	7	2	29
Lecturer 2	24	6	25
Legal Officer	4	3	75
Librarian	7	5	71
Matron Housekeeper	1	1	100
Medical Officer	86	8	9
Medical Officer (P/T)	108	4	4
Night Patrol	929	81	9
Nursing Grade A	4	3	75
Nursing Grade C	53	49	92
Nursing Grade D	117	95	81
Nursing Grade E	127	87	69
Nursing Grade F	109	89	82
Nursing Grade G	28	20	71
Nursing Grade H	6	5	83
Personal Secretary	495	492	99
Pharmacist	18	13	72
Pharmacy Technician	23	21	91
Principal Lecturer	3	—	—
Principal Medical Officer	5	—	—
Principal Officer	1,348	44	3
Principal Officer (APS)[1]	33	9	27
Principal RC Chaplain	1	—	—
Prison Auxiliary	1,593	314	20
Prison Officer	18,847	1,800	10
Prison Officer (APS)[1]	37	19	51
Professional & Technology Off.	98	11	11
Psychological Assistant	42	28	67
Psychologist	1	—	—
Psychologist-Graduate Trainee	28	20	71
R.C. Chaplain	[illegible]	1	6
Regional Catering Manager	[illegible]5	—	—
Research Officer (Social Sci.)	[illegible]6	9	56
Scientific Officer	[illegible]15	64	56
Senior Assistant Statistician	8	2	25
Senior Divisional Officer	1	—	—
Senior Executive Officer	432	135	31
Senior Information Officer	9	4	44
Senior Inspector-Animals S.P. Insp.	3	—	—
Senior Instructional Officer	2	1	50
Senior Lecturer	3	—	—
Senior Legal Assistant	2	1	50
Senior Librarian	2	1	50
Senior Medical Officer	40	5	13
Senior Officer	3,509	116	5
Senior Personal Secretary	42	42	100
Senior Pharmacist	1	—	—
Senior Prof. and Tech. Officer	147	1	—
Senior Psychologist	48	29	60
Senior Research Off. (Social Sci.)	11	6	55
Senior Scientific Officer	197	31	16
Senior Telecoms Tech. Off.	2	—	—
Shop Assistant	1	1	100
Shop Manager	1	—	—
Staff Principal Pharmacist	5	—	—
Storeperson	465	21	5
Stores Officer Grade A	1	—	—
Stores Officer Grade B	4	—	—
Stores Officer Grade C	1	—	—
Stores Officer Grade D	5	1	20
Support Grade Band 1	150	103	69
Support Grade Band 2	718	435	61
Support Manager 1	1	—	—
Support Manager 2	4	3	75
Support Manager 3	12	11	92
Technical Grade 1	14	3	21
Technical Grade 2	7	3	43
Telecom Engineering Technician	4	—	—
Telecom Technical Engineer II	4	—	—
Telecoms Technical Officer	1	—	—
Temporary Prison Officer	4	4	100
Territorial Inspector	4	—	—
Trainee Graphics Officer	1	1	100
Trainee Typist	1	1	100
Typing Manager	32	32	100
Typist	749	748	100
Total	47,584	13,071	27

[1]APS—Accelerated Promotion Scheme

Campsfield House

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals are currently detained at Campsfield; and of these how many are *(a)* on hunger strike and *(b)* being force fed.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State being for the Home Department how many people are currently being held at Campsfield house; and how many have refused food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On Tuesday 15 March there were 191 people detained at Campsfield house; 118 were refusing food; none has been force-fed.

Mr Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is responsible for the management of Campsfield house; who previously held such responsibility; how frequently Home Office officials visit Campsfield; and how reports on its management are made to Ministers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since its opening on 29 November 1993 the Campsfield house immigration detention centre has been managed on behalf of the Immigration Service by Group 4 Total Security Ltd. under a total management contract. Home Office officials are based permanently at Campsfield house to oversee the management of the contract and report, through senior headquarters staff, to Ministers.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date a Minister in his Department most recently visited Campsfield house.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I visited Campsfield house today.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long on average it takes his Department to reach a decision on individual cases of those held at Campsfield house; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to ensure that those held at Campsfield house are fully able to put their reasons to his officials for wishing to stay in the United Kingdom; what percentage of those held at Campsfield have been able to have qualified representatives to argue their case at the Home Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: All those detained under the powers contained in the Immigration Act 1971 have the reasons for that detention explained to them and they are informed of their right to legal advice and assistance, in a language which they understand. In addition, at Campsfield house there are posters advertising the free services available from the Immigration Advisory Service and the refugee legal centre and detainees are free to make and receive telephone calls. Legal representation may visit detainees between 9 am and 9 pm every day. Others may visit between 2 pm and 9 pm, every day. The permanent Immigration Service staff at the centre are also available to provide advice and assistance as necessary.

General Pinochet

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the total policing costs associated with the recent visit to London of General Augusto Pinochet.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is a long-standing practice not to disclose the costs of security operations.

Mr. Paul Bennett

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the circumstances surrounding the procedural impropriety referred to by presiding Lord Justice Mann in the case of Mr. Paul Bennett and the subsequent discontinuance of the committal proceedings;

(2) if the services of Mr. Paul Bennett were used or employed by any of the United Kingdom's police or Government agencies prior to committal proceedings being undertaken against him.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* Operational matters are entirely the responsibility of the chief officer of the police force concerned. Furthermore, it would not be appropriate to make any comment at this stage on the actions of the police since the case may be considered further by the courts. I understand that a formal complaint has been lodged with the Metropolitan police.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Management Systems

Ms Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much his Department's computer-aided facilities management systems cost; from whom they were purchased; how many person hours were required to commission them; what the estimated and actual saving has been from their operation; and to what extent the use of such systems accounts for the apparent rise in theft noted in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North (Mr. Campbell) of 16 February, *Official Report*, column 771.

Mr. Hague: Computers are used by those employed in facilities management as part of their day-to-day work. There is no reason to suppose any link between this and the number of thefts from the Department.

Disability, Working Allowance

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the reasons for the current level of take-up of the disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: We have commissioned research from the Policy Studies Institute as part of the evaluation of disability working allowance. The evaluation will examine take-up issues. The final report from the Policy Studies Institute is due in 1995. The final evaluation is due for completion in October 1996.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the value of the independent living fund 1993; what proportion has been allocated to date; and what proportion has been allocated to claimants in Wales.

Mr. Scott: Financial provision of £4 million was made for the Independent Living (1993) Fund in 1993-94. I am informed by the director of the fund that, as at 1 March, 17 per cent. of this amount had been spent.

I am further informed that the total weekly payments to all United Kingdom clients stood at the same date at around £31,000, representing an ongoing commitment equivalent to 40 per cent. of this year's financial provision.

Around 10·5 per cent. of the amount so far in payment to disabled people is being paid to applicants in Wales.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the assessment points for the cold weather payments trigger and the days on which the temperature fell below the trigger point in each case over the last calendar year.

Mr. Scott: A list of the Meterological Office weather stations used by the cold weather payment scheme, together with the temperature information used to determine triggers is held in the Library. Information is held only for the mean temperature over periods of seven days and is not available on a daily basis.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients currently in receipt of invalidity benefit are over the age of 58 years in the Doncaster area.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his current estimate of the average value of benefit to those in receipt of invalidity benefit in the Doncaster area.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people in receipt of invalidity benefit in the Doncaster area for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the full range of information requested is not available. For that information which is available I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by Mr. Bichard on 3 December 1993 at columns *121-22*.

Correspondence

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many letters were received from, and written to, hon. Members by him and his ministerial colleagues in February.

Mr. Hague: This Department received 2,522 letters from hon. Members during February. Of these, 259 were passed to chief executives of the Department's agencies for reply. A total of 1,656 replies, mostly to correspondence received in January, were sent by Ministers.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. Hague: The information requested for permanent staff employed by the Department, including its agencies, on 28 February 1994 is as follows:

Grade (including equivalent professional and other grades)	*Total staff*[1]	*Percentage of women*
Grade 1	1	0
Grade 2	4	0
Grade 3	17	18
Grade 4	9	33
Grade 5	122	24
Grade 6	315	23
Grade 7	698	22
Senior Executive Officer	1,476	26
Higher Executive Officer (D)	17	35
Higher Executive Officer	5,950	42
Executive Officer	25,439	62
Administrative Officer	46,412	75
Administrative Assistant	15,071	69
Others	160	73
Total	95,691	67

[1] Including part-time staff paid for more than 10 hours a week.

Notes:

1. Total of 95,691 equates to 88,976 full time equivalent staff.
2. The table excludes:—
   - i staff on loan or secondment and not being paid by the Department
   - ii staff on unpaid leave for more than three months or on unpaid maternity leave
   - iii casual staff.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Interviews

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the interviews he gave to *(a)* the broadcast and *(b)* print media on 8 and 9 March, respectively; and if he will arrange for transcripts of his broadcast interviews to be put in the Library.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 8 March I gave formal radio and TV interviews to: ITN 5.40 pm news, Channel 4 news, BBC TV 6.00 pm news, Sky TV, BBC Radio PM programme and GMTV.

On 9 March I gave interviews to BBC Radio Today programme, LBC, BBC Jimmy Young programme, Channel 4 news, HTV and BBC Radio Bristol. I was interviewed by NHK TV Japan on the Science White Paper.

In addition I spoke to print journalists and broadcasters as I arrived at various engagements during the day.

My Department does not hold transcripts of these interviews and they can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will set out the criteria and conditions he adopts in deciding whether to give full or abbreviated replies to parliamentary questions.

Mr. Waldegrave: I answer parliamentary questions on the basis set out in paragraph 27 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. David Davis: The staff in post figures as at 15 March 1994 for the Cabinet Office, the Office of Public Service and Science, including CCTA, and the six executive agencies for which I am responsible—Chessington computer centre, Civil Service College, Occupational Health Service, the Recruitment and Assessment Services, COI and HMSO, are as follows:

Grade band	*Total number of staff*	*Percentage women*
Grade 1 (including 1A)	3	0·0
Grade 2	19	10·5
Grade 3	26	19·2
Grade 4	4	0·0
Grade 5	70	23·5
Grade 6	93	19·3
Grade 7	347	20·1
SEO	481	26·2
HEO(D) and AT	17	23·5
HEO	877·5	32·3
EO	951	40·9
AO	1,275	67·6
AA	515	67·2
TOTAL	4,678·5	45·4

ENVIRONMENT

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of new furniture for his private office during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Gummer: Such purchases are included within my Department's overall administration expenditure which is published every year in the annual report.

Landfill Sites

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will conduct an urgent study into the extent of water pollution problems posed by landfill sites; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will conduct urgent studies into the connection between the landfill sites at *(a)* Dooking, *(b)* Edgefield, *(c)* Hempton, *(d)* Mayton Wood, *(e)* Beetley,, *(f)* Attlebridge, *(g)* Blackborough End, *(h)* Costessey, *(i)* Harford, *(j)* Barnack road, *(k)* Helpston, *(l)* Wereham, *(m)* Rocklands, *(n)* Pakefield, *(o)* Norwich lane, *(p)* Buckden, *(q)* Bear's Pit and *(r)* Foxhall I and II, and water pollution;

(3) what is the scientific basis for the criteria used by the Waste Regulation Authority to decide whether it is unlikely that pollution of the environment and water will occur from landfill sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of the Environment has carried out research for many years on the environmental aspects of landfilling. Since 1990 my Department has been funding specific research into the effects of landfilling on groundwater. This research is continuing.

It has already enabled the Department to produce the monitoring protocols which will be included in statutory guidance to be published shortly with the Waste Management Licensing Regulations to be made under part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This information will provide waste regulation authorities with a more precise means to decide whether a landfill site is unlikely to cause pollution of the environment or harm to human health.

The sites listed by the hon. Member are mostly old and/or closed. The waste regulation authorities concerned and the NRA are aware of them and additional studies have been or are being conducted, where they have judged these are appropriate. I see no need for any additional study by my Department over and above the research I have mentioned.

Air Monitoring

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what basis sites for air monitoring were selected; if he will list the selected sites and the equipment used in respect of each; and when monitoring came into effect.

Mr. Atkins: The basis of site selection, the sites involved, the measurement methods and the dates of monitoring for urban monitoring sites funded by the Department of the Environment are given in the first report of the quality of urban air review group published in January 1993 which has been placed in the Library of the House. Similar information for rural monitoring of ozone is given in the first report of the photochemical oxidants.

Local Government Superannuation

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the organisations and individuals who have responded to the report of the efficiency scrutiny of the local government superannuation scheme; and if he will place their responses in the Library;

(2) which organisations and individuals who responded to the report of the efficiency scrutiny of the local government superannuation scheme supported the decentralisation of the local government scheme so as to allow local authorities to take responsibility for their own pension provision.

Mr. Gummer: My Department's efficiency scrutiny report on the local government superannuation scheme was completed in July 1993. Over 1,000 copies were circulated widely in England and Wales, together with a discussion paper. Two hundred and forty responses were received from local authorities, other organisations and individual scheme members. A list of respondees has been placed in the Library, but no authority has been received to publish their actual comments. However, respondees may be willing to give an indication of their views if approached. The following organisations expressed varying degrees of support for the scrutineer's recommendation that local authorities should take responsibility for their own pension provision:

Cambridgeshire County Council
Somerset County Council
Bradford Metropolitan Council
Birmingham City Council
Babergh District Council
Cherwell District Council
Woking District Council
National Rivers Authority
The Pensions Trust
Association of British Insurers
Bacon and Woodrow
Clay and Partners
Godwins Ltd.

Radioactive Substances

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the reason for his projected progressive reduction in the expenditure projected on radioactive substances policy from £2·4 million in 1993-94 to £1·3 million in 1996-97 in figure 22 of his Department's annual report and expenditure plans 1994-95 to 1996-97, Cm 2507.

Mr. Atkins: The reduction in research expenditure on radioactive substances policy set out in figure 22 of Cm 2507 reflects the completion of the Department's current research and monitoring programme on radon. Research on other aspects of radioactive substances policy is being maintained on a stable basis, subject to normal year-to-year variations.

Basildon

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what remaining assets the Commission for New Towns has to dispose of in Basildon; and when it will be wound up.

Mr. Baldry: In addition to the 2,444 rented and shared ownership dwellings and 10·7 acres of land due to be disposed of to the Basildon community housing

association before the end of March, the Commission for the New Towns retains the following assets for disposal in Basildon:

390 acres of developable land;
186,633 sq. feet of freehold commercial premises;
6,700 sq. feet of freehold industrial premises;
560,067 sq. feet of leasehold/leaseback industrial premises;
13,190 sq. feet of other miscellaneous properties;
54 commercial ground leases;
3 residential hostels where negotiations are currently in progress with the managing agents;
6 miscellaneous properties used for social/voluntary purposes.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 27 July 1993, the Commission for the New Towns is to be wound up by no later than 31 March 1998. In the mean time, the Basildon office of the Commission will close to the public on 31 March 1994.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the reason for the proposed reduction in expenditure between 1994-95 and 1995-96 on research and monitoring in the environment, as set out at figure 9 on environmental protection expenditure of his Department's annual report and expenditure plans 1994-95 to 1996-97, Cm 2507.

Mr. Atkins: Details of expenditure within the environmental protection programme are given in figure 22 of Cm 2507. Funding of environmental protection research and monitoring increased by about 50 per cent. since the 1990 White Paper, "This Common Inheritance". Year-to-year variations in funding, should be expected as projects move from start-up to completion. For example, the period between 1994-95 and 1995-96 is dominated by the procurement spend profile of the advanced along track scanning radiometer satellite instrument, which is due for launch in 1998.

Liverpool Housing Department

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will call for a report into complaints of corruption in the Liverpool city housing department; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No. Local authorities are accountable to their electorate and, where necessary, to their auditor and to the courts for the conduct of their business. If the law has been broken it is a matter for the police.

PM10 Particulates

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to set a limit on acceptable levels of PM10 particulates in the air.

Mr. Atkins: The expert panel on air quality standards, a group of independent medical and scientific experts which recommends air quality standards to the Secretary of State for the Environment, is currently considering a standard for particulates.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the link between levels of PM10 particulates in the air and traffic levels.

Mr. Atkins: The recently published second report of the quality of urban air review group estimated that in 1991 road vehicles contributed 27 per cent. and 42 per cent. of United Kingdom emissions of PM_{10} and black smoke respectively. In London, QUARG estimated the contribution of road vehicles to emissions of black smoke was 94 per cent.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, columns *294-95*, which local authorities made representations to his Department seeking the use of nature of housing tenure as an indicator for the purpose of standard spending assessment distribution prior to his announcement of a provisional settlement for 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry: Prior to consultation on the provisional revenue support grant settlement for 1994-95, as part the review of standard spending assessments, the following local authorities made representations in support of the use of nature of housing tenure as an indicator in the calculation of SSAs.

Barrow Borough Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
London Borough of Greenwich
Leeds City Council
Sheffield City Council

Hazardous Chemicals

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he published his departmental discussion paper on reducing emissions of hazardous chemicals to the environment; how many copies have been prepared; at what cost; and to whom it has been circulated.

Mr. Atkins: The discussion paper "Reducing Emissions of Hazardous Chemicals to the Environment" was published on 7 March 1994. A total of 1,200 copies have been prepared at a cost of £25,800, which includes the cost of drafting the paper, the graphical work, printing and its distribution. The paper has been circulated within my Department, other Government Departments, relevant agencies and non-governmental organisations, industry and trade associations, all of which have interests in either the manufacture, supply and use of hazardous chemicals as well as their potential impact on human health and the environment.

Air Pollution

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received a copy of the Government Chief Medical Officer's report on asthma and air pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: No.

The Department of Health's independent Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution has not yet reported on the effects of air pollutants on asthma. Their report is expected to be published this year.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he has made in charges payable by operators of industrial processes licensed by air pollution control authorities under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on 9 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *300*.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reports he has received since May 1992 from his advisory committee on releases to the environment; and what actions he has taken in response to the reports.

Mr. Atkins: Since 1 May 1992 the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment has given advice to the Secretary of State on 20 applications to release genetically modified organisms to the environment, made under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) Regulations 1992.

For each application made under the regulations, all ACRE's advice has been considered by the Secretary of State in deciding whether to issue a consent to release a genetically modified organism.

Details of each application and ACRE's advice relating to them are kept on a public register.

Conservation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent meetings he or officials of his Department have had with the Business and Technology Education Council on its national vocational qualifications scheme on environmental conservation.

Mr. Atkins: None. However, the Department suppports the Council for Occupational Standards and Qualifications in Environmental Conservation, which is working with the Business and Technology Education Council to deliver environmental conservation national vocational qualifications.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what support his Department gives to the Institution of Environmental Health Officers programme to improve energy efficiency in private sector housing.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has collaborated with the Institute of Environmental Health Officers on a series of workshops for IEHO members aimed at improving energy efficiency in private sector housing. We are currently considering other possible methods of collaboration.

Acidity

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of his departmental critical loads advisory group reports on critical loads of acidity in the United Kingdom; and what actions he plans to take arising from its recommendations.

Mr. Atkins: The Government warmly welcome the reports of the critical loads advisory group and its various sub-groups. The reports contain a number of recommendations as to further research which the Department will be considering. The group's findings have been and will continue to be an essential element informing the Government's development of effects—based emission control policies and the Government's position in international negotiations designed to reduce transboundary air pollution.

Cadmium Plating

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent support his Department has given to assist research in the private sector or research establishments on clean production technologies to replace the use of cadmium plating in corrosion protection.

Mr. Atkins: The Department has recently offered a grant of up to £390,000 towards the costs of a three-year project initiated by the National Centre for Tribology, within AEA Technology. The centre will undertake the project along with a consortium of 20 or more companies. The project will investigate new technologies to replace cadmium plating in corrosion protection and in bearing materials.

Careers Service

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of funding the careers service has received in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The available information is as follows:

Government grants to local authorities in England in respect of Careers Service Administration

	£ million
1979-80	3·1
1980-81	5·2
1981-82	7·9
1982-83	11·4
1983-84	11·1
1984-85	12·0
1985-86	12·7
1986-87	13·9
1987-88	13·7
1988-89	16·8
1989-90	18·8
1990-91	23·2
1991-92	22·9
1992-93	24·5

Aggregates

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many licensing applications have been intimated to his Department for marine dredging of aggregates in each year since 1989 for the purpose of obtaining a Government view.

Mr. Baldry: The numbers of licensing applications for marine dredging of aggregates intimated to my department in each year since 1989 for the purpose of obtaining a Government view are as follows:

1989	2
1990	none
1991	none
1992	4
1993	3
1994	1 to date

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many licence applications for the marine dredging of aggregates have received a favourable Government view in each year since 1989.

Mr. Baldry: The numbers of licence applications for the marine dredging of aggregates within English waters which have received a favourable Government view in the years since 1989 are as follows:

1989 — 2
1990 — 2
1991 — 1
1992 — 1
1993 — none
1994 — none to date.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total area of sea bed covered by *(a)* licensing applications for a Government view of marine dredging of aggregates and *(b)* licensing applications for the marine dredging of aggregates which have received a favourable Government view, in each year since 1989.

Mr. Baldry: The total area of seabed covered by current licensing applications for a government view of marine dredging of aggregates is 196·08 sq km. The total area of seabed covered by licensing applications for the marine dredging of aggregates which have received a favourable government view, in each year since 1989 is as follows:

1989 — 34·85 km^2
1990 — 35·73 km^2
1991 — 49·17 km^2
1992 — [1]
1993 — no favourable government views given.
1994 — no final decisions on government views given to date.

[1] The licensing application covered by the one favourable government view issued in 1992 was for a change in tonnage for two previously licensed areas: there was no increase in area.

North Race Bank

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to give a decision on the Government's view of the production application by National Rivers Authority Anglia for the extraction of sand from the North Race bank.

Mr. Baldry: My Department issued a letter on 15 March, stating that it was minded to issue a favourable Government view for limited extraction by NRA on Race bank, subject to the finalisation of strict conditions.

City Challenge

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what payments have been made to date in respect of the City Challenge programme for Bolton; and what further authorisations are currently due.

Mr. Baldry: A total of £5·753 million grant has been paid to date in respect of Bolton's city challenge expenditure in 1993-94, the first year of the programme.

Bolton city challenge partnership is forecasting a full spend of its £7·5 million funding allocation for 1993-94. A remaining £1·747 million grant is therefore due to be paid in respect of city challenge expenditure in this financial year.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend the home energy efficiency scheme to all people aged 60 years or over.

Mr. Atkins: Proposals to amend the regulations governing the home energy efficiency scheme which would extend eligibility for the scheme to those receiving disability living allowance and those aged 60 and over were laid before Parliament on 9 March.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will estimate how much it would cost to extend the home energy efficiency scheme to all pensioners and people with disabilities;

(2) if he will estimate how much it would cost to extend the home energy efficiency scheme to all people aged 60 years or over.

Mr. Atkins: An extra £35 million per year is to be made available for the home energy efficiency scheme from 1 April 1994, when the scheme is to be extended to those receiving disability living allowance and those aged 60 and over.

Water Disposal Areas

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to designate new areas as high natural water dispersal areas;

(2) how many areas are designated as high natural water dispersal areas in other EU member states;

(3) when those areas currently designated as high natural water dispersal areas were given that designation;

(4) how many areas in the United Kingdom are designated as high natural water dispersal areas under the EC urban waste waters directive; and if he will list them;

(5) what criteria are used for designating areas as high natural water dispersal areas;

(6) what research is currently being conducted into high natural water dispersal areas.

Mr. Atkins: High natural dispersion areas will be identified on the basis of criteria adopted following a public consultation exercise in the United Kingdom in March 1992.

No areas have yet been formally identified in the United Kingdom. An announcement will be made in due course. We do not have any information on other member states' intentions.

Once the high natural dispersion areas have been identified, the comprehensive studies required by the directive will be carried out to demonstrate that primary treatment will have no adverse environmental effect in these areas.

Council Tax

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities where persons in a lower council tax band may be paying a higher level of council tax than equivalent persons in a higher band due to the operation of the transitional relief scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: On the basis of information received so far it appears that some cases of this kind may arise in 1994-95 in Blyth Valley, Derwentside, Greenwich, Wakefield and Wandsworth, as a result of the decisions of these authorities to reduce headline levels of council tax considerably compared with 1993-94.

Isle of Dogs

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total amount of capital and any other allowances claimed by companies in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone; and how much of that total had been claimed by the time the deadline was extended after Canary Wharf went into administration.

Mr. Baldry: The total cost of capital allowances for all enterprise zones in Britain, estimated at 31 March 1993, was approximately £1 billion in 1993-94 prices. No information on the cost of capital allowances is available for individual enterprise zones or developments within them.

The total cost of rate relief on the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, up to its expiry on 25 April 1992, was £113 million in 1993-94 prices.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. Gummer: The following information covers non-industrial staff in my Department, excluding PSAS;

Grade	*Total*	*Women (percentage)*
Grade 1	1	0
Grade 2	7	43
Grade 3	34	12
Grade 4	7	0
Grade 5	140	14
Grade 6	322	9
Grade 7	788	17
SEO and equivalent	759	19
HEO and equivalent	979	32
EO and equivalent	1,244	44
AO and equivalent	1,569	63
AA and equivalent	732	67
Totals	6,582	41

"London: Making the Best Better"

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what *(a)* proportion and *(b)* number of the responses to the questionnaire accompanying the document "London: Making the Best Better", were from people with addresses outside London;

(2) if he will publish a table giving the top 10 suggestions for how to improve London contained in the responses to the questionnaire accompanying the document "London: Making the Best Better";

(3) what stage has been reached in assessing the responses to the questionnaire accompanying the document "London: Making the Best Better"; by what date the assessment will be complete; and when he will publish the full results;

(4) what *(a)* proportion and *(b)* number of responses to the questionnaire accompanying the document "London: Making the Best Better", referred to a need for greater investment in London's transport system, on the basis of his preliminary assessment.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* The analysis of the replies to the consultation document "London: Making the Best Better" is complete, and we will publish a digest of the responses later this month.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a full list of all organisations, individuals and Government Departments sent details of his preliminary assessment of the responses to the questionnaire accompanying the document "London: Making the Best Better", together with the date on which details were sent.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* In accordance with normal practice my right hon. Friend is consulting ministerial colleagues on a draft text of a digest of the responses to the London questionnaire which will be published shortly. No other organisations or outside individuals have been consulted.

TRANSPORT

Rail Privatisation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what funds he has made available to the franchise director to implement privatisation in 1993-94; and what is his current estimate for 1994-95.

Mr. Freeman: Around £2 million has been provided in 1993-94 to cover the running costs of the office of passenger rail franchising. Estimated running costs in 1994-95 are £10 million.

Government support for passenger services will continue to be provided. The estimated level of support in 1994-95 is £1,825 million, the greater proportion of which will be paid via the Franchising Director.

British Transport Police

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what legislative steps the Government intend to take in connection with the jurisdiction of the transport police.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what change will take place on Railtrack's vesting day to powers of pursuit or arrest by the British transport police constables;

(2) what change to powers of pursuit or arrest will be experienced by British transport police constables on the vesting day of any rail franchise;

(3) what plans he has to introduce legislation relating to the powers of the British transport police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he now intends to take to protect the powers and scope of jurisdiction of the British transport police after 1 April.

Mr. Freeman: The Government will introduce at the earliest possible opportunity a short Bill to clarify the jurisdiction of the British Transport police following discussions with British Rail and the chief constable.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has come to a firm conclusion on the future of vehicle inspectorate testing functions.

Mr. MacGregor: I have decided, in the light of responses to the proposals outlined last May, and taking account of the work I subsequently commissioned from consultants Price Waterhouse, not to transfer the vehicle inspectorate's testing activities to the private sector.

The consultants concluded that while privatisation was feasible a number of my main objectives, including, in particular, the development of significant competition in the provision of testing services and the transfer of the freeholds of the testing sites to the purchasers, would not be possible if a successful sale was to be achieved. Moreover, their analysis drew attention to the possibility that privatisation might limit the scope for innovation in the future provision of testing services, a concern shared by the road transport industry. The consultants also confirmed the views previously expressed to me that most customers believe that they are well served by the vehicle inspectorate.

In deciding that the whole of the inspectorate should remain an executive agency of the Department of Transport I have instructed the chief executive to develop plans which will build substantially on the organisation's current levels of efficiency and quality of service. I have asked the chief executive to report quickly to me on the scope for substantial future savings. I will also be taking forward an initiative to facilitate a significant expansion of the arrangements for on site testing by the inspectorate's staff at operators' own, suitably equipped premises. This featured in the industry's own response to my original proposals.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Aerospace

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade during what periods since 1990 there has been a Government appointed director on British Aerospace's main board; who were the nominees; and if they receive payment for their services.

Mr. Sainsbury: There has been a Government-appointed director throughout the period since 1990. The appointee is Mr. Keith Brown. He is a director of the company and has, therefore, received no payment from Government for his services.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what golden share provisions have continued to exist with British Aerospace since 1992; when the terms on which such shares were varied; and what golden shares provisions could apply to British Aerospace subsidiaries, after their disposal by that company.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government have held a special share in British Aerospace public limited company throughout the period since 1992. The rights attaching to the special share are set out in the company's articles of association. There has been no amendment to the articles to which these rights relate in this period. The Government do not hold a special share in any of British Aerospace's subsidiary companies, so no special share provisions apply to such companies.

Manufacturing Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what was the import/export ratio for trade in manufactures with Brazil in 1993 to the latest available date and what was the corresponding surplus or deficit; what were the figures for 1970, 1979 and 1985 and the corresponding level of the real exchange rate compared to 1993; and if he will list the principal surpluses or deficits in 1993 together with the reasons therefore;

(2) what was the import/export ratio for trade in manufactures with Switzerland in 1993 to the latest available date and what was the corresponding surplus or deficit; what were the figures for 1970, 1979 and 1985 and the corresponding level of the real exchange rate compared to 1993; and if he will list the principal surpluses or deficits in 1993 together with the reasons therefore;

(3) what was the import/export ratio for trade in manufactures with Austria in 1993 to the latest available date and what was the corresponding surplus or deficit; what were the figures for 1970, 1979 and 1985 and the corresponding level of the real exchange rate compared to 1993; and if he will list the principal surpluses or deficits in 1993 together with the reasons therefore;

(4) what was the import/export ratio for trade in manufactures with Finland in 1993 to the latest available date and what was the corresponding surplus or deficit; what were the figures for 1970, 1979 and 1985 and the corresponding level of the real exchange rate compared to 1993; and if he will list the principal surpluses or deficits in 1993 together with the reasons therefore;

(5) what was the import/export ratio for trade in manufactures with Sweden in 1993 to the latest available date and what was the corresponding surplus or deficit; what were the figures for 1970, 1979 and 1985 and the corresponding level of the real exchange rate compared to 1993; and if he will list the principal surpluses or deficits in 1993 together with the reasons therefor.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom trade in manufactures, defined as sections 5 to 8 of the Standard International Trade Classification, is published regularly by the Central Statistical Office in the Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Since the beginning of 1993, the publication appears in two parts: overseas trade statistics of the United Kingdom with countries outside the European Community, extra-EC trade; and overseas trade statistics of the United Kingdom with countries within the European Community, extra-EC trade: Intrastat. These publications are available from the Library of the House.

Information on real exchange rates is not available.

Civil Servants

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number, grade and destination of civil servants in his Department who were seconded to manufacturing industry in 1993 and in 1994 to date.

Mr. Eggar: The numbers of DTI staff who were on long-term secondment to business organisations, including manufacturing industry, in calendar year 1993 and in 1994 to date are as follows:

	Number
1993	54
[1]1994	34

[1]to date

Additional details on each of these secondments cannot be provided other than at disproportionate cost.

Wind Farms

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the membership of the working group set up by his Department to consider what lessons might be learned from the operating experience now being accumulated on wind farms; and on what dates the group has met.

Mr. Eggar: The working group is concerned only with wind turbine noise. Its membership is:

Mr. R. A. Meir
Chairman
Department of Trade and Industry.
Dr. D. I. Page
ETSU.
Dr. M. B. Anderson
Renewable Energy Systems.
Dr. A. Bullmore
Hoare Lea and Partners.
Mr. M. Jiggins
Carrick District Council.
Dr. J. Warren
National Wind Power.
Mr. H. A. Thomas
Isle of Anglesey Borough Council.
Dr. M. L. Legerton
Secretary ETSU.
Dr. H. G. Parkinson
ETSU.
Mr. B. F. Berry
National Physical Laboratory.
Mr. M. Hayes
The Hayes McKenzie Partnership.
Dr. P. Musgrove
National Wind Power.
Mr. D. J. Spode
North Cornwall District Council.
Ms Emily Tomalin
EcoGen Ltd.
Mr. M. Trinick
Bond Pearce Solicitors.

It has met on 27 May 1993, 9 August 1993, 11 October 1993 and 10 January 1994.

Nuclear Review

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will publish the terms of reference of the nuclear review; and if it will include a review of the disposal of waste and the merits of dry storage versus reprocessing.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 16 December 1993 to the hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant), *Official Report,* columns *759-60.*

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on British Shipbuilders' external financing limit for 1993-94.

Mr. Sainsbury: British Shipbuilders' external financing limit for 1993-94 was set at minus £7·8 million as recorded in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1993-94 to 1995-96" published in February 1993, Cm 2204. The planned EFL has increased slightly due to a decrease of £0·6 million in British Shipbuilders' income on interest. However, this effect has been offset by the transfer to BS of £0·32 million residual balance from its now-dormant subsidiary Sunderland Enterprise and Training Ltd. The net effect is a small increase in the EFL to minus £7·5 million.

Regional Development

Mr. Hendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has considered the business plans of the English regional development organisations; and what level of financial support he proposes to offer for 1994-95.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have studied the current performance and future plans of the six English regional development organisations. I am pleased to say that they continue to make a significant contribution to the work of my Department's Invest in Britain Bureau, to the overall success of the United Kingdom in attracting inward investment, and in particular to the performance of their region. In recognition of this, I have today offered £5·605 million of grant in aid for their inward investment promotion activities for 1994-95. In total this is an increase of £50,000 on last year. Last year was an increase of £550,000 on 1992-93. I have allocated the grant aid as follows:

RDO	*1994-95 grant £'000*	*Per cent. share of total grant*
Northern Development Company (NDC)	1,461,5	26·0
INWARD Ltd (in the North West)	1,173	20·9
Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association (YHDA)	1,088	19·4
West Midlands Development Agency (WMDA)	818,25	14·6
East Midlands Development Company Ltd (EMD)	400	7·1
Devon and Cornwall Development Bureau (DCDB)	664,25	11·8

These individual grants are very slightly smaller than last year except for the East Midlands Development Company Ltd., and reflect in part the need to respond to changes in assisted area coverage within the total available funding provision for all the English regions.

Grant is offered on an annual basis according to past performance, ability to absorb additional funding effectively, and for an agreed programme of future activities, with proper regard to value for money. It is Government policy to encourage direct inward investment to the United Kingdom because it contributes significantly to economic growth. Inward investment brings benefits both to the country as a whole and more specifically to the assisted areas.

New-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Martlew: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many applications he has received for energy projects under each type for the third tranche of the non-fossil fuel obligation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that the non-fossil purchasing agency has received around 230 applications in respect of the wind band; 100 in respect of the hydro band; 140 in respect of the landfill gas band; 100 in respect of the municipal and industrial waste band; and 100 in respect of the energy crops band.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* The number of statutory instruments made by the Department in the past three years was as follows:

	Number
1991	151
1992	104
1993	86

Redundancy Arrangements

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the redundancy arrangements applicable to staff employed at the National Engineering Laboratory and Warren Spring Laboratory.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* The handling of staff surpluses arising in the Department of Trade and Industry, including its agencies, is covered by the departmental redundancy agreement. Copies of the current agreement have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Compensation payments are set out in the principal civil service pension scheme section of the civil service pay and conditions code.

Units of Measurement

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to table legislation which will implement the units of measurement directive; and what time has been allowed for the industries affected to make the necessary plans for compliance.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 2 March 1994]:* It is the Government's intention that before the summer recess a complete set of implementing measures will be laid in Parliament. Discussions are continuing with trade associations about plans for compliance.

WALES

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he plans to visit Meirionnydd Nant Conwy.

Mr. Redwood: I plan to visit Meirionnydd Nant Conwy again later this year.

Female Workers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many female *(a)* chief executives and *(b)* chief officers there are in (i) local government service and (ii) the NHS in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: According to the 1993 "Chief Executive/Chief Officers Salaries and Numbers Survey", conducted by the Local Government Management Board, among the 41 Welsh authorities, out of 45 which responded, there were no female chief executives and 20 female chief officers in post on 1 April 1993.

None of the general managers of health authorities and family health service authorities is female. One of the NHS trust chief executives currently in post is female and two of the NHS trust chief executive-designates, for NHS trusts which become operational on 1 April 1994, are female. Chief officers may be defined in different ways within the NHS and consistent information is not, therefore, available centrally.

Environment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the environmental initiatives he has taken on green matters within his Department further to chapter eight of the annual report and departmental expenditure plans 1994-95 to 1996-97, Cm 2515, on environmental services provided by his Department.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Relevant information is given in chapter 10 on page 117 of the departmental report, Cm 2515. Further details will be provided in the third annual report on follow-up to the 1990 Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance", which the Government will be publishing shortly.

Exhaust Fumes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evidence he has of a correlation between levels of PM10 particulates in the air and hospital admissions in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A study conducted in Birmingham of the period 1988 to 1990 and published earlier this year has shown that levels of particulates measured as British standard black smoke are a significant predictor of hospital admissions for asthma and all other acute respiratory disorders.

The Department of Health is currently funding a study into the health effects of the London air pollution episode in December 1991. This research will provide useful background into the relationship between hospital admissions and levels of air pollutants.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the Committee on Medical Effects report into the health threat posed by PM10 particulates in the air in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution has not yet reported on the adverse health effects of PM10 particulates in the air. The Government are seeking definitive advice on this issue and the Committee have set up a sub-group to assess the latest evidence on the health effects of all particulate matter.

Levels of PM10s are monitored continuously at the Government's air monitoring network site in Cardiff. When the advice from the committee becomes available we shall be better able to assess the possible health effects of particulates in the air in Wales.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by month for the last 12 months, the number of working hours he has spent in the Principality.

Mr. Redwood: In the 10 months to the end of March, I will have spent 67 working days in Wales on government

and political business. My duties for Wales require me to be in London on Tuesdays and Thursdays for Cabinet Committees and Cabinet. On most Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays I am required to be in London for parliamentary business in the evening.

Electricity

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the gross consumption of electricity in Wales in 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information for 1993 is not yet available. Estimated total sales of electricity in Wales were 16,363 GW/H in 1992.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the reason for the projected reduction between 1993-94 and 1994-95 in housing expenditure in Wales as set out at figure 7.01 in his annual report and expenditure plans for 1994-95 to 1996-97, Cm 2515.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As figure 7.01 of the Welsh Office departmental report indicates, total provision for housing programmes in 1994-95 has been set at £634·9 million, an increase of £27 million over 1993-94 plans and £32·9 million over 1993-94 forecast outturn. The table does not include private sector contributions to the Housing for Wales programme. These, together with transfers from local authorities, are expected to take total housing association capital spending to some £200 million in both 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Redwood: The code of practice on open government will reinforce and build on my Department's existing arrangements for the provision of information. Operational details will be made public in due course.

Rechem

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he received the latest consultants report on the environmental and health consequences of the Rechem incineration plant at Pontypool, commissioned by his Department; how many copies of the report have been printed; to whom they have been made available; and if he will make a statement on its conclusions.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest report on further monitoring of PCB levels around the Rechem plant in Pontypool was published on 10 March. Eighty copies were printed and distribution included the four local MPs; the chairman of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs; the European Commission; Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; the Health and Safety Executive; Rechem; Torfaen borough council and other local interests. Copies have also been placed in the Library of the House.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State indicated in his recent letter to the hon. Member, the report generally confirms results obtained in the main study. The area of higher concentrations of PCBs and dioxins previously identified near the Rechem plant has also been narrowed down to a strip of land about 200 m wide to the east of the plant.

School Leavers

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of female school leavers left school with five or more GCSE's at grades A to C in Mid Glamorgan in the latest year for which figures are available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is given in table 9.11 of "Statistics of Education and Training in Wales: Schools" No. 2, 1994, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Nursery Education

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of third and fourth year children in Mid Glamorgan are in maintained sector education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The proportion of national curriculum year three and four pupils in maintained sector education in Mid Glamorgan at January 1993 was 99·2 per cent.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to this answer to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) of 3 March, *Official Report,* column 792, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the notes on order 24 in the Supreme Court Practice concerning public interest immunity.

The Attorney-General: No. It would not be appropriate to publish in the *Official Report* lengthy extracts from published works which are widely available. I have, however, placed a photocopy of the relevant pages of the *Supreme Court Practice* in the Library for ease of reference—deposited paper No. 10250.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Attorney-General in what circumstances the actual documents to which Ministers have stated that public interest immunity should apply are not themselves made available to the judge.

The Attorney-General: The court will decide, having regard to relevant case law, whether to inspect documents which are the subject of a claim for public interest immunity, and will always do so in a criminal case.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the recent public statements by law officers concerning Crown privilege and public interest immunity.

The Attorney-General: I have no such list, but I refer to my answers to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold):

15 December 1993, *Official Report,* column 640
20 January 1994, *Official Report,* column 726
3 February 1994, *Official Report,* column 833
3 March 1994, *Official Report,* column 792
15 March 1994, *Official Report,* column 576

Disclosure Guidelines

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General when he proposes to revise his guidelines on disclosure.

The Attorney-General: The recommendations of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice relating to prosecution disclosure are at present being considered. The Government stated in their interim response to the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice that they intend to produce a package of measures which would then be the subject of legislation at the earliest available opportunity.

Makanjuola *v.* Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Attorney-General what assessment he has made of the implications for Government Ministers of Lord Justice Bingham's judgment in Makanjuola *v.* Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* the relevant paragraphs of the judgment.

The Attorney-General: The judgment is relevant to my evidence to Lord Justice Scott on 24 March. It is published at page 617 vol. 3 of the "All England Law Reports" for 1992 which is in the Library.

CPS Charges

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General how many charges have been reduced by the Crown Prosecution Service following the defendant's electing for trial by jury for the latest period of 12 months for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: This information is not available and cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the occupation by Indonesia of East Timor in 1975.

Mr. Goodlad: The invasion of East Timor in 1975 was condemned, with our support, in Security Council resolutions at the time. We have not recognised Indonesia's annexation of the territory. We are encouraging Indonesia and Portugal to continue to work together, under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General, to find a solution to East Timor.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to promote a motion critical of Indonesia's human rights record at the current session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Mr. Goodlad: The British delegation to this year's session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights worked hard to secure agreements between Portugal and Indonesia on the consensus statement on East Timor.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received recently from the Indonesian Government.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has recently taken to encourage the Indonesian Government to comply with its human rights obligations.

Mr. Goodlad: The Indonesian Government are well aware of our views. Most recently, we supported efforts at this year's session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to secure a consensus statement on East Timor which encourages Indonesia to live up to its human rights obligations.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the total number of civilian casualties sustained in East Timor for each year since 1979 and in total; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: There is no reliable and independent source for information on this matter.

Cuba

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the present situation in Cuba.

Mr. Goodlad: Cuba is one of the few remaining communist countries. Some economic reforms have been introduced to counter recent sharp economic decline. But there have been no significant reforms leading to political pluralism. Human rights continue to give cause for concern.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. Goodlad: Using the latest available figures, the number of persons and the percentage of women employed in each grade in this Department, including agencies, is:

	Total number of persons employed	*Percentage of women employed*
Open structure		
Grade 2	1	—
Grade 3	4	25
Grade 4	1	—
Grade 5	67	16
Grade 6	102	8
Grade 7	353·5	16
Occupational groups		
Senior executive officer	95	24
Higher executive officer (D)	3	—
Higher executive officer	247·5	34
Executive officer	444	45
Administrative officer	722·5	60
Administrative assistant	118·5	44
Senior economic assistant	2	—
Economic assistant	1	—
Senior information officer	11	55
Information officer	31	65
Assistant information officer	10	50
Senior librarian	3	100

	Total number of persons employed	Percentage of women employed
Librarian	6	100
Assistant librarian	18	72
Museum curatorial Grade D	2	100
Museum curatorial Grade E	1	100
Museum curatorial Grade F	2	—
Senior P and T officer	45	4
Higher P and T officer	49	2
P and T officer	19	—
Technical Grade 1	8	—
Higher mapping and charting officer	1	—
Mapping and charting officer	1	—
Mapping and charting tech Grade 1	1	100
Typing manager	10	100
Personal secretary	150	100
Typist	82	99
Senior scientific officer	81	21
Higher scientific officer	62	37
Scientific officer	35	37
Assistant scientific officer	22	59
Catering manager 1	1	—
Catering manager 2	1	—
Catering manager 3	3	33
Higher photographic officer	1	—
Photographic officer	1	—
Higher graphics officer	1	100
Graphics officer	1	100
Dep Reg Vet officer	2	—
Agricultural officer 1	18	—
Agricultural officer 2	5	—
P and GS Grade B	3	—
P and GS Grade C	5	—
P and GS Grade D	9	—
P and GS Grade E	11	—
Stores officer Grade B	1	—
Stores officer Grade C	2	50
Stores officer Grade D	5	—
Support manager 1	4	—
Support manager 2	9	67
Support manager 3	45	44
Support grade band 1	222	36
Support grade band 2	271	45
Senior TTO	18	—
Higher TTO	70	1
TTO	102	1
Assistant TTO	95	4
Communications Officer IV	1	100
Industrial grades	55	38
Departmental groups		
Senior grade	135	4
Diplomatic service grade 4	268	4
Diplomatic service grade 5	428	13
Diplomatic service grade 6	260·5	12
Diplomatic service grade 7M	424	22
Diplomatic service grade 7D	112	33
Diplomatic service grade 8	57	16
Diplomatic service grade 9	784	51
Diplomatic service grade 10	446	41
Legal adviser	1	—
Second legal adviser	1	—
Deputy legal adviser	2	—
Legal counsellor	7	43
Senior assistant legal adviser	9	33
Assistant legal adviser	4	50
Research counsellor	3	—
Senior principal research officer	14	29
Principal research officer	28	46
Senior research officer	32	28
Research officer	1	—
Diplomatic service grade 8C	14	—
Diplomatic service grade 9C	7	—
Diplomatic service grade 5T	1	—
Diplomatic service grade 6T	1	—
Diplomatic service grade 7T	20	—
Diplomatic service grade 8T	45	2
Diplomatic service grade 9T	15	—
Secretary 1	106	100
Secretary 2	441	100
Secretary 3	7·5	87
Chief overseas security officer	41	—
Overseas security officer	146	1
Nurse	4	100
Doctor	5	20
Senior lecturer	10	70
Senior field investigating officer	1	—
Field investigating officer 2	16	19
Translator 1	1	—
Translator 2	5·5	82
Translator 3	2	50
Chief cypher superintendent	3	—
Cypher superintendent	12	—
Cypher supervisor	31	—
Telecommunications and cypher officer	103	6
Operator technician	1	—
Queen's messenger	27	—
Queen's messenger escort	4	—

EMPLOYMENT

Manufacturing Employment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in employment in United Kingdom manufacturing in absolute and percentage terms since the United Kingdom joined the EC; and what is the corresponding figure for other industrial countries.

Miss Widdecombe: Comparable information for all G7 countries is only available for the production and construction industries combined, of which manufacturing is the largest component. Changes since June 1973 are shown in the following table. The shift from manufacturing towards services is a trend shared by all western industrial nations. Nonetheless, the output of United Kingdom manufacturing industry increased by 1·5 per cent. between 1973 and 1993. This reflects a substantial improvement in productivity, up by 77·4 per cent. over the same period.

Changes in civilian employment in production and construction industries in the major 7 nations (G7) between June 1973 and September 1993[1]

(Thousands)

	Absolute Change	Percentage Change
Canada	+204	+8
United States of America	+1,071	+4
Japan	+2,797	+14
France	−2,675	−32
West Germany	−2,005	−16
Italy	−715	−10
United Kingdom[2]	−4,121	−39

Source: OECD, except United Kingdom (Employment Department).

[1] Latest available data.

[2] Figures exclude participants in work related Government training programmes (for which separate industry estimates are not available).

Finance Sector Employees

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in banking, insurance and finance in the Yorkshire and Humberside

region in the last quarter for which figures are available; and if he will give the equivalent quarter figures for 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information is given in the following table:

Numbers employed in Yorkshire and Humberside in banking, finance, insurance and their auxiliary activities (including employees and self-employed only)

Thousands

Quarter	*Employees and self-employed*
Spring 1989	57
Spring 1990	64
Spring 1991	70
Spring 1992	79
Summer 1992	78
Spring 1993	79
Summer 1993	77

Source: Labour Force Survey (not seasonally adjusted).

Training

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money has been spent by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the European Community on training (i) unemployed youths aged 16 to 18 years, (ii) 18 to 24-year-olds and (iii) the long-term unemployed in the Doncaster area; how many such trainees subsequently found employment; and which organisations were so financed to (1) commission and (2) conduct the programmes in each of the last four years.

Miss Widdecombe: The answer is as follows:

(a) Employment Department:

Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council Funding

	1991-92 £	*1992-93* £	*1993-94 to 30 January 1994* £
Careership (youth training)	13,349,000	10,632,000	12,834,000
Adult training	7,448,000	7,778,000	7,026,500

Trainees finding employment	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94 to 30 January 1994*
16 to 18 years	n/a	1,537	1,134
18 to 24 years	n/a	293	217
Long-term unemployed	1,136	1,185	1,099

The Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) were financed by the Government to commission these programmes and sub-contract them to local providers in the Barnsley and Doncaster area; information on the Doncaster area alone is not available.

(b) The European Community, through the European Social Fund (ESF) provides support, on a national and regional basis, for unemployed young people aged under 25 years and for long-term unemployed adults aged 25 and over. Details of ESF support for unemployed people in the age ranges 16 to 18 and 18 to 24 and for the long-term unemployed in any specific locality, and information on organisations financed to commission and conduct programmes, are confidential to TECs and local authorities.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what follow-up survey has been conducted by his Department of people who have participated in training courses supported by the European social fund; what are the latest results regarding outcome available broken down by sector and region, and separately for male and female, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Follow-up surveys cover all leavers from training for work and youth training programmes, which are supported by the European social fund. Results from these surveys are published monthly in the *Employment Gazette*. To complement these arrangements, in June 1993 the Department implemented a follow-up system for people participating in ESF courses run by the non-government sectors. Results will be produced annually and we expect the first analysis of 1993 data towards the end of this year.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the number of accidents on youth training broken down by fatal, major and minor for the latest available three-month period, shown by region; and how many youth training providers had contracts terminated *(a)* in that period and *(b)* in the three preceding months for reasons of inadequate health and safety.

Miss Widdecombe: Table A gives the latest available youth training accident figures for the quarter October—December 1993.

Region	*Fatal*	*Major*	*Minor*
South East	0	3	17
London	0	4	15
Eastern	0	7	18
South West	0	9	29
West Midlands	0	8	32
East Midlands	0	4	26
Yorkshire and Humberside	0	9	69
North West	0	6	69
Northern	0	2	9
Scottish Enterprise	0	4	35
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	1	0	1
Welsh Office	0	2	15
National total	1	58	335

Notes:

(a) Employment Department (ED) figures for YT trainees have been

compiled on a similar basis to those for employees by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). However, the ED's figures also include a number of accidents to trainees in educational establishments, and road traffic accidents, which would not have been reportable to HSE for employees.

(b) Major and minor injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR).

Information on YT provider contracts terminated by training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies for reasons of inadequate health and safety is not held centrally.

Unemployment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the male rate of unemployment in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France, *(c)* Germany, *(d)* the USA and *(e)* Japan for each year since 1979; and if he will indicate the reasons for changes.

Miss Widdecombe: International comparable unemployment rates for males are available from 1987 and can be found in "Eurostatistics", which is published by the Statistical Office of the European Community and is available in the Library. Changes in unemployment rates are due to many factors which vary in their effect from country to country, one of which is the particular point reached in a country's economic cycle. The latest monthly figures from the SOEC indicate that the United Kingdom is the only country from the European Community, Japan and the USA where the rate of male unemployment is falling.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the rate of unemployment among men in December 1993 in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* Italy and *(d)* France.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the following table. No figures are available for the unified Germany.

Internationally comparable ILO unemployment rates for men (December 1993 seasonally adjusted)

	Per cent.
United Kingdom	11·9
Italy	7·9
France	9·5

Source: Statistical Office of the European Community (SOEC) monthly Unemployment Bulletin.

The United Kingdom is the only European Community country where the rate of male unemployment has fallen over the year to December 1993.

Jobcentres

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were placed in employment by jobcentres in the Doncaster area in each month since April 1992; and what percentage of the unemployed in the Doncaster area this represents.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on jobcentre placings can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library. Employment information below regional level is only available from the census of employment for 1991.

During 1993 jobcentres in the Doncaster area placed over 400 people into employment each month.

Earnings

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees earned between 0 and 10 per cent. below, and between 0 and 10 per cent. above the national insurance lower earnings limit.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that in an average week approximately 220,000 employees earn between 0 and 10 per cent. below the national insurance lower earnings limit and approximately 190,000 employees earn between 0 and 10 per cent. above the LEL.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women currently earn less than the national insurance lower earnings limit.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) on 9 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *292*.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what hours are worked per week on average by employees earning less than the national insurance lower earnings limit.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that in April 1993 employees earning below the national insurance lower earnings limit worked an average of 11·6 hours a week.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the average weekly earnings of employees earning less than the national insurance lower earnings limit.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that the average gross weekly earnings of employees earning less than the national insurance lower earnings limit is approximately £24.

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will be the implications for the operation of his Department, and the Health and Safety Commission, of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department and the Health and Safety Executive already answer many hundreds of thousands of inquiries each year, through, for example, their "public enquiry point" service. The code of practice will reinforce and build upon existing arrangements for the provision of information to the public.

Financial Services

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *201*, how many people were employed in banking, insurance and finance in Greater London, including those not resident in Greater London, in the latest quarter for which figures are available and the equivalent quarters of 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is given in the following table:

Employees in employment in banking, finance, insurance and business services and leasing (SIC division 8): Greater London

	Number
December 1989	798,000
December 1990	773,000
December 1991	726,000
December 1992	699,000
December 1993	712,000

Employment Service

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the reasons for the introduction of the new regional, district and area management structure of the Employment Service; how will it differ from existing arrangements; what are the implications for awarding and monitoring contracts entered into with external organisations operating job clubs; how it relates to and affects PACT—placing assessment and counselling—teams and other services for unemployed people with disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms Clare Short, dated 17 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Employment has asked me to reply to your question about the new introduction of the Employment Service management structure.

The Employment Service (ES) is setting up a structure of Districts in order to focus more effectively on the delivery of services to its clients, and provide better value for money. Districts will consist of a number of local offices serving discreet local labour markets, and they will be managed through the existing network of ES Regions.

The new arrangements become operational from April 1994, when the Area tier of management will cease. The new structure will ensure that more senior managers will be directly responsible for managing resources and performance within districts. The existing network of local offices will remain in place, and continue delivering services to clients.

District Managers will be responsible for awarding contracts to external organisations operating Jobclubs, and for ensuring that these contracts are monitored. In this they will be assisted by programme contracting specialists.

The specialist disability service delivered by Placing, Assessment and Counselling teams (PACTs) will be strengthened by the appointment of Regional managers. Their role is to maximise the potential of PACTs, establish effective working relationships with local offices in the new districts and ensure that the appropriate specialist programmes and services are available for clients.

They will also work with District Managers to provide appropriate help for clients with disabilities who do not need specialist help in funding or retaining work.

I hope this is helpful.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women are employed by the Employment Service; and what this figure is as a percentage of the total work force of the Employment Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mrs. Ann Clwyd, dated 17 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of women employed by the Employment Service and what percentage of the total workforce this represents.

I have looked at the latest available staff-in-post figures taken at 1 January 1994. These show that we presently employ 49,061 staff. Of this figure 35,119 are women, which represents 71 per cent. of the total workforce.

I hope this is helpful.

Rules and Regulations

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many rules and regulations his Department has passed in each of the last three years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made the following number of statutory instruments in the last three years:

	New instruments	*Other instruments*
1991	25	10
1992	29	12
1993	27	9

"Other instruments" cover those which amend, replace, or revoke existing instruments, or are commencement orders.

Not all instruments impose requirements or regulations on business.

Self-financing Regulatory Authorities

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many self-financing regulatory authorities his Department has set up since 1979; what was the annual running cost of each of the self-financing regulatory authorities in each of the last three years; what is the current staffing establishment; and what it was last year and two years ago.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* None.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women are employed at each civil service grade in his Department as a whole; and what percentage of each grade is constituted by women.

Miss Widdecombe: The numbers and percentages of women in each grade in the Employment Department Group at 1 January 1994 are set out in the following table:

Women in the Employment Department Group at 1 January 1994

Grade	*Number*	*Percentage*
Administrative assistant	2,234	74·7
Administrative officer	24,402	75·3
Typist	663	99·7
Executive officer	11,107	67·8
Administrative trainee	5	71·4
Management trainee	36	65·5
Higher executive officer(D)	9	45·0
Higher executive officer	1,771	43·1
Senior executive officer	338	27·5

Grade	Number	Percentage
Grade 7	182	24·2
Grade 6	14	10·3
Grade 5	21	18·8
Grade 4	0	0·0
Grade 3	1	4·2
Grade 2	1	20·0
Grade 1	0	0·0

PRIME MINISTER

Cabinet Records

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Prime Minister whether the 30-year rule applies to the handwritten records of each Cabinet meeting; and, after the lapse of this time, whether they will be open to public scrutiny.

The Prime Minister: The Cabinet Secretary's handwritten records of Cabinet meetings are regarded as subject to the Public Records Acts which make provision for the release of public records after 30 years. Section 3(4) of the 1958 Act permits the retention of such records for longer than 30 years, subject to the Lord Chancellor's approval.

The question of the release of the notebooks was considered in the summer of 1993, in accordance with a recommendation in the Wilson committee's report on "Modern Public Records", Cmnd. 8204. The Lord Chancellor has approved the continued retention of the notebooks. It is proposed that a further review will take place in 10 years' time.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 March.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Coastal Erosion

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many square miles of coast have been lost to the sea since 1979.

Mr. Jack: Recent studies suggest that the average annual rate of coastal erosion is probably in the range of 0.08 to 0.2 sq m per year. Much of the material lost as a result of this erosion contributes to coastal accretion or the formation of beaches or banks which provide protection to other coastal areas.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average net annual income of farm owners in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: The farm business survey collects data from a sample of farms throughout the United Kingdom which are classified as full-time holdings. Results are not readily available for the United Kingdom as a whole, but the table provides information on the occupier's net income for wholly owner-occupied farms in each of the four home countries in 1992-93.

Occupier's net income on wholly owner occupied farms 1992-93[1]

	Average for all types of farm £ thousand
England	19·1
Wales	14·6
Scotland[2]	16·7
Northern Ireland	9·1

[1] Occupier's net income represents the return to the principal farmer and spouse for their manual and managerial labour and investment in the farm business.
[2] Includes holdings which are wholly and mainly owner occupied.

French Fishing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has made to the European Commission about the French emergency aid package for the French fishing industry; how much of this aid is new money; for what purposes it is paid; and what assessment she has made of the resulting advantage of French industry over the United Kingdom industry.

Mr. Jack: According to the announcement by the French Government, the aid package takes a variety of forms, including the rescheduling of loans, social payments to fishermen's families, advancement of reimbursement of market withdrawal costs, government-funded promotion of fish, and reduced national insurance contributions. The European Commission has responsibility for assessing state aids and for overseeing their compliance with articles 92 and 93 of the treaty. We have written to the Commission asking them to consider urgently whether the aid package gives French fishermen an unfair economic advantage and whether all its elements are in accordance with EU legal provisions. I understand that the Commission is actively pursuing this.

Farmers

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the numerical difference between the number of United Kingdom citizens whose primary economic activity is farming and the number of public employees and private contractors employed by her Department.

Mr. Jack: No figures are available on the number of United Kingdom citizens whose primary economic activity is farming.

EU Enlargement (Agricultural Protection)

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the notional loss to United Kingdom agricultural producers as a result of the transitional agricultural protection allowed to Austria, Sweden and Finland on their accession to the European Community.

Mr. Jack: The United Kingdom agricultural industry should benefit from the immediate abolition of border

controls as a result of the agreement by the applicant countries to introduce CAP support prices from the date of accession. While the European Union has authorised Austria, Finland and Norway to introduce transitional, degressive national aids where support levels for particular commodities are significantly reduced, such aids should not adversely effect United Kingdom producers. These arrangements will be approved and supervised by the European Commission to ensure that competition is not distorted.

Farm Animals (Poland)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks are carried out to ensure that farm animals coming from Poland are free from radioactive contamination.

Mr. Soames: Council Regulation (EEC) No. 737/90 lays down conditions governing imports into the European Community of agricultural products, including live animals, originating in third countries following the Chernobyl accident. The regulation specifies maximum permitted levels of radioactivity in imported products and requires checks to be made at the point of entry to the Community. In the United Kingdom such checks are the responsibility of port health authorities, acting under the Imported Food Regulations 1984.

Food Imports

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the overall value of all food and food products imported from other EU countries; and what proportion, in cost terms of these imports from *(a)* France and *(b)* Germany were of (i) meat and (ii) dairy products in 1980, 1990 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: The following is the information requested:

Imports of food and food products into the United Kingdom from other EU countries

Year	EU 11 £ million	France £ million	Germany £ million
1980	2,611	356	210
1990	6,659	1,043	621
1992	7,597	1,252	773

Food imports from France and Germany that were meat products and dairy products

	From France		From Germany	
Year	Meat per cent.	Dairy per cent.	Meat per cent.	Dairy per cent.
1980	9·6	8·8	12·6	16·0
1990	15·3	11·3	11·2	22·0
1992	16·9	11·3	8·8	20·6

Aggregates

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and food in respect of how many licensing applications for marine dredging of aggregates her Department has commissioned research into the implication for fisheries of such applications in each year since 1989.

Mr. Jack: Applications for dredging licences are made to the Crown Estate, but the Department is consulted under the Government view procedure because of our concerns about the impact of dredging operations on the marine environment and fisheries. We look to licence applicants to produce a properly researched and comprehensive environmental statement in support of their applications and the Ministry's directorate of fisheries research has recently issued guidelines to indicate the range of issues which need to be considered. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the Library of the House. In addition from time to time the Department's scientists carry out specific research of their own. Since 1989 they have initiated the following studies relating to marine aggregate extraction:

Migration of sole across Hastings Shingle Bank;
overwintering of crabs;
recolonisation of benthos in dredged areas;
the importance of Race Bank to the North Sea crab population;
physical effects on the seabed.

Some of the work is still in progress.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research her Department has commissioned into the implication for fisheries of the production application by the National Rivers Authority, Anglia, for a licence to extract aggregate from North Race bank—area 405; and when the results of the research are expected to be finalised.

Mr. Jack: To enable the Department to make its contribution under the Government view procedure on an application from the NRA to dredge sand from Race bank the Department has required a series of studies to be undertaken. These include a one-year programme of work being carried out by the Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies of Hull university under contract to NRA, in conjuction with MAFF scientists. Studies of the turbidity of the area to be dredged, the benthos and epibenthos and plankton surveys are all included. A series of potting surveys will be undertaken and two have already been carried out. Longer-term work will be undertaken on crab migration using tags and survey trawls will be undertaken of demersal and pelagic fish species.

Additionally MAFF undertook its own study of crab larval distribution in the southern North sea in July 1993 with particular emphasis on the Race bank and north Norfolk areas. Further physical studies by MAFF are continuing. These include current measurements, sidescan sonar, and underwater TV surveys of the benthos and epibenthos. We shall also be undertaking work on the particle size of sediments in the area.

Much of the work has already been completed and most of the outstanding results will be available later this year. In addition some of the longer-term work, such as the crab migration study, will continue to generate information over the next few years.

Mycoplasma Bovis

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farm holdings in the United Kingdom have been affected by mycoplasma bovis before and after the introduction of the single market in each year since 1990; how many cattle are currently infected; how and when the disease was introduced into the United Kingdom; and from where it came.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Mycoplasma bovis was first recorded in the United Kingdom in 1975. It is not a notifiable disease and comprehensive data is not maintained. There are no records of the total numbers of infected animals. The numbers of cases recorded by the veterinary investigation laboratories in the United Kingdom for the years concerned are:

Year	Farms
1990	61
1991	56
1992	36
1993	29

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in which EU member states mycoplasma bovis is a notifiable disease.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Mycoplasma bovis is not a notifiable disease under EC legislation. We have no information on whether member states require notification under their own national legislation.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action the Government are taking to combat mycoplasma bovis.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no statutory powers in respect of mycoplasma bovis.

Days at Sea

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current state of the dispute over the legality of the days at sea regime under the Sea Fisheries (Conservation) Act 1992.

Mr. Jack: Following a hearing between 1 November and 5 November 1993, and in accordance with its judgment of 2 December, the High Court has referred a number of questions on the days at sea regime to the European Court of Justice. The court's order includes a request for expedition, and the Government hope that the court in Luxembourg will recognise the need for a ruling within a reasonable timescale. Meanwhile, as I announced on 14 December, implementation of days at sea has been suspended.

Decommissioning

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many agreements have been made under the decommissioning scheme; on what date the agreement was finalised for the last fishing vessel to be decommissioned; and what is the schedule for the next sequence of decommissioning agreements.

Mr. Jack: Under the Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning) Scheme 1993 135 vessels have been decommissioned: all claims were submitted before 1 March, as required by the scheme.

Decommissioning formed part of a package of conservation measures which is being reviewed following the decision to suspend implementation of days at sea controls, and I am not yet in a position to announce a further scheme.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the position of the German Government regarding bovine spongiform encephalopathy and the importation of British cattle and beef into Germany.

Mr. Jack: Every necessary measure has been taken to protect both animal and public health in the United Kingdom and in our trade with the European Union. These measures have been endorsed not only by the European Commission and the Scientific Veterinary Committee in Brussels but by the World Health Organisation and its veterinary equivalent the OIE.

I have warned the German authorities that I would regard any unilateral action as contrary to Community law and technically indefensible.

The Commission has already told the German authorities that it shares my assessment of the adequacy of the current arrangements for both cattle and beef and that it would take appropriate action in the event of unilateral action.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list for each civil service grade in her Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. Jack: The information set out as at 1 March 1994 relates to non-industrial staff in MAFF, excluding agencies.

	Total staff	Percentage women
Grade 1	1	0·0
Grade 2	5	0·0
Grade 3	22	4·5
Grade 4	8	0·0
Grade 5	91	11·0
Grade 6	101	11·9
Grade 7	697	19·7
SEO	457	20·1
HEO	943	34·7
EO	1,428	45·2
AO	1,886	64·5
AA	2,011	66·8
Total	7,650	49·5

The figures are given by grade equivalent and include all permanent staff, casuals and staff on temporary release. Part-time staff are counted as 1·0.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Duncan-Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the additional cost to EAGGF guarantee spending of the Breydel agreement.

Mr. Jack: The Breydel agreement concluded between the EU and the United States in the closing stages of negotiations on the Uruguay round agreement allows for greater flexibility in the phasing of cuts in subsidised agricultural exports over the period of the agreement's implementation. As a result, there will be an increased

possibility of the export of wheat and wheat flour, cheese, beef, pigmeat, poultrymeat, wine, raw tobacco and incorporated foods between 1995 and 2000.

It is not possible, however, to estimate the precise cost to EAGGF guarantee since the cost of increased expenditure on export subsidies would, in the absence of the Breydel agreement, have had to be offset by some increase in expenditure on intervention or subsidised internal disposal for some of the commodities and quantities involved. In that the Breydel agreement opened the way for the successful conclusion of the Uruguay round it also avoided the very heavy budgetary costs which would have followed from the failure of the round.

TREASURY

Value Added Tax

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the average daily arrears of value added tax for each year since 1980 *(a)* in absolute terms in (i) cash and (ii) current values and *(b)* as a proportion of tax liability.

Sir John Cope: Information for the years 1986 to 1993 is shown in the table:

Table of average daily arrears at 31 March

Year	Amount (absolute) £ million	Current values £ million	Percentage of payment liability
1986	1,351·6	1,973·3	6·5
1987	1,218·6	1,706·0	5·4
1988	1,060·3	1,442·0	4·2
1989	1,085·2	1,367·4	3·8
1990	1,168·7	1,355·7	3·6
1991	1,623·5	1,753·4	4·3
1992	1,927·8	1,985·6	4·4
1993	1,993·9	2,013·8	4·4
31 December 1993	1,897·2	1,897·2	3·7

Current values represent absolute amounts inflated in line with the retail prices index to prices current at March 1994.

This measure was introduced in the year 1985-86, and no reconstruction can be done for previous years.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the amount of value added tax outstanding for each year since 1980 *(a)* in absolute terms in (i) cash and (ii) current values and *(b)* as a proportion of tax liability.

Sir John Cope: Information for the years 1988 to 1993 is shown in the table.

Table of value added tax outstanding at 31 March

Year	(a) Amount (absolute) £ million	Current values £ million	(b) Percentage of payment liability Per cent.
1988	837·2	1,138·6	3·3
1989	884·2	1,114·1	3·1
1990	1,180·0	1,368·8	3·6
1991	1,466·6	1,583·9	3·8
1992	1,628·9	1,677·8	3·7
1993	1,572·6	1,588·3	3·5

Current values represent absolute amounts inflated in line with the retail prices index to prices current at March 1994.

Prior to the year ended 31 March 1988 information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the outstanding balance for collection of the value added tax default surcharge for each year since 1986 *(a)* in absolute terms in (i) cash and (ii) current values and *(b)* as a proportion of surcharge liability.

Sir John Cope: The available information is shown in the table.

Table of default surcharge outstanding balances at 31 March

Year	(a) Amount (absolute) £ million	Current values £ million	(b) Per cent. of default surcharge liability
1988	50·7	69·0	—
1989	61·7	77·7	—
1990	74·9	86·9	—
1991	102·7	110·9	—
1992	132·3	136·3	57
1993	116·3	117·5	59

Current values represent absolute amounts inflated in line with the retail prices index to prices current at March 1994.

No information is held on the surcharge outstanding for 1986 and 1987, or the surcharge liability for 1986-1991.

The absolute amount outstanding is a year-on-year cumulative total.

The percentage of default surcharge liability is based on the total surcharge assessment issued during that year.

Economic Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his assessment of the reasons for the scale of *(a)* the United Kingdom deficit and *(b)* the German surplus in table 6.4 of "Eurostat Basic Statistics of the Community in 1993"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: A country's visible trade balance depends on the strength of its own domestic demand and that of its trading partners, and on the level of its competitiveness.

Capital (Rate of Return)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the rate of return on capital required by industry to justify investment in new manufacturing capacity solely for import saving and export and of the premium demanded to insure against an appreciation of the currency as a result of the Government's monetary and exchange rate policies.

Mr. Nelson: The upward movement of equity prices over the past couple of years does not necessarily signal any increase in industry's required rates of return. The January CBI "Industrial Trends Survey" showed, for the first time since July 1989, that on balance manufacturers are planning to increase investment in plant and machinery over the next 12 months.

Alcohol

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what conclusions Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have drawn on whether United Kingdom citizens are permitted to purchase alcoholic liquor abroad, pay duty in that country and have the goods delivered by a third party to a United Kingdom addresss; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Goods subject to United Kingdom excise duty which have been bought duty paid in another member state of the EU may be brought into the United Kingdom without further duty payment only if they have been purchased by a private individual for personal use and have been personally transported to the United Kingdom by the purchaser. Purchases made in a country outside the EU in excess of a traveller's allowance are subject to United Kingdom duty however they are transported.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the change in the number of weekly hours worked in manufacturing industry since 1989; and what has been the impact on *(a)* shareholders, *(b)* the Exchequer and *(c)* the living standards of the British people.

Mr. Nelson: Statistics on the weekly hours of manual workers in the manufacturing sector are published each month in the *Employment Gazette*, table 1.12. Manufacturing productivity performance has been exceptionally good in recent years, and this sector is well placed to continue contributing to sustained economic recovery.

European Community

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evidence he has of the extent to which the economic losses from EEC membership foreseen in the economic assessment White Paper of 1970—Cmnd. 4289—have been offset by gains; what the gains have been; and what he now assesses as being the balance of advantages.

Mr. Nelson: As paragraph 104 of the White Paper said, this is not a question to which any calculations could give a precise mathematical answer. Further, there have been major changes since 1970 in the economic, financial and trading relationship between the United Kingdom and the EC. A full update of all the contents of the White Paper could be undertaken only at a disproportionate cost.

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury will use the code of practice to build on its current arrangements for the provision of information. Details of the administrative arrangements will be available shortly.

Economic Growth

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average rate of economic growth per annum in the United Kingdom in the period from 1964 *(a)* until the United Kingdom joined the EEC and *(b)* since the United Kingdom joined the EEC.

Mr. Nelson: Average growth rates for gross domestic product can be found in table 16.10 of the 1993 edition of the CSO Blue Book: "United Kingdom National Accounts", which is available in the House of Commons Library.

VAT (Domestic Fuel)

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to ensure that VAT is imposed only on fuel consumed after 1 April, and not before this date.

Sir John Cope: Transitional rules already exist giving fuel suppliers the option not to charge VAT on supplies made before 1 April. Customs have had meetings with British Gas and the electricity companies and arrangements are in the place for these suppliers to apportion bills straddling 1 April to take account of estimates of zero-rated supplies made before 1 April.

The Oval

Ms Hoey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer under what powers the Treasury may object to any proposal by the Duchy of Cornwall to sell the freehold of the Oval.

Mr. Dorrell: The Duchy requires Treasury approval under section 11 of the Duchy of Cornwall Management Act 1863 for any sale or disposal of Duchy land or property. Before approving any such transactions, the Treasury needs to be satisfied that the Duchy will receive the full commercial value of the land or property being disposed.

Under section 7 of the Duchy of Cornwall Management Act 1982, upon application by the Duchy, the Treasury can approve a sale or disposal at less than full value where the latter would be conducive to the good management of the Duchy. In exercising its authority, the Treasury has to take into account any effect on persons living on, or in the vicinity of, the land and to have regard to the interests of future Dukes.

If the Duchy does not satisfy the conditions for an approval under section 11 of the 1863 Act or under section 7 of the 1982 Act, the Treasury would object to the proposed transaction.

The Duchy of Cornwall is responsible for the day-to-day management of its assets, and for seeking Treasury approval to a sale or disposal of any land or property.

Funding Policy

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for funding policy in 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The Chancellor has decided to set an annual remit for the Bank of England's operations in the gilt market to clarify responsibilities between the Treasury and the Bank, and to explain the Government's intentions to the markets. The remit will be published before the start of each new financial year.

Every year, the Government aim to sell enough gilts and national savings products fully to fund the PSBR, maturing debt that needs to be refinanced, and any net increase in the

United Kingdom's foreign exchange reserves. There is no change to the Government's funding policy as set out in the November 1993 medium-term financial strategy.

The Treasury is responsible for all borrowing for the National Loans Fund, under the terms of the National Loans Act 1968. The Bank of England has long been the Government's adviser and agent in the gilt market, where the bulk of these funding operations are carried out.

The Chancellor will also give the Bank guidelines for the detailed operation of its remit. In the past, individual decisions on funding were taken after discussion between Treasury Ministers, Treasury officials, and the Bank of England. In future, any operations the Bank proposes that fall within the remit and the guidelines will normally be approved by Treasury officials. The Bank will send a monthly report to Treasury Ministers on progress, and there will be regular review meetings between the Treasury, the Bank and the Department for National Savings.

The remit for 1994-95 is as follows:

Funding requirement

As set out in the November 1993 Financial Statement and Budget Report, the Government will continue to operate a full fund policy.

The PSBR for 1994-95 was forecast in the Budget to be £38 billion. Some £9 billion of gilts are expected to mature in market hands and need to be refinanced. Maturing and withdrawn National Savings products will be netted off the National Savings contribution to funding, rather than included in the funding requirement. It is not possible at this stage accurately to forecast net changes over the year in the foreign currency reserves, so these will be assumed to remain unchanged on balance. Any overfunding in 1993-94 will reduce the funding requirement in 1994-95, and any underfunding increase it. The funding outturn for 1993-94 is not yet known.

The funding requirement for 1994-95 is currently forecast to be around £47 billion, adjusted for any over- or under-funding carried forward from 1993-94, and subject to any changes in the Reserves.

National Savings

The net contribution of National Savings to funding (including accrued interest) is assumed to be around £3¼ billion. this is not a target, but an estimate based on experience in previous years and forecasts for 1994-95.

Other debt sales

Net sales of government debt instruments other than gilts and National Savings are expected to make a negligible contribution to funding.

Sales of gilts to banks and building societies

As announced at Budget time, the sales of gilts to banks and building societes in 1992-93 will be taken into account before the end of 1994-95. These amount to £6·8 billion, and the required level of gilt sales will be reduced by that amount.

Quantity of gilt sales

The Bank of England will aim to meet the remainder of the funding requirement by selling gilts to the private sector on the government's behalf. On the basis of the Budget forecast, this means selling approximately £37 billion of gilts, adjusted for any over or under-funding carried forward from 1993-94, and any change in the Reserves.

Pace of funding

The Bank should aim to sell at a broadly even pace through the year.

Methods of sale

Auctions will continue to form the backbone of gilt-edged funding. They will be held at broadly monthly intervals, each normally on the last Wednesday of a calendar month. Each auction should be between £2 and 4 billion of stock.

The remainder of gilt sales may be made by ad hoc taps and tenders.

Review

This remit may be reviewed and, if appropriate, revised by Her Majesty's Treasury from time to time. Revisions will be published.

G7 Jobs Conference

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will report on the G7 jobs conference in Detroit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Secretary of State for Employment and I attended the G7 jobs conference in Detroit on 14 to 15 March. Finance and Labour Ministers of the G7, together with some Economics Ministers and representatives of the European Union, attended this meeting, which was opened by President Clinton and presided over by Vice-President Gore. It was the first meeting of G7 Finance and Labour Ministers.

In his keynote opening speech President Clinton said that, in a world of accelerating technological advance, the major countries had to face a choice between protectionism and following the path of change. He said that America had chosen the latter. The President emphasised that people needed to be prepared for a higher skill world; to be ready to change jobs many times in a career; and to change attitudes towards employment of both the young and the old. In conclusion, he believed that the industrialised countries should discuss these issues because it would become easier for them to adopt the right policies at home if they were a part of an international consensus.

There was widespread support for these sentiments throughout the rest of the conference. None of the Ministers supported protectionism. The Secretary of State for Employment and I emphasised the need for sound macroeconomic policies to achieve sustainable growth, open and competitive economies with no protectionism to encourage innovation and enterprise, the importance of improved education and training and active labour market policies, together with flexible labour markets, the need to reduce the costs of employment, and the vital role of small and medium-sized enterprises.

US Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen read out a chairman's statement on behalf of the G7 at the end of the conference. A copy of this has been placed in the Library of the House. The chairman's statement supports the principles and policies that the Secretary of State for Employment and I advocated. It ends with a request for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to examine the relationship between productivity, job creation and technology, especially information technology; and to expand its analysis of data on job creation and job loss. The Ministers present agreed to send employment experts to learn about the employment and training programmes of the others.

I believe that this unique conference was very valuable. It will ensure that policies to reduce unemployment will be high on the agenda of G7 Governments, and will be discussed by Heads of Government at the forthcoming G7 economic summit in Naples. Examining and assessing the policies of other countries and achieving a wide measure of agreement on the way ahead will help our Governments to implement the policies necessary to reduce unemployment. The UK Government are absolutely committed to

co-operating with this policy agenda in the G7 and the European Union and to strengthening policies that will reduce unemployment.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of gross domestic product and gross domestic product per head, for *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland, *(d)* Northern Ireland and *(e)* the United Kingdom; and if he will indicate the appropriate percentages of the United Kingdom average in each case from *(a)* to *(d)*.

Mr. Nelson: The latest available estimates were published in the December 1993 issue of "Economic Trends", available in the House of Commons Library.

Tax Coding Notices

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number and proportion of incorrect notices of tax coding for 1994-95 which the Inland Revenue has sent out; what are the principal reasons for the errors; and what action is being taken to ensure more accurate notices of coding in future.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* Code numbers based on the latest information available to the Indland Revenue are issued in January and February each year. They may subsequently need to be amended if updated information is received or if the Inland Revenue has made an error. It is therefore too soon to estimate the number and proportion of 1994-95 code numbers that for any reason will need amending. The Inland Revenue is constantly striving to improve the quality of service it gives to taxpayers. It is setting targets for getting tax affairs right first time and has systems in place to monitor its performance.

SCOTLAND

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. Lang: The number of staff and the percentage of women in post in the Scottish Office and associated departments as at 1 January 1994, excluding the Scottish Prison Service, are shown by grade equivalent in the table.

Grade (and equivalents)	*Women*	*Total staff*	*Percentage of Women*
1	—	1	—
2	—	9	—
3	4	27	14·8
4	3	18	16·7
5	18	131	13·7
6	36	194	18·6
7	86	484	17·8
Senior Executive Officer	57	477	11·9
Higher Executive Officer	290	960	30·2
Executive Officer	504	1,154	43·7
Administrative Officer	931	1,363	68·3
Administrative Assistant	905	1,413	64·0
Industrial Staff	18	491	3·7
Total	2,852	6,722	42·4

Slopping Out

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each prison in Scotland his plans for ending slopping out.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under the chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. John McFall, dated 17 March 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about slopping out in Scottish prisons.

With the recent completion of the installation of in-cell toilets at Inverness and Aberdeen Prisons, there are 6 prison establishments, out of the total of 20 in Scotland, which in varying degrees require further sanitation facilities. These are Barlinnie, Dumfries, Edinburgh, Perth, Perterhead and Polmont YOI. (Greenock Prison has 4 cells without sanitation but these are held for observation purposes only).

A high priority is being attributed to the ending of slopping out, as indicated in the Estates Strategy for the Service (contained at Chapter 9 of, and Annex B to, the Scottish Prison Service Corporate Plan, a copy of which was deposited in the Library in August of last year). Work is continuing to be undertaken through a rolling programme which, among other things, has to take account of the feasibility of cells being taken out of use for this purpose at a time of high prisoner numbers.

Work is currently underway in installing an electronic locking system, to provide access to night sanitation, throughout a large part of the cellular accommodation at Polmont YOI and it is planned that this will be followed up by projects to provide in-cell toilets in the remaining accommodation.

In the coming financial year, sanitation work is planned to commence in Perth (E Hall), Edinburgh (D Hall), Dumfries (C Wing) and, provisionally, in the latter part of the year, in Barlinnie (D Hall). If we can maintain subsequent progress I would expect the programme to be completed by the end of the 1990s at the latest. Prisoner numbers will however have an important influence on how quickly work can be undertaken.

HEALTH

Life Expectancy and Infant Mortality

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in *(a)* life expectancy and *(b)* infant mortality in the last 10 years in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) other OECD countries.

Mr. Sackville: Death rates in almost every age and sex group in the United Kingdom have been steadily declining over the period 1982 to 1991. This has resulted in increases in life expectancy.

From 1982 to 1991 the United Kingdom life expectancy at birth has increased: males from 71·1 years in 1982 to 73·3 years in 1991, an increase of 2·2 years; and females from 77·0 years in 1982 to 78·8 years in 1991, an increase of 1·8 years. For the same period the United Kingdom infant mortality rate has decreased from 1,098·1, per 100,000 livebirths, in 1982 to 735·0 in 1991, a decrease of 33 per cent. Further information is shown in the table.

The information for other Organisation of Economic Co-operation Development countries will be placed in the Library.

Life expectancy and infant mortality rate for the United Kingdom 1982-1991

Year	[1]Life expectancy		[2]Infant mortality Rate
	Males	Females	
1982	71·1	77·0	11·0
1983	71·4	77·2	10·2
1984	71·5	77·4	9·6
1985	71·7	77·5	9·4
1986	71·9	77·6	9·5
1987	72·2	77·9	9·1
1988	72·4	78·0	9·0
1989	72·7	78·3	8·4
1990	73·0	78·5	7·9
1991	73·3	78·8	7·4

[1] At birth.
[2] Per 1,000 livebirths.

Source:
Population Trends (Tables 8 and 12), for 1982-1990.
World Health Organisation Statistics Volume 1992, for 1991.

Nurse-patient Ratio

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *514*, if she will provide figures for the ratio of qualified nursing and midwifery staff to patients *(a)* by region and *(b)* by district in each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Sackville: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Disability Symbol

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to encourage health authorities and trusts to qualify for the disability symbol.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service trusts and health authorities are free to work with their local employment service placing, assessment and counselling team to qualify for registration on the approved PACT list of disability symbol users.

Ovarian Cancer

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths of women for each of the last five years for which information is available were due to ovarian cancer; what is the latest estimate of the risk of death within five years of the onset of this disease; and what steps are being taken by her Department, and by hospital trusts, to improve detection in the earliest possible stages.

Mr. Sackville: Deaths from ovarian cancer in England and Wales for the years 1988-92 are shown in the table. The average relative five-year survival rate after diagnosis of ovarian cancer is 28 per cent. based on cancers registered in 1981. Early diagnosis of ovarian cancer offers the best prognosis. Research to develop an effective means of ovarian screening in reducing mortality is being undertaken by the Medical Research Council which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who spent £318,000 on ovarian cancer research in 1992-93; as well as by national health service bodies and cancer charities.

Deaths from ovarian cancer in England and Wales in the years 1988-92

Year	Deaths
1988	3,798
1989	3,934
1990	3,995
1991	3,866
1992	3,880

PM10 Particulates

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment she has made of the Committee on Medical Effects' report into the health threat posed by PM10 particulates in the air;

(2) what is her estimate of the annual number of deaths caused by PM10 particulates;

(3) what assessment she has made of the link between *(a)* cardiovascular and *(b)* respiratory disease and levels of PM10 particulates in the air;

(4) what assessment she has made of the link between respiratory disease and particulates of less than 2·5 micrometres across.

Mr. Sackville: The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution has not yet reported on the adverse health effects of PM10 particulates in the air. In 1992, the Advisory Group on the Medical Aspects of Air Pollution Episodes concluded that particulate levels were low and not thought to pose a significant threat to health. They stated that this conclusion was tentative and noted gaps in the available information.

COMEAP has since stated that there appears to be sufficient evidence from recent studies in a number of countries to give cause for concern about the possible effects of current levels of fine particles upon health. This is a complex area and it is not yet clear what role changes in low levels of particles play vis-a-vis changes in levels of other pollutants and temperature and humidity in causing the changes in indices of mortality recorded in a number of studies. Despite these difficulties, reductions in levels of fine particles should be welcomed.

In response to a request from the Department for definitive advice on this issue COMEAP has set up a sub-group on particles to assess the latest evidence on the health effects of all particulate matter and advise on needs for further research.

Deaths are not recorded as caused by exposure to particulate matter. The sub-group examining the assumptions underlying the published calculations of mortality and will advise the Department as to whether an estimate of deaths due to particulates can be determined.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the health benefits of a limit on acceptable levels of PM10 particulates in the air.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is advised by the Committee on Medical Effects of Air Pollution, which have set up a particulates sub-group specifically to advise on the health effects of particulate matter. Additionally, the Expert Panel on Air Quality Standards makes recommendations on these to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. EPAQS and the Department of the Environment are considering a standard for particles.

Some members of COMEAP also serve on EPAQS and the professional staff from the Department are members of the secretariat.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the link between asthma and PM10 particulates in the air.

Mr. Sackville: The Advisory Group on the Medical Aspects of Air Pollution Episodes reported in 1992 that suspended particulate matter contains acidic components which, in laboratory studies, have produced inconsistent changes in indices of lung function in asthmatic subjects. The Department has asked for further advice from the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution and they have set up a sub-group to assess the relationship between asthma and all air pollutants.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has of a correlation between high levels of PM10 particulates in the air and hospital admissions.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is funding a study into the health effects of the London air pollution episode in December 1991. This study will relate hospital admissions to levels of air pollutants. A study conducted in Birmingham of the period 1988 to 1990 and published earlier this year has shown that levels of particulates measured as British standard black smoke are a significant predictor of hospital admissions for asthma and all other acute respiratory disorders.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what expansion there has been in the facilities during the last three years at the Doncaster royal infirmary and Mexborough Montagu hospital trust for treating children with brain tumours and other cancers.

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Mr. C. Bryant, for details.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been undertaken by *(a)* her Department, *(b)* Trent regional health authority and *(c)* Doncaster health authority into the incidence of brain tumours or the incidence of cancers within the Trent regional health authority and Doncaster health authority areas.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional cancer registries are the major source of information on cancer incidence rates. The Department funds the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to produce data on national incidence rates, but does not fund analysis of this data on a regional basis. The Department also funds the Childhood Cancer Research Group at the University of Oxford through which research is carried out into childhood cancers of all kinds. This research is largely carried out on a national basis and provides data on national incidence rates of childhood cancers.

Analysis of cancer incidence rates at a regional or district health authority level can be carried out by the Regional Cancer Registry, if requested by regional or district health authorities. Last year, the director of public health for the Doncaster health authority obtained data from the Trent Regional Cancer Registry about the occurrence of brain tumours, both in the Doncaster district and in the Trent region, for the period 1982-88. These data showed that the rate of ocurrence of brain tumours in Doncaster is consistent with the rates in Trent and in England and Wales, since 1982.

Dentistry

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *159*, what information her Department has available centrally on *(a)* the number of dental surgeons (i) providing national health service treatment and (ii) not providing national health service treatment and *(b)* the division of costs between NHS and non-NHS treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: Available information is shown in the table. The table shows, for the Avon family health services authority area, national health service expenditure on gross fees paid to dentists providing general dental services and the number of dentists in contract with Avon FHSA to provide NHS dental treatment.

Gross fees and number of dentists—Avon Family Health Services Authority, 1983-84 and 1988-89 to 1993-94

Year	Gross fees (including patient charges)[1] (£ million)	Number of dentists[2]
1983-84	12·9	336
1988-89	19·4	364
1989-90	19·3	374
1990-91	21·3	372
1991-92	25·6	374
1992-93	25·7	374
1993-94	[3]—	382

[1] Fees paid to dentists for provision of NHS treatment, including patient charges.
[2] Includes principals, assistants and vocational trainees at 30 September.
[3] Information not available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have been deregistered by their dentists in each regional health authority area in England and Wales during each of the last four years; and how many dentists in each of the regional health authority areas have been involved in the deregistration.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested, which has been collected centrally for England since 3 July 1992, is shown in the table. Over the period July 1992 to December 1993 there was a net increase of over 600,000 patients registered with dentists and 264 dentists in contract with family health services authorities.

Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Number of dentists who have deregistered patients and number of patients deregistered 3 July to 4 March 1994, by regional health authority area

Region	Number of dentists deregistering adult patients[1]	Number of adult patients deregistered	Number of dentists deregistering child patients[1]	Number of child patients deregistered
Northern	51	19,519	14	256
Yorkshire	218	31,476	27	276
Trent	153	38,658	19	48
East Anglia	113	41,235	9	114
North West Thames	101	17,057	6	65

Region	Number of dentists deregistering adult patients[1]	Number of adult patients deregistered	Number of dentists deregistering child patients[1]	Number of child patients deregistered
North East Thames	119	22,872	15	126
South East Thames	444	87,433	28	316
South West Thames	139	67,454	1	4
Wessex	120	62,226	1	2
Oxford	220	74,036	4	30
South Western	331	113,584	33	441
West Midlands	121	28,477	13	57
Mersey	106	8,071	6	19
North Western	254	30,962	78	214

[1] Some dentists may have deregistered both adult and child patients.

Patient Charges

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total amount of revenue raised annually from charges to patients within the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: The total amount of revenue raised in England in 1992-93 from charges to patients within the national health service was £844,166,453. This figure covers the whole range of charges which may be made to patients by NHS bodies and includes; prescription charges; dental charges; the sale of dried baby milk under the welfare food scheme; and charges to patients in both NHS trust hospitals and directly managed units, including private patients in NHS hospitals.

Limb Defects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions her Department has held with the Trent regional health authority and Doncaster health authority concerning the incidence of upper limb defects in children within the Trent regional health authority and Doncaster health authority areas.

Mr. Sackville: None. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) on 1 March at column *678*.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what contacts have taken place during investigations of limb defects in the area of the Trent regional health authority and Doncaster health authority between the authorities and the British Medical Association and other organisations;

(2) which agencies in the Trent regional health authority are charged with monitoring the incidence of limb defects in children born within the health authority's area.

Mr. Sackville: These are matters for the Trent regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Michael Carlisle, the chairman, for details.

NHS Numbers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how copyright can be used to protect the NHS number; and whether copyright would prevent the NHS number from being used by other Government Departments, the police or security services.

Mr. Sackville: Copyright infringement, of the use of the national health service number system outside of the NHS, will be taken up by the Controller Her Majesty's Stationery Office, by way of injunction and damages.

Copyright does not cover the use of the NHS number by other Government Departments. However, there is no intention to use the NHS number for anything other than NHS purposes.

Doncaster Family Health Services Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the amount, recipient and date of all grants made by Doncaster family health services authority by year since 1990-91.

Mr. Sackville: The information in the annual accounts of Doncaster family health services authority is shown in the table.

Year	Grants to General Medical Service Trainers £	Practice Teams and Premises—Improvements REVENUE £	Practice Teams and Premises—Improvements CAPITAL £
1990-91	38,498	—[1]	[1]2,491
1991-92	42,399	13,886	76,444
1992-93	27,472	50,130	100,514

Notes to table:
1. [1]In 1990-91 the expenditure was reported on a different basis to that in subsequent years i.e. as "Improvement Grants", not analysed between revenue and capital.
2. 1992-93 figures are subject to National Audit Office approval.

Source:
Doncaster Family Health Services Authority's annual accounts.

Complaints

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if all health authorities and NHS hospitals have yet published details of both the number of complaints received and how long it has taken to deal with them; and what progress has been made in centrally collecting and publishing this information.

Dr. Mawhinney: All district health authorities have published annual reports on patients charter performance, including data on the right to complain. This means that information is available locally on the handling of complaints. We will be reviewing the information we collect on complaints and publish centrally, in the light of recommendations of Professor Wilson's independent review committee on national health service complaints procedures, and those made by the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

International Year of the Family

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans the Government have to review their plans and policies for supporting family life in the international year of the family.

Mr. Bowis: The Government recognise the importance of the family as providing the essential environment for bringing up children and we give every priority and encouragement to the family in the development of policies. It seeks to ensure that all policies take account of their impact on families.

Government policy seeks to enable families to be self-supporting.

The role of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will be to explain how the Government's policy initiatives affect the family.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will continue to handle the day-to-day co-ordination of the Government's contribution to the United Nations International Year of the Family.

Marriages

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* 16-year-old, *(b)* 17-year-old and *(c)* 18-year-old people got married in each of the last three years.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table.

The numbers of men and women who married at ages 16, 17 and 18 during the last three years for which the information is available are:

England and Wales

Age	Year of marriage 1989	1990	1991
Men			
16	46	50	35
17	357	259	203
18	1,974	1,598	1,258
Women			
16	814	647	516
17	2,549	2,028	1,723
18	8,657	6,934	5,724

Source: Marriage and divorce statistics, England and Wales, Series FM2, Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, HMSO.

GPs (Practice Administration)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hours weekly on average were spent by general practitioners on practice administration in *(a)* 1985-86, *(b)* 1989-90 and 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the 1985-86 and 1989-90 surveys of general practitioners' workload, the reported average weekly time spent on practice administration associated with the provision of general medical services was 1·78 hours and 2·48 hours respectively. A further such survey ran for a year from November 1992; interim results, based on the first seven months' data, give a reported average of 3·53 hours a week.

Health Promotion Clinics

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will make a statement on the value of health promotion clinics in general practice.

Dr. Mawhinney: New arrangements for health promotion in general practice, based on modern authorative medical opinion and in line with "The Health of the Nation" strategy, were introduced on 1 July 1993. Practice-based health promotion programmes play an important part in helping people to improve their health.

NHS Drugs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much profit in the last year was made from the prescription of drugs and other items which cost the NHS less than £4·75.

Dr. Mawhinney: The concept of "profit" has no meaning when applied to prescription charges.

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *346*, on general practitioner fundholders preparatory allowances, what information she has received from regional health authorities in relation to the number of general practitioners who have received the preparatory management allowance in two or more years running.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 10 February at column *419*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy in respect of general practitioner fundholders both prescribing and dispensing drugs; what proposals she has to change this policy; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: In areas where patients do not have convenient access to a community pharmacy, dispensing by general practitioners—whether they are fundholders or non-fundholders—provides an important service. There are no plans to change this policy.

Psychiatric Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the total number of psychiatric beds in each year since 1979.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 16 February at column. *860*.

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the implications for the operation of her Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Sackville: The code of practice will reinforce and build on my Department's existing arrangements for the provision of information. Operational details are being finalised and will be available in due course.

Sex Education

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recommendations she has made to the Secretary of State for Education in relation to sex education in the school curriculum.

Mr. Sackville: The content of the curriculum, including sex education provision in schools, is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Education about sex education in schools.

Mr. Sackville: Ministers in both Departments are in regular touch on a number of issues including sex education.

Orthodontic Treatment

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the current waiting lists for all types of orthodontic treatment for children in Huddersfield and Dewsbury.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on waiting times for in-patient and day case treatment by specialty for district health authorities and trusts is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England". The latest published figures are for September 1993 and copies are available in the Library. Although information is available on waiting times for various paediatric specialties, orthodontic treatment for children is not separately listed.

Electricity Pylons

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the policy which allows electricity pylons to be sited near homes; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Advice to Government, including both this Department and the Department of Trade and Industry, about radiation matters is provided by the National Radiological Protection Board. New electric lines above ground, with the exception of connections to individual customers and certain very minor developments, require the consent of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade who may also grant deemed planning permission.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 21 February at columns *40-41* concerning the question of any health risk.

Private Medical Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place a copy of her Department's written evidence to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on private medical services in the Library.

Mr. Sackville: The Department's evidence is summarised in paragraphs 10.2 to 10.9 of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on private medical services, a copy of which is available in the Library.

NHS Patients (Private Treatment)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she has issued regarding the offer by NHS staff employed by trusts of private treatment to NHS patients in hospital accident and emergency departments; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: None. We are not aware of any such offer. The national health service will remain available to all on the basis of clinical need, not the ability to pay.

NHS Consultants

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS consultants, by specialty, undertaking work in the private sector have failed to meet fully their contractual obligations to the NHS for each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service employers are responsible for satisfying themselves that consultants are fulfilling their contractual obligations. The information requested is not available centrally.

Hospital Beds, London

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what number of hospital beds she now determines are required in the capital so that London has the appropriate number of beds.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for hospitals themselves to determine the number of beds required locally taking account of the requirements of local health authorities and general practitioner fundholders.

Private Hotels

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she has issued to regional health authorities, district health authorities, family health services authorities and trusts on the use of private hotels.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. National health service bodies are expected to apply value-for-money judgments on the use of such facilities.

Morning-after Pill

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions her Department had on making the morning-after pill available on request from a pharmacist.

Mr. Sackville: Any change to the legal classification of such medicines to allow them to be supplied by pharmacists without prescription would be subject to statutory consultation with all interested organisations.

Dental Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental patients have been deregistered in each family health service authority since July 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table. Since July 1992 there has been a net increase of over 600,000 patients registered with 264 dentists in contract with family health services authorities.

Number of dental patients deregistered, from 3 July 1992 to 11 March 1994, by Family Health Service Authority England

FHSA	Number of patients deregistered
All FHSAs	647,593
Cleveland	2,636
Cumbria	13,403
Durham	347
Northumberland	2,665
Gateshead	725
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	—
North Tyneside	3
South Tyneside	16
Sunderland	—
Humberside	10,949
North Yorkshire	9,710
Bradford	—
Calderdale	876
Kirklees	691
Leeds	8,790
Wakefield	936
Derbyshire	19,235
Leicestershire	13,161
Lincolnshire	—
Nottinghamshire	4,853
Barnsley	—
Doncaster	23
Rotherham	394
Sheffield	1,492
Cambridgeshire	5,264
Norfolk	29,038
Suffolk	7,187
Bedfordshire	1,317
Hertfordshire	7,113
Barnet	4,871
Brent and Harrow	1,551
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	35
Hillingdon	—
Kensington, Westminster and Chelsea	2,288
Essex	14,947
Barking and Havering	3,858
Camden and Islington	313
City and East London	751
Enfield and Haringey	981
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	2,214
East Sussex	15,304
Kent	54,585
Greenwich and Bexley	4,392
Bromley	13,206
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	446
Surrey	27,404
West Sussex	35,481
Croydon	1,945
Kingston and Richmond	1,016
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	1,756
Dorset	22,886
Hampshire	24,365
Wiltshire	11,525
Isle of Wight	3,634
Berkshire	26,057
Buckinghamshire	18,818
Northamptonshire	3,124
Oxfordshire	26,240
Avon	15,478
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	14,729
Devon	27,721
Gloucestershire	52,618
Somerset	4,042
Hereford and Worcester	4,181
Shropshire	684
Staffordshire	7,801
Warwickshire	9,676
Birmingham	2,268
Coventry	1,598
Dudley	—
Sandwell	—
Solihull	2,507
Walsall	—
Wolverhampton	—
Cheshire	6,474
Liverpool	430
St. Helens and Knowsley	19
Sefton	590
Wirral	604
Lancashire	25,440
Bolton	632
Bury	675
Manchester	298
Oldham	—
Rochdale	1,904
Salford	151
Stockport	1,279
Tameside	742
Trafford	245
Wigan	—

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each civil service grade in her Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. Sackville: The information shows the position on 14 March 1994:

Total number of staff employed in the Department of Health

Grade (including grade equivalents)	Total	Women (percentage)
UG1	3	0
UG2	8	0
UG3	25	18
UG4	28	39
UG5	204	38
UG6	136	32
UG7	575	26
SEO	402	29
HEO	724	45
EO	972	58
AO	1,333	74
AA	529	57
Others[1]	166	42
Total	5,110	52

[1] There are a number of grades, mainly on Youth Treatment Service, which do not easily equate to Unified Grades.

Note: Casual staff have been excluded, as have staff on loan to other government departments, on maternity leave of more than three months, and on unpaid career breaks/study leave.

Private Medical Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many meetings she has held over the past year with representatives of private medical service providers; and if she will give details of the identity of participants and the nature of the discussions.

Mr. Sackville: One, with the Independent Healthcare Association, where I met the chairman, chief executive and two board members at their request, at which they expressed their views on a number of issues.

NHS Trusts (Amenity Beds)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether charges levied by NHS trusts for amenity beds include a notional amount to cover, when appropriate, the additional cost of providing a better menu and exclusive use of television, telephone or bathroom.

Mr. Sackville: The charge levied by national health service trusts for amenity beds should cover all appropriate additional costs of facilities provided.

Health Benefits Scheme

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the review of the health benefits scheme including the availability of free prescriptions is now completed.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) on 15 February at column *669*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fine Defaulters

8. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many male persons were committed to prison in Northern Ireland for defaulting on a fine in the last year for which figures are available; and what percentage of the total number of male persons committed to prison this represents.

Sir John Wheeler: In 1992, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,671 male persons were received into prison in Northern Ireland for fine default, comprising 34 per cent. of all males received into prison in that year. However, since fine defaulters spend, on average, a much shorter time in prison than other categories of prisoner, they accounted for only 2 per cent. of the average daily population. Approximately one third of those received pay the outstanding fine in whole or in part at the time of reception or shortly afterwards.

Medical Consultants

9. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to improve consultancy cover in the medical specialties to the level recommended by the Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Ancram: Additional consultant posts have been created and further posts will be established in the coming year through the Department's initiative on junior doctors hours. Consultant numbers will also increase as a result of the implementation of the Calman report, and rationalisation of acute hospital services should result in improved consultant cover in all specialties.

Draft Children Order

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to publish the revised draft Children Order.

Mr. Ancram: I do not wish to prejudice the consideration which my noble Friend will be giving to the comments made during the consultation period and in the recent debate in the Northern Ireland Committee. However we hope to have the order laid before the House rises for the summer recess.

Cross-border Security

11. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further progress has been made with the Government of the Irish Republic about cross-border security co-operation.

17. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross-border security.

Sir John Wheeler: The Irish security forces have continued to achieve very positive results against the terrorists, including for example the interception of a primed Mk 15 mortar in Donegal two weeks ago. As the Chief Constable of the RUC made clear yesterday, practical co-operation is at an all-time high and both the British and Irish Governments remain committed to working closely together to maintain and enhance that co-operation.

Political Talks

12. **Ms Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his most recent discussions with representatives of the political parties in Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

13. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for re-starting talks to determine new political structures for Northern Ireland.

16. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he is making in convening talks between the political parties in Northern Ireland.

27. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the talks he has had with the parties in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government relating to Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) earlier today.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the basis of the talks between the Northern Ireland political parties and with the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew *[holding answer 16 March 1994]:* The Government's bilateral discussions with three of the Northern Ireland constitutional political parties and their dialogue with the Irish Government, are taking place in accordance with the statement of 26 March 1991 and upon the platform represented by the joint declaration issued on 15 December 1993.

Prospects For Industry

14. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about future prospects for industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: I have received a number of representations about future prospects for industry in Northern Ireland. The number of people employed now stands at 551,200. This is a new record for the Province. Together with recent good news about inward investment, it confirms the excellent prospects for industry in Northern Ireland.

Joint Declaration

15. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest position relating to the joint declaration.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) earlier today.

Security Situation

18. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his assessment of the current security situation in the Province.

22. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on security in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The level of threat from terrorists remains high, but the security forces have been conspicuously successful in preventing attacks and apprehending suspects. Over the last month there have been over 170 arrests of suspected terrorists, 42 people have been charged with scheduled offences, and 16 weapons and 1,075 lb of explosives have been recovered.

Community Care

19. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on community care policy.

Mr. Ancram: The community care reforms introduced in Northern Ireland on 1 April 1993 were first promulgated in the Department's 1990 policy document "People First", which is the equivalent of "Caring for People". These new arrangements for the provision of community care services by health and social services boards are intended to ensure that, as far as possible, people are cared for and supported in community-based settings rather than hospital.

Inward Investment

20. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current level of inward investment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: So far this year the Industrial Development Board has secured seven new inward investment projects involving a total investment of approximately £213 million and promising 1,476 new jobs. I am confident that there will be further announcements before the end of the financial year.

Further and Higher Education

21. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of school leavers are now entering further and higher education in Northern Ireland; and what the figures were in 1979.

Mr. Ancram: A total of 58.2 per cent. of school leavers in Northern Ireland entered further and higher education in 1991-92. The figure for 1979-80 was 33.2 per cent.

Building Workers

23. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he proposes to reduce unemployment among building workers in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: Government policy is to create the conditions which produce economic growth leading to demand for construction workers and other employees. In Northern Ireland violence continues to be one of the greatest impediments to such growth. Nevertheless programmes are available from the Training and Employment Agency to help unemployed building workers re-train or find employment.

Interrogation Procedures

24. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for extending to Northern Ireland the tape recording of interrogations and access to legal advice for suspects.

Sir John Wheeler: Both these issues have been raised by Sir Louis Blom-Cooper in his first report as Independent Commissioner for the Holding Centres. His report will receive careful consideration.

Interviews with suspects detained under the Police and Criminal Evidence (NI) Order 1989 are currently tape-recorded. The Government remain firmly of the view that recording of interviews with terrorist suspects in Northern Ireland would not be in the overall interests of justice.

Integrated Education

25. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the growth of integrated education in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Parental demand for integrated education continues at a high level. Twelve new integrated schools have been established since 1989, when legislation to encourage and facilitate its development was enacted. 4,000 pupils now attend 21 integrated schools, primary and secondary, throughout Northern Ireland. The Government will continue to respond positively to viable proposals.

Legislative Procedures

28. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the reform of current legislative procedures for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The basic procedures for legislating for Northern Ireland are well understood but my right hon. and learned Friend is always prepared to consider reasonable proposals for improvement. The Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs will be able to provide additional scrutiny.

Police Authority

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made in new appointments to the Northern Ireland Police Authority.

Sir John Wheeler: The term of office for the current Police Authority for Northern Ireland expires on 28 June. Nominations for potential members have been invited from a wide range of interested organisations. Thirty-two bodies, including 23 district councils, have so far put forward nominations.

Housing

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland under what terms and conditions two blocks of flats at Camross park, Rathcoole, Co. Antrim were leased to Newtownabbey community project by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Tim Smith: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I am advised by its chief executive that two blocks of flats at Camross park, Rathcoole, have been let to Newtownabbey community project, subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. The tenant shall vacate the premises when required to do so by the Landlord.
2. The tenant shall be responsible for maintenance and repair of the dwelling.
3. The tenant is responsible for payment of rates.
4. The tenant shall be responsible for ensuring that the persons using the premises act in a reasonable manner, both in respect of the treatment of the building and adjoining property and that they avoid conduct likely to cause a nuisance to others, and for ensuring that the dwelling is in a reasonable condition at the termination of tenancy.
5. Written permission from the Housing Executive is required for the following matters:
   (a) To carry out structural alterations and to erect any structure on the grounds of the dwelling.
   (b) To assign or sublet the dwelling.
6. The Newtownabbey Community Project hereby agrees:
   (a) Not to use or permit the premises to be used for any purpose which is in breach of or contravenes any law, order, or regulation for the time being in force.
   (b) Not to use or permit the premises to be used for any purpose which will cause damage to the premises or injury to any person using the premises.
   (c) Not to sell or permit the sale or consumption of intoxicating liquor on the premises.
   (d) To use the premises only for the lawful business of the community project.
7. The Executive reserves the right on notice being given (save in the case of emergency) for the Executive's duly authorised representatives to inspect the premises at any reasonable hour.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if approval was obtained from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to sub-let flats at Camross park, Rathcoole, Co. Antrim to a pigeon club by Newtownabbey community project.

Mr. Tim Smith: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I am advised by its chief executive that no approval was obtained from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to sub-let flats at Camross park, Rathcoole to a pigeon club, by Newtownabbey community project.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future security of tenure of a pigeon club in Northern Ireland Housing Executive property at Camross park, Rathcoole, Co. Antrim, sub-let by Newtownabbey community project group.

Mr. Tim Smith: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I am advised by its chief executive that Newtownabbey community project, in permitting the use of all or part of the premises to the East Way Housing Pigeon Society, is in breach of the tenancy agreement. The Housing Executive was notified of the breach of tenancy on 9 March 1994 and a formal letter instructing the project to take immediate action to terminate the sub-let to the Pigeon Society was issued on 11 March 1994.

Compensation

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to extend the proposed tariff régime for compensation in England to the victims of crime to Northern Ireland; and if he has plans to consult interested organisations in the Province.

Sir John Wheeler: I am currently considering what lessons might be learnt for Northern Ireland from the forthcoming changes to the criminal injuries compensation scheme in Great Britain, details of which were published recently by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

If, as a consequence, I consider that changes should be made to the current compensation scheme in Northern Ireland, I am committed to public consultation with interested parties in the Province.

Hume-Adams Agreement

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will seek a copy of the agreement between the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and Mr. Gerry Adams.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: No. I believe, and the hon. Member for Foyle has stated, that the Downing Street declaration sufficiently sets out the principles that must govern the future. They establish that in Northern Ireland there can be no place, and no justification, for politically motivated violence, whether of the kind still being perpetrated by the Provisional IRA with Mr. Adams' justification or at all.

School Sports Facilities

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many schools have *(a)* some playing fields and *(b)* artificial games areas, excluding playground areas; what were the figures (i) five, (ii) 10 and (iii) 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, information compiled in 1989 indicates that some 325 schools had grass pitches and 314 had hard surface games areas; some schools had both types of provision.

Blood

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was *(a)* the number of blood donors, *(b)* the quantity of blood donated and *(c)* the amount of blood required for each health board for each month since April 1993.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* The Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service is a regional service and figures are not collected by board but on a province-wide basis.

The number of blood donors on the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service panel is 82,138, while the quantity of blood donated over 1992-93 totalled 63,848 units.

Information on the amount of blood issued for each month since April 1993 is currently not available.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Legislation (Amendments)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will give examples of small and less controversial amendments to primary legislation, which would be unlikely to be made due to time constraint, which could not be made in the same manner as those contained in chapter II of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, as indicated in his evidence before the Procedure Committee on 16 February.

Mr. Newton: Chapter 3 of the booklet "Deregulation —Cutting Red Tape" identifies 55 measures which the Government believe would be suitable for the order-making power in clauses 1 to 4 of the Bill. One example which I quoted in my evidence to the Procedure Committee was an amendment to the Patents Act 1977 and the Registered Designs Act 1949 to enable the Patent Office to accept documents in forms other than paper, such as electronic filing. The deregulation initiative is a rolling programme and more measures are expected to come forward in the future.

Exhibitions (Upper Waiting Hall)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to Lancashire Aerospace to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 9 May to Friday 13 May.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the sesquicentenary of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 25 April to Friday 29 April.

EDUCATION

Adult and Further Education

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number of enrolments of students aged under 19 years for adult education courses and further education colleges with the Inner London education authority in 1989 and for its successor bodies for each year since.

Mr. Boswell: The number of enrolments by students aged under 19 years on further education courses in adult education centres and further and higher education colleges funded by ILEA in 1989 or by its successor bodies in subsequent years are shown in the following table:

The number of enrolments as of 1 November of the appropriate year by students aged under 19 on further education courses in adult education centres and in further and higher education colleges in Inner London

Academic Year	Number of Enrolments (thousands)
1989-90	31
1990-91	29
1991-92	27
1992-93	29

Staffordshire Schools

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on how many occasions he has visited schools in Staffordshire; if he will give details; and when he next expects to visit schools in Staffordshire.

Mr. Patten: I have not visited any schools in Staffordshire, and at present I have no plans to do so.

Science Education

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the percentages of young people aged 18 to 21 years in full-time education studying a science subject in each of the member countries of the OECD.

Mr. Robin Squire: The readily available information is given in the table.

Students[1] enrolled on higher education science[2] courses as a proportion of the population aged 18-25 in 1991[3]

	Per cent.
Belgium[3]	3·6
Canada	8·4
Denmark	8·3
France	7·8
Germany, FRG	10·4
Greece[3]	7·0
Ireland	7·1
Italy	7·4
Japan[3]	4·5
Netherlands[4]	6·5
Portugal	3·9
Spain[3]	6·9
United Kingdom[3,4]	7·7
United States of America	11·9

[1] Full and part-time students.

[2] Science includes Natural Science, Mathematics and Computer Science, Medical and Health related, Engineering, Architecture and Town Planning and Trade Craft and Industrial programmes.

[3] 1990 data for Belgium, Greece, Spain and Japan and 1992 for the United Kingdom.

[4] Excluding Open University enrolments in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

[5] The sources used are:
UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1992 and 1993;
United States Digest of Education Statistics, 1993;
Data supplied by OECD for Education at a Glance, 1993;
Education Statistics for the United Kingdom 1992 and 1993.

Nursing

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether mandatory awards will be offered to lecturers in nursing who are being required to upgrade their qualifications to degree level.

Mr. Boswell: Lecturers in nursing who enrol on designated courses and who seek a mandatory award are subject to the same conditions in respect of personal eligibility and previous study as apply to other students.

Primary Schools (Surplus Places)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will initiate a survey by local education authorities of some, or all, of their primary schools which under his criteria possess surplus places of between 20 per cent. and 40 per cent. of those notional place numbers, to assess the impact on their activities prohibiting any use of that proportion of their space currently in use.

Mr. Forth: We have no plans to require local authorities to undertake such a survey. It is for local authorities in the first instance to make plans for the removal of surplus capacity, including the scale and method of rationalisation.

School Premises

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if his formula for a school place in secondary schools permits each pupil within its specified pupil total to possess inside an all-purpose class, or similar room, a personal desk or locker of minimum cubic capacity.

Mr. Forth: The formula for measuring the capacity of schools used in the implementation of the more open enrolment provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 does not cover this level of detail. It is up to schools how they use and furnish their teaching accommodation.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if, in his assessment of school occupancy, he includes classrooms, workshops or other buildings of a temporary character; and when his policy was last changed and reviewed;

(2) what adjustments have been made in the minimum standards in relation to a school place in secondary schools in the last 15 years; for what reasons; and what assessment he has made of any change in pupil space requirements consequent on the introduction of the national curriculum;

(3) if he will state the latest official criteria of what constitutes a school place in *(a)* maintained primary and *(b)* maintained secondary schools; and what comparative studies have been made between the minimum standards laid down in *(b)* and any group of schools whose heads are members of the (i) headmasters or (ii) headmistresses conferences.

Mr. Forth: The more open enrolment provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 mean that schools must, in most cases, admit pupils until they are full. Each school has a standard number, or an approved admission number in the case of a grant-maintained school, which reflects previous levels of intake or the school's physical capacity as measured against a prescribed formula. All suitable permanent and temporary accommodation is taken into account in the assessment of standard numbers or approved admissions numbers.

The provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 and the advice contained in departmental circulars 11/88, Admissions to County and Voluntary Schools, and 6/91, Implementation of More Open Enrolment in Primary Schools, represent the latest steps in a process of continual refinement in the calculation of school capacity.

I am not aware of any comparative studies covering independent schools.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice, or requirement, he makes in approving capital consent for new secondary buildings in respect of *(a)* the need for split, or smaller, teaching groups for certain classes held in rooms deemed capable of accommodating 30 or more pupils and *(b)* the need for a significant proportion of space to remain empty in order to construct an educationally efficient timetable.

Mr. Forth: Capital support for new or extended secondary schools is made available through annual capital guidelines to LEAs, and by grant aid for voluntary aided and self-governing GM schools, according to the assessed need for new places in an area. The level of support is based on cost multipliers which reflect the average cost of providing new places. The cost multipliers are based on costs actually achieved in LEA building projects.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what cost limits applied to newly built primary and secondary schools, respectively, in respect of costs per place of the building, net of site costs, and the name, date and authorisation of any official publication advising on how minimum space requirements could be obtained within the limits without prejudice to other costs, including future maintenance.

Mr. Forth: There are no cost limits in respect of expenditure per place on individual LEA schools, although limits may, in the case of voluntary aided schools, be placed on the levels of our grant aid. Under the capital finance system LEAs are free to spend what they like on individual projects. In determining the basic need—that is, the requirement for new school places in areas of population growth—element of the 1994-95 annual capital guidelines, the Department used per place cost multipliers, valued as follows:

	£
Primary	3,747
Secondary	5,116
Secondary (16+)	6,128

These are based on actual LEA projects providing places in new schools and extensions. They include the cost of the buildings, external works, furniture and equipment and professional fees. They do not include the cost of site purchases or VAT. The cost in each case represents a level of achievement being met by about a third of LEAs. The teaching standards adopted in the project are about 15 per cent. above the regulation minimum for a 210-place primary school, and about 8 per cent. above the minimum for a typical secondary school.

The Department's most recent guidance in respect of new primary schools, published in 1989 and called *"St. John's School Sefton: the design of a new primary school,"* illustrated lower teaching area standards than those indicated above. No recent comparable publication has been produced related to secondary schools.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what study he has made, or is planning, of the amount of space available per secondary pupil in any group of independent schools, which are charitable foundations, which are making economical use of their premises.

Mr. Forth: None.

School Leavers

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of female school leavers left school with five or more GCSEs at grades A to C in Merseyside in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Robin Squire: The percentage of female school leavers estimated to be leaving maintained schools with five or more GCSEs at grades A to C in Merseyside in 1992 was 33·6 per cent. The latest year for which the information is available is 1991-92, when the school examinations survey was undertaken with a reduced sample of 3 per cent.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. Boswell: The figures are as follows:

	Total in grade	*Women as a percentage of total*
Grade 1	1	0
Grade 2	3	0
Grade 3	12	0
Grade 4	4	25·0
Grade 5	46	26·1
Grade 6	15	13·3
Grade 7	153	28·1
SEO and Equivalent	112	34·8
HEO and Equivalent	369	49·6
EO and Equivalent	501	60·5
AO and Equivalent	628	74·7
AA and Equivalent	382	66·2
Total	2,229	58·5

These figures include 367 staff in post in the Teachers Pensions Agency of which 71·7 per cent. are women.

Cash Limits

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to announce changes to cash limits on votes within his responsibility for 1993-94.

Mr. Patten: The cash limit for class X, vote 1, schools, research and miscellaneous services, will be reduced by £1,500,000 from £708,982,000 to £707,482,000. The reduction will be used to offset an increase in the non-voted cash limit DFE local authority capital to meet increased expenditure on supplementary credit approvals in respect of urgently needed school building projects. The local authority capital cash limit will therefore be increased by £1,500,000 from £48,922,000 to £50,422,000.

DEFENCE

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will provide substantive answers to the questions from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton of 21 January, and 27 January, concerning the membership of non-departmental public bodies.

Mr. Hanley: The delay in answering has been caused by the need to establish whether members would be content for their names to be published, particularly where NDPBs deal with sensitive issues. I am now in a position to answer a number of the questions referred to and will answer the remainder once all individuals concerned have replied to my Department.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the Review Board for Government Contracts.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 January 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Sir Peter Webster *(Chairman)*
Sir Laurence Airey KCB
Sir Alan Bailey KCB
Derek Kingsbury CBE
Dr. Alan Watkins

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Royal Air Force museum.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 January 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Sir Michael Beetham GCB CBE DFC AFC FRAeS *(Chairman)*
Sir Thomas N. Risk
Mr. Barry Pinson QC
Group Captain Sir Gordon Pirie CVO CBE JP DL (Retd)
Dr. Basil Greenhill CB CMG FRHists FSA
Sir John Cuckney
Sir Ralph Robins FENG FRAeS
Sir Colin Marshall
Sir Hector Monro AE JP DL MP
Sir Colin Chandler
Sir John Blelloch KCB

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the meteorological research sub-committee.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 January 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Professor H. Charnock
Professor B. Fender
Professor J. Harries
Professor A. Hollingsworth
Professor B. Hoskins
Dr. M. Vaughan
Dr. J. Woods

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the Services Sound and Vision Corporation.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 January 1994]:* The members are:

General Sir Geoffrey Howlett, KBE, MC
David E. Hatch, JP, MA, DipEd, FRSA, CIMgt *(Vice Chair)*

Brian Tesler, CBE
Frederick P. Turner
Dr. Bryce McCrirrick, CBE, DSc, FEng, FIEE, FRTS

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the oil and pipelines agency.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 January 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Geoffrey Richards *(Chairman)*
Christopher Finch

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the meteorological committees.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 January]:* The information requested is as follows:

Professor R. L. Bell
Mr. D. A. Davis
Mr. D. Filkin
Ms A. Gammidge
Professor B. J. Hoskins
Dr. H. Hughes
Baroness Jay
Professor M. H. Pesaran
Baroness Platt
Mr. C. M. Stuart
Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Royal Navy submarine museum, Gosport.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 January 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Mr. D. Patch
Mr. R. D. Wilson
Dr. Robert Bud
Mrs. P. L. Lee BA
Captain R. Channon RN (Retd)
Rear Admiral A. J. Whetsone CB
Captain G. C. W. Hayhoe RN (Retd)
Commander G. Turner RN (Retd)

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the board of of the Royal Marines museum, Southsea.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 January 1994]:*

Mr. Brian Ashby
Mr. Barrie C. Johnston OBE FPMI FRSA
Mr. Nick Sonas DL
Mr. Derek J. Martin
Mr. Nigel S. E. Martin
Mr. Michael N. E. Ware FRPS FMA

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Fleet Air Arm museum.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 January 1994]:* The board of trustees as established by the trust deed and subsequent amending scheme consists of:

Mr. Michael Cobham
Mr. Desmond Cracknell
Sir Donald Gosling
Sir Stanley Grinstead
Mr. Jeffrey Smith
Doctor Thomas Wright
Dame Margaret Weston

The trustees meet twice a year mainly to review and approve the strategic plan. The director exercises day-to-day management under the aegis of the management committee of the chairman, deputy chairman, director, deputy director and museum administrator.

Market Testing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what additional non-operational staff have been taken on by his Department to execute the new objective of market testing as set out at paragraph 3 of his Department's annual report and expenditure plans 1994-95 to 1996-97, Cm 2501.

Mr. Aitken: Up to 30 additional staff are being recruited on fixed-term appointments for a variety of contract duties. Eight have been appointed.

Additionally, two industrial advisers have been seconded for a period of one year.

Appraisal Strategy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what appraisal strategy he has set in place to monitor the effectiveness of his achieving availability, reliability and maintainability standards, as set out at paragraph 59 of his departmental annual report, Cm 2501.

Mr. Aitken: A comprehensive data collection system is being implemented in each of the services, to monitor the effectiveness of achieving availability, reliability and maintainability standards.

Green Matters (Responsibility)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which departmental Minister is responsible for reporting to the House on green matters within his Department.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence is responsible for environmental matters within the Department. I answer to the House on his behalf.

Indonesia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what investigations he has made into the assertion by Mr. B. J. Habibie, director of Indonesia's armaments procurement programme, to assure himself that the Hawk jets bought from British Aerospace last year by Indonesia will be used for ground attack purposes.

Mr. Aitken: We have received assurances from the Indonesian Government that the Hawk aircraft will not be used for internal security.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evaluation he has made of the use to which Hawk jets sold to Indonesia by British Aerospace last year have been put.

Mr. Aitken: The Hawks purchased by Indonesia last year have not yet been delivered.

Chemical Weapons Testing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what follow-up has been conducted in the last 10 years by his Department as to the long-term health effects

arising from experiments conducted on service men from RAF Kinloss in the 1950s at the Porton Down chemical warfare establishment to establish antidotes to chemical warfare agents.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Llew Smith, 17 March 1994:

Parliamentary Question 29, Order Paper 9 March 1994

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence, asking what follow up has been conducted in the last 10 years by his Department as to the long term health effects arising from studies conducted on servicemen from RAF Kinloss in the 1950s at the Porton Down to develop antidotes to chemical warfare agents has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces have effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. In order to carry out this work, it is necessary to use service volunteers to:

(a) assess the ability of service personnel to function with new equipment and procedures,
(b) develop medical countermeasures to protect Service personnel and
(c) evaluate the effects of very low and medically safe concentrations of CW agents on the ability of unprotected personnel to operate normally.

No studies involving volunteers are carried out unless there is a clear military need and a detailed protocol has been reviewed and approved by an independent Ethics Committee in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Royal College of Physicians.

3. The procedure in respect of Service volunteers is that on arrival at CBDE each volunteer is given a medical examination to see if they are fit for the proposed study. The nature of the study is explained to them and they are told that they may withdraw from the study without any explanation at any stage. At the end of the study they are given a second medical examination and the fact that they have participated at CBDE in a volunteer study is recorded on their medical records.

4. From time to time, Service volunteers have been recalled so that checks on their medical health can be made. There is no particular frequency or pattern to such recalls. In addition some volunteers return voluntarily to CBDE to take part in subsequent unrelated studies. There is no evidence that Service volunteers have had any deterioration in their health as a result of their participation as a volunteer in a human study.

5. Our records are not collated in such a way as to allow us to readily identify volunteers from RAF Kinloss in the 1950s. There has been no particular reason to carry out a follow up in respect of these volunteers and none has been carried out.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies and tests have been done by the chemical warfare establishment at Porton Down to assess a nerve agent which penetrates skin and clothes quicker than the G agents and VX; when these experiments were done; and what was the conclusion of the assessment.

Mr. Hanley *[pursuant to his reply, 26 January 1994, c. 305]:* I have asked the chief executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment to write a further letter to the hon. Member.

Letter from G. Pearson to Mr. Ken Livingstone, dated 17 March 1994:

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION 22, ORDER PAPER 18 JANUARY 1994

1. Further to my answer (Official Record, 26 January 1994, Column 305) to your question about agents which penetrate skin and clothing quicker than the G-agents and VX, my attention has been drawn to a report available in the Public Records Office about work carried out at this Establishment in the early 1960s. This work was to seek organophosphorus anticholinesterases which have the chemical and physical properties likely to make them more effective agents than GB and VX eg compounds which may penetrate human skin more rapidly. The information provided in the report does not provide the additional information that you sought on when these experiments were done and what was the conclusion of the assessment; it would require a disproportionate amount of effort and cost to see if this information is available elsewhere.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to ensure that the UK Armed Forces have effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used by an aggressor against them. This work necessitates the study of potential chemical and biological agents that might be used by an aggressor so that the effectiveness of the available protective measures can be evaluated against potential agents and, where appropriate, the protective measures improved.

3. Work is currently being carried out, and has been for many years, to examine the potential hazard from chemical compounds that might be used as a chemical warfare agent by an aggressor; such compounds may be identified through intelligence or as a result of advances in chemistry.

4. In my answer of 26 January 1994, I said that our records did not indicate that any tests or studies had been carried out to assess a nerve agent which penetrates skin and clothing quicker than the G-agents and VX. When a parliamentary question concerning work on a particular subject is asked, information is sought from all readily available sources which include the library at CBDE to see if there are any reports on the subject, and the Superintendents of the Divisions at CBDE in which such work is being or may have been carried out, who in turn make enquiries of their senior staff. If these searches reveal no information I then reply stating that our records do not indicate any work into this subject.

5. It would require a disproportionate amount of effort and cost, every time a Parliamentary Question is asked, to initiate a search into the past records at the Public Record Office or elsewhere to see if there was information on a particular subject. We need to concentrate on providing the UK Armed Forces with effective protective measures against the current hazards should chemical or biological weapons be used against them wherever they may serve worldwide.

6. The report from the Public Record Office also refers to other materials that have been the subject of parliamentary questions. I will write further letters as soon as the newly available information has been considered.

"Green Forces"

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many copies of his departmental video "Green Forces" have been produced; at what cost; to whom they have been distributed; and what arrangements exist to obtain a copy of the video for hon. Members.

Mr. Hanley: Some 2,750 copies of the video "Green Forces" have been produced for free distribution, on request, to schools, colleges, libraries, other national and international organisations with an interest in environmental issues, and members of the public. To date, production, copying, marketing and distribution costs amount to some £94,000, excluding VAT. Two copies of "Green Forces" are being placed in the Library of the House. Hon. Members can also obtain a copy of the video by writing to the head of publicity, room 0384, Main building, Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those facilities where his Department has invoked Crown immunity or defence exception for *(a)*

national security or *(b)* operational effectiveness to override routine compliance with United Kingdom environmental legislation, as mentioned in general terms at paragraph 79 of his departmental annual report and expenditure plans for 1994-95 to 1996-97.

Mr. Hanley: Following the enactment of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, there have been no instances where MOD has formally invoked Crown immunity or defence exemptions to justify non-compliance with the requirements of the Act or other United Kingdom environmental legislation to regulatory authorities. A statement of MOD policy in respect of its exemptions from the health and statutory nuisance provisions of part III of the Act has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

RAF Machrihanish

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by year for the last four years, and this year to date *(a)* the number of times RAF Machrihanish was used by the United States navy maritime patrol aircraft assigned to Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic; and what were the type and make of aircraft.

Mr. Hanley: The total number of times RAF Machrihanish was used by the United States maritime patrol aircraft since 1 July 1990 is as follows:

	Number
From 1 July to 31 December 1991[1]	31
1991	80
1992	103
1993	103
1 January to 28 February 1994	0

[1] Detailed records before 1 July 1990 no longer available.

The type and make of aircraft involved were the Lockheed P3 Orion and the Lockheed S3 Viking.

Large Aircraft

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which is the largest *(a)* military and *(b)* civilian aircraft to have landed, or taken off, from each of the airports or aerodromes that his Department owns or controls in Yorkshire and Humberside, other than RAF Finningley.

Mr. Hanley: No records are available for Church Fenton, Dishforth or Topcliffe. The largest military aircraft to have landed at, or taken off from, RAF Leeming is a Lockheed C141 Starlifter; the largest civilian aircraft to have done so is a Boeing 737. No records are available for civilian aircraft landing at, or taking off from, RAF Linton-on-Ouse; the largest military aircraft to have done so is a Nimrod MR2.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which is the largest civilian aircraft that could be landed in normal operating conditions from each of the airports or aerodromes that his Department owns or controls in Yorkshire and Humberside, other than RAF Finningley.

Mr. Hanley: Adequate performance data for civilian aircraft is not available in respect of RAF Linton-on-Ouse. The relief landing grounds at Church Fenton, Dishforth and Topcliffe are now suitable only for light aircraft. The largest civilian aircraft that could be landed at RAF Finningley in normal operating conditions is a Boeing 707.

RAF Finningley

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money has been spent on improving accommodation assigned to *(a)* commanding officers, *(b)* other officers and *(c)* other ranks in each of the last four years at RAF Finningley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Figures are not available prior to 1991 when works management was untied from the Property Services Agency and delegated to local budget areas. Figures from financial year 1991-92, which include both single and married accommodation, is as follows:

Year	*Commanding Officer* £	*Other Officers* £	*Other Ranks* £
1991-92	Nil	4,800,000	759,000
1992-93	Nil		483,000
1993-94	2,725	160,000	135,000

The £4,800,000 was spent over financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93 on a single project for a major refurbishment of officers' married quarters. The other expenditure largely relates to: Food Act improvements and health and safety fire measures in the officers', sergeants' and airmen's messes; the refurbishment of two barrack blocks for airmen in 1991 and 1992; and double-glazing for the commanding officer's residence.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what review there has been into the requirements of *(a)* RAF Finningley and *(b)* each other airport or aerodrome in Yorkshire and Humberside for military purposes (i) before and (ii) since the publication of "Options for Change".

Mr. Hanley: No formal review was conducted into the requirements for military purposes of either RAF Finningley or any other RAF airport or aerodrome in Yorkshire and Humberside prior to "Options for Change". Following "Options for Change", the RAF airfield at Church Fenton was declared surplus to requirements and the station was closed in April 1992, although the airfield remains in use as a relief landing ground for RAF Linton-on-Ouse. Currently, the complete RAF flying training requirement is the subject of a review which will include consideration of the use of all flying training airfields within the United Kingdom. More generally, the requirement for all RAF airfields is currently under review as part of the defence costs study "Front Line First".

Accommodation Improvement

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money has been spent on improving accommodation assigned to *(a)* commanding officers, *(b)* other officers and *(c)* other ranks in each of the last four years at airports and aerodromes owned or under his Department's control in Yorkshire and Humberside, other than RAF Finningley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There is no RAF-maintained accommodation at Church Fenton, Dishforth or Topcliffe. For RAF Linton-on-Ouse, figures are only available for the last two years, as follows:

Year	Commanding Officer £	Other Officers £	Other Ranks £
1992-93	Nil	Nil	62,727
1993-94	Nil	105,686	43,760

For RAF Leeming, figures are available for all four years, as follows:

Year	Commanding Officer £	Other Officers £	Other Ranks £
1990-91	2,000	58,700	[1]2,033,000
1991-92	1,700	122,700	457,200
1992-93	2,000	229,700	403,800
1993-94	16,500	180,200	281,000

[1] This expenditure includes the completion of new housing.

Runway Capacity

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the airports or aerodromes that his Department owns or controls in Yorkshire and Humberside other than RAF Finningley; if he will list the length of each airport or aerodrome runway; and if he will list the annual volume of flights in and out of each location for each of the last four years and the current year to date.

Mr. Hanley: The only airports or aerodromes other than RAF Finningley owned or controlled by the Ministry of Defence in Yorkshire and Humberside are RAF Leeming and RAF Linton-on-Ouse; RAF Linton-on-Ouse also has the use of the airfield facilities at the former RAF stations of Church Fenton, Dishforth and Topcliffe, which are used as relief landing grounds. Runway lengths are as follows:

Airfield	Length metres
RAF Leeming	
Only one operational runway	2,292
RAF Linton-on-Ouse	
Runway 04/22	1,835
Runway 10/28	1,339
Church Fenton	
Runway 06/24	1,759
Runway 16/34	1,666
Dishforth	
Runway 16/34	1,858
Runway 10/28	1,362
Topcliffe	
Runway 03/21	1,837
Runway 13/31	1,262

The number of movements at each airfield, since 1990, is as follows:

Airfield	Movements by Year 1990	1991	1992	1993	[1]1994
RAF Leeming	—[2]	36,674	41,221	33,793	6,510
RAF Linton-on-Ouse	71,531	76,549	66,382	56,485	8,937
Church Fenton	—[2]	—[2]	33,618	24,602	5,885
Dishforth	43,035	43,961	32,519	32,277	5,712
Topcliffe	23,285	29,141	14,540	15,529	3,332

[1] figures to date
[2] figures not available

World War Two Munitions

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what areas in the Irish sea, northern channel and off the coast of Northern Ireland have been used in the disposal of world war two munitions since 1964; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many discarded world war two munition devices have come ashore on the British mainland over the last five years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make a statement on sea disposal of surplus world war two munitions since 1964; if the disposal included chemical weapons and gas canisters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There are no records of world war two vintage munitions having been disposed of by sea dumping after 1964. In the last five years Royal Navy clearance diving units have conducted 3,268 munitions clearance tasks below the highwater mark on the British mainland. Available records do not identify the type, origin or number of devices dealt with.

Low Flying

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table giving the number of low-flying sorties conducted over Wales in every year since 1978 *(a)* in total, *(b)* below 250 ft and *(c)* at 100 ft.

Mr. Hanley: Records are not held of low-flying sorties conducted over specific locations or the number of low-flying sorties flown below 250 ft. However, the number of low-flying movements below 250 ft authorised into the central Wales tactical training area in each year since 1979, the earliest year for which figures are available, are set out in the table. Operational low flying may be authorised down to a minimum level of 100 ft, but records do not distinguish between movements flown below 250 ft and at 100 ft.

Number of movements carried out below 250 ft down to a minimum height of 100 ft in the Central Wales Tactical Training Area

Year	Number
1979	123
1980	171
1981	59
1982	4
1983	21
1984	64
1985	44
1986	63
1987	242
1988	60
1989	89
1990	265
1991	90
1992	174
1993	192

Light Dragoons Reconnaissance Squadron

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reasons the commanding officer of the Light Dragoons Reconnaissance Squadron, Major Oliver Ellwood, did not accompany his troops when they left base in Germany for Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Major Ellwood departed Germany for Bosnia on the first flight and with the first group of his squadron on the evening of Saturday 12 March 1994.

Overseas Contracts

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates on which memoranda of understanding have been drawn up with overseas Governments on matters relating to defence contracts in each year since 1986.

Mr. Aitken: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 9 February, *Official Report*, column *254*.

Arms Sales

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each year since 1979, and in total at constant 1993 prices, the total value of arms sales to *(a)* Indonesia and *(b)* Tanzania.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our policy to reveal details of arms sales to individual countries.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 29 November 1993, *Official Report*, columns *371-76*.

Yugoslavia

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is *(a)* the total number of United Kingdom service personnel currently serving in the former Yugoslavia and on sanctions activities in the Adriatic and on the Danube and *(b)* his estimate of the comparable figures for other Western European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries.

Mr. Hanley: There are currently some 3,300 United Kingdom service personnel deployed on the ground in the former Yugoslavia. Around 600 Royal Navy personnel are serving in the Adriatic in support of NATO-WEU sanctions monitoring and enforcement operations. The military contribution of other nations to these operations is a matter for their national Governments and for the United Nations. Due to fluctuations in the actual level of troop contribution from a wide range of countries, it is not possible at this time to estimate comparable figures for other NATO and WEU countries.

Married Quarters

Mr. Coe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on plans for the new management arrangements for the Ministry of Defence's married quarters estate.

Mr. Hanley: Following an open competition, Mr. James Michael Robinson, presently co-ordinator and chief executive of Bristol city council, has been selected for the post of chief executive designate of the new housing organisation. Mr. Robinson will take up his appointment shortly.

Following a separate competition, Price Waterhouse has been appointed as the lead consultant to assist Mr. Robinson in developing the operational and business plans for the new organisation.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 18 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Barristers

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to limit unnecessary multiple representation by barristers of participants in court cases; and what response he has made to the comments made by Mr. Justice Ward on this matter following a High Court case in Nottingham in 1992.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In the light of remarks made about recent cases, the Legal Aid Board has been asked to consider what action might be taken to ensure that applications for separate representation for parties with the same interest can be identified at an early stage in the proceedings with a view to avoiding duplicating costs.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) what plans he has to bring forward legislation to end the use of public interest immunity certificates.

(2) what plans he has to introduce legislation governing the issue of public interest immunity certificates.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Public interest immunity certificates are one of the subjects under investigation by Lord Justice Scott. The Government will take careful note of any conclusions and recommendations in his report.

EMPLOYMENT

Pathfinder Initiatives

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the activities and performance of the careers service pathfinder areas will be assessed; what are the terms of reference of the pathfinders evaluation exercise commissioned by his Department; who is conducting the evaluation of the pathfinder process; what information will be made available about the activities and performance in each of the pathfinder areas; what restrictions the new pathfinder contract places on the ability of those organisations running the Careers Service to make public comments on the performance of the Careers Service; if a copy of the contract will be placed in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Performance will be assessed against the standards specified in the requirements and guidance for providers, which is a public document. I am placing a copy in the Library.

The Department is commissioning an independent evaluation of the pathfinder arrangements. This will be carried out in two phases. The terms of reference for the first phase, which is largely complete, are to provide a comprehensive picture of the performance of a sample of careers services prior to the start of the new arrangements. This will provide a baseline against which the subsequent performance of pathfinder careers services can be compared. This initial study has been carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research, which won the research contract through competitive tender. The second phase of the study will be commissioned during 1995-96 to allow the pathfinders to make progress. This phase of the evaluation will also be competitively tendered.

Much of the information collected by the Department during normal contract management and by researchers in the evaluation will be commercially sensitive. The Department will not publish such information in a way which allows an individual contractor to be identified or which hampers subsequent contract negotiations.

Careers Service providers will produce client entitlement statements setting out the careers guidance and other key services to be provided. The main conclusions about the delivery of the Careers Service under contract will be presented in the Careers Service annual report.

Under the Careers Service contract, providers are free to make factual statements about the performance of the service, but will require agreement from the Department to any proposed public statement about Government policy which is intended to be made by or on behalf of the provider.

I shall place a copy of the standard contract in the Library.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many civil servants are currently employed at his Department's offices at Caxton house; and how many were women *(a)* in 1990 and *(b)* at the latest date for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The figures are not available for Caxton house. The following figures are for staff in all the Department's London headquarters buildings: 1,313 at 1 January 1994, of whom 662 were women. The comparable figures for 1 January 1990 were 1,337 and 667 respectively.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Courts (Closed Session)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what are the precedents for courts going into closed session where disclosure of evidence would be detrimental to the public interest; and what sanctions are available to the courts to ensure that no disclosure is then made of matters which the court finds should not be disclosed.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply.

As a matter of general principle in civil and criminal proceedings, the public interest lies in open justice. Section 8(4) of the Official Secrets Act 1920 and section 11(4) of the Official Secrets Act 1989 give courts the power to allow evidence to be heard in camera if disclosure to the public would be prejudicial to national security. In addition, the courts have a discretion at common law to rule that evidence may be heard in camera where a public hearing would defeat the interests of justice. Such a discretion is only exercised exceptionally and the courts

will consider first whether any action short of excluding the public, such as communicating certain information confidentially to the court, would be appropriate. Unauthorised disclosure of evidence given in camera may be punished as a contempt of court which carries a maximum of two years imprisonment.

TRANSPORT

Single Regeneration Budgets

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contribution his Department makes to single regeneration budgets; and what percentage of his Department's previous budgets will pass the single regeneration budgets.

Mr. MacGregor: I am not contributing specific transport resources to the single regeneration budgets, but I shall be taking into account the views of senior regional directors in allocating resources within national transport programmes to the areas concerned.

Major Road Starts

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the environmental assessment carried out in respect of each of the major national road starts in 1994-95 announced on 28 February.

Mr. Key: No. Details of the environmental assessment for each of these schemes was made available to the public before a decision was taken to proceed. Copies of all the documents relevant to these assessments are not readily available and could not be obtained at reasonable cost.

Highways Agency

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff will transfer to the Highways Agency; and to what locations.

Mr. Key: Some 2,416; initially the Highways Agency will have its headquarters in London and regional offices in Bedford, Birmingham, Bristol, Dorking, Exeter, Leeds, London, Manchester, Newcastle and Nottingham.

Railway Station Closures

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement in respect of the railway stations to be withdrawn from service during 1994.

Mr. Freeman: Currently, British Rail has proposed the closure of 14 stations under the Transport Act 1962. The proposals are at various stages in the statutory procedure. British Rail is considering proposing a further two stations for closure under the 1962 Act.

From 1 April, responsibility for bringing forward closure proposals will rest with the operator or the Franchising Director. The rail regulator will be responsible for deciding whether or not the closure should be permitted. Appeals against the regulator's decision can be made to the Secretary of State I am not aware of any plans at present to propose the closure, under the Railways Act 1993, of any station used for passenger services.

Greater Manchester Buses North Ltd.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy regarding intervention in the bidding process for Greater Manchester Buses North Ltd.; what action his Department has taken since preferred bidder status was won by the bid from Greater Manchester North's employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The responsibility for the actual sale process lies with the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority, the owner of Greater Manchester Buses North Ltd.

The Department is keeping closely in touch with what is happening with regard to the sale of both the GMB North and GMB South bus companies. The Secretary of State's consent to both the sales will eventually be required. As in the sales of all the public transport companies, his role is to give or to withhold consent.

In view of the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial function in these sales it would not be appropriate for me to comment further or make a statement.

Rail Fares (London-Doncaster)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the cost of a return journey by rail from Doncaster to London King's Cross at the *(a)* first-class and *(b)* standard class rate for each year since 1975;

(2) what was the cost of a return journey by rail from Doncaster to London King's Cross at *(a)* the off-peak rates and *(b)* the standard rate for each year since 1975.

Mr. Freeman: The costs of first-class ordinary and standard-class ordinary return journeys in January of each year since 1975 are set out in the table. The fare structure for off-peak rates has changed significantly over the same period and makes comparison less straightforward.

Year	1st Cash £	1st 1994 prices £	Standard Cash £	Standard 1994 prices £
1975	13·82	64·68	8·65	40·48
1976	18·40	69·81	11·50	43·63
1977	21·80	70·96	14·20	46·22
1978	25·45	75·36	16·60	49·16
1979	28·30	76·64	18·50	50·10
1980	34·40	78·63	22·30	50·97
1981	41·70	84·39	27·00	54·64
1982	45·50	82·20	29·50	53·30
1983	51·00	87·81	33·00	56·82
1984	54·00	88·45	35·50	58·15
1985	59·00	92·02	38·40	59·89
1986	66·00	97·54	43·00	63·55
1987	69·00	98·15	45·00	64·01
1988	75·00	103·28	49·00	67·48
1989	84·00	107·64	54·00	69·20
1990	84·00	99·99	54·00	64·28
1991	104·00	113·69	68·00	74·33
1992	111·00	116·51	72·00	75·57
1993	118·00	121·79	78·00	80·50
1994	118·00	118·00	80·00	80·00

Year	2nd 17 day return (a) £	1st weekend return £	2nd weekend return £	2nd day return £	1st 17 day return £
1975	6·50	9·21	5·63	4·61	—
1976	9·91	12·63	8·36	6·92	—
1977	11·90	12·40	9·20	8·40	16·70

Year	2nd 17 day return (a) £	1st weekend return £	2nd weekend return £	2nd day return £	1st 17 day return £
1978	13·85	14·60	10·80	9·90	19·40
1979	15·40	16·20	12·00	11·00	21·60
1980	19·60	20·10	15·50	13·70	30·10
1981	23·60	25·00	19·30	16·60	36·50
1982	26·00	27·50	21·00	18·10	39·50
1983	28·00	29·00	22·00	19·50	43·00
May 1983		Monthly return fares withdrawn			
1984	31·00	23·50	20·50	—	—
1985	—	33·00	25·00	21·50	—

Year	2nd saver (b) £	2nd low saver (b) £	2nd apex £	Super advance £	Leisure first £
May 1985		New fares structure			
1986	29·00	26·00	—	—	—
1987	31·00	27·00	—	—	—
1988	31·00	27·00	—	—	—
1989	33·00	29·00	—	—	—
1990	36·00	31·00	—	—	—
1991	41·00	35·00	—	—	—
1992	43·00	37·00	27·00	—	—
1993	45·00	40·00	27·00	—	—
1994	45·00	40·00	25·00	40·00	59·00

(a) Became monthly return on 2 January 1977.

(b) Saver and low saver tickets became white saver and blue saver tickets from 21 June 1987 and subsequently became saver and supersaver tickets from 13 May 1990.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide details of the statements made by each Minister in his Department during November 1989 which referred to a completion date for the channel tunnel rail link; and what completion date was announced in each case.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* Following a further search, I can provide the following additional information:

Question by Kenneth Warren MP, 6 November 1989:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assurance has been received from British Rail regarding availability for use when the tunnel opens of a high-speed rail link to London from the Channel Tunnel for passengers and freight."

Michael Portillo: "In the early years of the tunnel's operation, BR plan to use existing lines, upgraded as necessary, for international passenger and freight services. British Rail and their joint venture partners, Eurorail, are planning to build a new passenger rail link between the Channel Tunnel and London to overcome capacity constraints on the existing network. This new line, which is expected to be operational in 1998, will release additional capacity on existing lines for the growth of international freight traffic."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1989; Vol. 159, c. *417*.]

NORTHERN IRELAND

Compensation

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Seccretary of State for Northern Ireland how many claims against the Northern Ireland Office in respect of criminal injury or criminal damage were disposed of by way of settlement or adjudication in the period (i) 1 July 1991 to 30 June 1992 and (ii) 1 July 1992 to 30 June 1993; in how many of such cases within each period junior counsel was instructed giving *(a)* the number of junior counsel with the number of cases in which each was briefed and *(b)* the perceived religious affiliation of the number of counsel instructed and the number of cases in which each was briefed.

Sir John Wheeler: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Compensation Agency under its chief executive Mr. John Robinson. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from John Robinson to Mr. David Trimble, dated 16 March 1994:

Your parliamentary Question to Sir John Wheeler MP concerning the number of settled claims for compensation in respect of criminal injuries and criminal damage in 1991-92 and 1992-93 in which junior counsel were instructed has been passed to me as Chief Executive of the Compensation Agency.

The figures are as follows:

	1 July 1991 to 30 June 1992	1 July 1992 to 30 June 1993
Total number of settlements and court awards	9,330	10,174
Number involving junior counsel	2,582	2,217
Number of junior counsel instructed	16	15

Number of cases in which individual counsel was instructed

Counsel	1 July 1991 to 30 June 1992	1 July 1992 to 30 June 1993
A	569	500
B	531	318
C	525	461
D	437	368
E	129	91
F	107	99
G	71	96
H	67	219
I	38	8
J	34	13
K	32	1
L	31	39
M	7	0
N	2	1
O	1	0
P	1	0
Q	0	2
R	0	1
Total	2,582	2,217

The Agency has no information on the religious affiliation of counsel instructed.

I hope this is helpful.

Abortions

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many abortions were performed by each health and social services board in Northern Ireland for each year from 1990 to 1993; and what was the total number of women aged 15 to 44 years who were resident in each board area in 1991.

Mr. Ancram: While the Abortion Act 1967 does not extend to Northern Ireland, therapeutic terminations of pregnancy may be carried out in Northern Ireland hospitals on strictly medical grounds. The number of such

terminations cannot be identified separately in the statistical information collected centrally on obstetric and gynaecological procedures.

The total number of females aged 15 to 44 resident in each board area on 30 June 1991 was as follows:

	Number
Eastern	140,600
Northern	86,700
Southern	61,700
Western	56,700

Figures are rounded to the nearest 100.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much his Department spends on child care provision for the under-fives and out-of-school provision for children aged over five either directly, excluding provision for departmental staff, or indirectly through resources made available to local authorities or other organisations; what form of provision is thereby provided; how many places are thereby provided; and if he will make a statement on child care.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The Department of Health and Social Services directly assists the development of child care for pre-school and school age children by grant aiding regional voluntary child care organisations in Northern Ireland working in this field. In the current financial year over £235,000 has been provided in this way.

In 1991-92, the latest year for which the information is available, health and social services boards in Northern Ireland spent £1,598,000 on support for local day care projects, either through direct provision or in support of voluntary and community facilities. In that year, boards also spent £148,000 on family day centres, but these do not cater exclusively for parents with young children.

Details of the forms of provision and number of places available, as at 31 March 1993, are as follows:

Type	*Places available*
Pre-school playgroups	16,063
Day nurseries	2,036
Childminders	14,045
Total	32,144

Note: These figures are provisional.

The provision of day care services forms an integral part of the Department of Health and Social Service's preventive strategy in child care. Their development is a key part of the health and social services boards responsibilities under the current regional strategy 1992-97, in particular the identification of areas and groups with particular health and social needs and targeting services accordingly.

Hospital Beds

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many beds per 1,000 people are available in *(a)* Northern Ireland hospitals and *(b)* Belfast hospitals.

Mr. Ancram: The available information is as follows:

	Available beds	*Population*	*Available beds per 1,000 population*
Northern Ireland	11,712	1,610,268	7·3
Greater Belfast area	3,721	[1]n/a	[1]n/a

Note:

Hospitals in the Greater Belfast area have been taken as those in Greenspark Healthcare Trust (Musgrave Park, Belvoir and Forster Green), Royal Group of Hospitals Trust (Royal Victoria, Royal Maternity and Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children), Belfast City Hospital Trust, the Ulster North Down and Ards Trust (The Ulster) and the Mater Iafirmorum Hospital and Purdysburn Hospital.

[1]Hospitals in the Greater Belfast area cater for people from all over Northern Ireland. It is therefore not appropriate to directly calculate available beds per 1,000 population in relation to the Greater Belfast population.

Dental Services

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what is the average cost per child under 18 of general dental services in Northern Ireland for *(a)* children registered with a general dental practitioner and *(b)* all other children.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) on 11 March 1994, *Official Report*, c. *436-37.*

TREASURY

Customs and Excise

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what representations he has received in support of postponing the closure of the Customs and Excise group's Blyth office, on 31 March, pending a further independent review; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what estimate he has made of the number of job losses which will occur as a result of the proposal to close the Customs and Excise group's Blyth office on 31 March.

Sir John Cope: I have received representations from the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) against the closure of Customs' Blyth office on 31 March. The closure will result in the loss of one and a half jobs.

ENVIRONMENT

Departmental Property

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what property, leased or owned by his Department, is not in current use.

Mr. Baldry: Property Holdings is responsible for the Government's reusable office estate—the common user estate. There are currently over 3,200 properties on the common user estate. Of these, 165 or 5 per cent. are not in current use. Some 128 are surplus to operational requirements and are either being actively marketed by external consultants or being prepared for disposal action; nine have been allocated for re-use; and six are held for redevelopment-refurbishment.

Decisions on the future of the remaining properties, which are ever changing, are under constant review in the context of normal portfolio management activity.

Taxation, Ealing

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the change in the average payment per head in cental and local taxation in the London borough of Ealing between *(a)* 1986 and 1990 and *(b)* 1990 and 1994 in real and percentage terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Both the rating system which operated in 1986-87 and the council tax are property-based taxes. This, and the extensive changes which have occurred in the local government finance system since the 1980s, mean that it is extremely difficult to make the comparison suggested.

It is not our practice to produce estimates of central taxation at the sub-regional level as they are not, in general, reliable.

Landfill Sites

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the measures that he is taking to ensure that operators who use landfill are held to account for any subsequent pollution of domestic and other water.

Mr. Atkins: Since 1976 active landfill sites have required licences under the Control of Pollution Act 1974. The purpose of these licences includes ensuring that the activities to which the licence relates do not cause pollution of water. Licences are granted by the waste regulation authority for the area, which is required by statute to consult the National Rivers Authority or, in Scotland, the river purification authority. As the then Minister for the Environment and Countryside announced on 29 November, *Official Report*, column *384*, we intend to bring new waste management licensing regulations into force in May 1994. These regulations will strengthen the powers of waste regulation authorities to protect the environment. The Government is currently reviewing the arrangements for dealing with contaminated land and the related liabilities. As I announced on 8 March, *Official Report*, column *110*, we have published a consultation paper, "Paying for our Past", as part of that review.

Agencies

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the number of appointments he makes to, and the budgets of, the non-departmental agencies he has responsibility for.

Mr. Baldry: Information about the non-departmental public bodies for which the Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible is contained in "Public Bodies 1993". A copy is available in the House of Commons Library and shows the number of bodies, their gross expenditure and the number of appointments to each body.

"Public Bodies" includes the Commons Commissioners and valuation tribunals for which the Secretary of State is responsible but to which appointments are made by the Lord Chancellor and local authorities, respectively.

Taxation, Lewisham

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the change in the average payment per head in central and local taxation in the London borough of Lewisham between *(a)* 1986 and 1990 and *(b)* 1990 and 1994, in real and percentage terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) today.

Open Government

Ms Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Baldry: A code of practice will reinforce and build on my Department's existing arrangements for the provision of information, which are already particularly extensive in relation to the release of environmental information. Operational details will be announced at the time of the launch.

Black People (Training and Enterprise)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's response to the key recommendations of the Black Training and Enterprise Group on the draft bidding guidance for the single regeneration budget; and what actions are planned by the Government to ensure that the integrated regional offices *(a)* establish clear requirements for race equality for TECs and local authorities, *(b)* employ staff at a senior level to formally liaise with the black voluntary sector to ensure they are given the necessary support to put funding bids together, *(c)* employ staff to assist black businesses and enterprise agencies in accessing contracts funded by the SRB and ensuring that TECs and local authorities have clear guidelines as to how they should assist black enterprise and *(d)* have a specific budget allocation targeted at the black voluntary sector.

Mr. Baldry: We have received a large number of responses following the extensive consultation on the proposed bidding guidance for the new single regeneration budget. We are now considering the comments that have been received, including the recommendations contained in the response from the Black Training and Enterprise Group, and this will inform the revision of the bidding guidance. The revised bidding guidance will be issued by the new regional offices in early April.

The Home Office will be posting an officer to each of the new regional offices, who will monitor objectives for supporting the ethnic minorities, and will provide advice to the senior regional directors.

Waste Shipment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he published his most recent departmental circular on the transfrontier shipment of waste regulations; how many copies have been printed; and to whom they have been circulated.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the Department of the Environment circular 16/89, published on 2 June 1989, relating to the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988, Statutory Instrument No. 1562. The printing and distribution of this circular are matters for

HMSO. As part of the initial, official distribution, copies were sent to all local authorities and waste authorities in England and Wales.

Acid Rain

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures his Department will be taking to cut emissions of sulphur dioxide and to rectify damage already caused to buildings and wildlife from acid rain.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the then Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside to his question of 25 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *189*, and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's reply to the question from the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) of 9 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *366-67*.

John Archer School Site

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions his Department is having on the proposed sale by Wandsworth council of land of the former John Archer school site.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Tiger Bone

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what products claimed to contain tiger bone have been imported into the United Kingdom during each of the last three years.

Mr. Atkins: No permits have been issued by my Department in the last three years to authorise the importation of products claimed to contain tiger bone.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the Environment Commissioner of the European Communities in relation to the impact of the 1979 wild birds directive and the habitats directive on the consents required for the construction of the Cardiff bay barrage.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 1 March, *Official Report*, column *643*.

Domestic Fuel

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what controls exist in England, Wales and Scotland over the sale of unauthorised fuels in smoke control areas and the sale of high sulphur solid fuels for domestic use; and what proposals he has to introduce further regulations.

Mr. Atkins: The Clean Air Act 1993 contains provisions to control the sale and acquisition of unauthorised fuels in smoke control areas. Solid fuels with a sulphur content greater than 2 per cent. are not authorised for use in smoke control areas. In view of the decline in annual average concentrations and emissions of smoke and sulphur dioxide from domestic sources, we have re-examined our proposals for further regulations and do not propose any additional controls at present. The need for such controls will be reviewed if any significant risk emerges to the maintenance of air quality.

Planning

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to make the amendments to the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 announced on 16 December 1992 by the Minister for Local Government and Planning.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales have today laid amendments to the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988. These add privately financed toll roads to schedule 1 of the regulations, thus requiring environmental assessment in every case; and wind generators, motorway service areas and coast protection works to schedule 2 of the regulations, the effect of which will be to allow local planning authorities to require EA where a particular development proposal would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. The amendments will come into effect on 8 April.

The amendments will bring privately financed toll roads promoted by local authorities in line with similar toll roads promoted by the Department of Transport. The addition of motorway service areas reflects the fact that EA has been undertaken for motorway service areas proposed in the past by the Department of Transport. Future motorway service areas will be provided instead by private developers, but the measures announced today will ensure that they continue to be subject to EA. Coast protection works, which are carried out by maritime district councils, have been added to bring them in line with new flood relief works, including sea defence works, which are already included in schedule 2 of the regulations and subject to EA where appropriate. Wind generators have been added because they can often have a significant visual impact on the local environment, particularly in sensitive areas.

The amendments to the regulations also include the technical changes referred to in the reply which my right hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) gave on 16 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *320-21*.

Since my right hon. Friend's reply, the Government have reviewed earlier proposals for the addition of further categories of project to the regulations. We have concluded that any extension of the regulations beyond those set out above would be inconsistent with the aim of limiting unnecessary regulation. However, the environmental effects of any project will continue to be among the material considerations which a planning authority must take into account when deciding whether or not to grant planning permission.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be making similar amendments to the equivalent EA regulations for Scotland.

Rent Arrears (London)

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the rent arrears, in cash and percentage terms, for each of the London boroughs as at the date for which figures are kept.

Sir George Young *[holding answer Monday 28 February 1994]:* The latest available information is as follows:

Cumulative rent arrears at 31 March 1993—London boroughs

Local Authority	Arrears as per cent. of Rent Roll	Total Rent Arrears (£000's)
Barking	2·4	873
Barnet	4·2	1,286
Bexley	2·6	429
Brent	31·8	15,500
Bromley	27·7	399
Camden	19·4	14,170
City of London	4·7	244
Croydon	3·1	1,329
Ealing	29·5	21,184
Enfield	8·5	3,320
Greenwich	23·0	15,218
Hackney	32·6	33,718
Hammersmith	16·4	6,944
Haringey	21·6	12,681
Harrow	4·1	746
Havering	2·0	465
Hillingdon	3·1	1,224
Hounslow	9·7	3,055
Islington	20·4	18,630
Kensington and Chelsea	8·1	1,786
Kingston upon Thames	4·1	712
Lambeth	25·0	21,121
Lewisham	13·2	9,627
Merton	5·3	1,317
Newham	25·0	12,368
Redbridge	6·1	1,719
Richmond upon Thames	5·6	1,104
Southwark	24·7	29,900
Sutton	4·3	938
Tower Hamlets	6·4	4,324
Waltham Forest	6·2	2,119
Wandsworth	6·7	4,144
Westminster	6·9	3,450

Source: HIP1 Forms

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Air Miles

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, c. *645*, (1) how many free air miles were accrued by civil servants on official business prior to new guidance being issued;

(2) when it was decided that the benefits of frequent flyer schemes should be used only for official travel or forgone;

(3) how many civil servants accrued free air miles in each Government Department on official business prior to new guidance being issued.

Mr. David Davis: Departments were asked on 24 February to issue guidance to their staff. The other information sought is not available.

Civil Service (Disabled Employees)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the employment of disabled people in the civil service.

Mr. David Davis: The annual report on the progress in the employment of disabled people in the civil service is presented in the magazine "Independent" published today.

The report shows that during 1993 8,384—1·5 per cent.—registered disabled people were employed in the civil service departments and agencies, a small increase over 1992. In addition to this, the civil service employs many more disabled people who choose not to register as disabled.

I am arranging for copies of "Independent" to be placed in the Library of the House.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Unemployment Benefit

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state in pounds sterling what is the total annual payment in unemployment benefit and related measures in *(a)* the European Union and *(b)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Burt: Details of the total benefit expenditure on benefits paid to unemployed people is given in table 5, page 81, of the 1994 "Social Security Departmental Report", a copy of which is in the Library. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has responsibility for expenditure in respect of Northern Ireland.

There are also payments of training allowances under several schemes including: youth training bridging allowance, training for work, learning for work and TEC challenge. For 1993-94 the total for Great Britain is estimated to be in the region of £525 million.

In addition to these amounts there are a number of miscellaneous payments made to unemployed people by the Employment Department. Many of these are payments for travel or subsistence when attending interview or certain training courses, but there are also other payments such as those made under the visually impaired, personal reader services. These payments are estimated to total approximately £20 million for the year April 1993-94.

Comparable information for the European Union is not available in the form requested. The Eurostat publication "Social Protection Expenditure and Receipts 1980-1991" gives the latest information available about expenditure on unemployment for EC member states. A copy of this publication is also in the Library.

Child Support Agency

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *214*, what factors are taken into account by the Child Support Agency when deciding not to implement a reduced benefit deduction to protect single mothers who have disabilities or children with disabilities; how many decisions of this kind have been made; and how many cases of this kind have been considered.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Ms Jean Corston, dated 17 March:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the imposition of reduced benefit directions in cases where the parent with care or a child had disabilities.

As I explained in my reply to Ms Gordon, the Child Support Manual contains no specific instructions on this matter, although child support officers will consider the impact of such a deduction on the welfare of the children.

No information is collected on whether the parent with care or any children are disabled. National figures show, however, that from 5 April 1993 to 31 January 1994, 44,600 parents with care were considered in relation to the requirement to cooperate. Of the cases so far completed, good cause was accepted in nearly 25,000; the absent parent was named in 8,900; and 330 were referred to the Benefits Agency to consider the implementation of a Reduced Benefit Direction.

I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful.

Crisis Loans

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for crisis loans made in the Doncaster area, have been refused in each of the last 24 months.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 17 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of Crisis Loan (CL) applications which have been refused in the Doncaster area in each of the last 24 months.

The Doncaster area is served by the Benefits Agency's Doncaster District, Details broken down on a monthly basis, of the number of CL applications refused by the District for the period 1 March 1992 to 28 February 1994 (latest available figures) are shown at Annex A.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Annex A

Number of crisis loans refused by month March 1992 to February 1994 (latest available figures) for the benefit agency's Doncaster district

Month and year	Number of crisis loans refused
March 1992	31
April 1992	35
May 1992	53
June 1992	92
July 1992	114
August 1992	58
September 1992	91
October 1992	123
November 1992	127
December 1992	114
January 1993	95
February 1993	81
March 1993	79
April 1993	89
May 1993	77
June 1993	64
July 1993	78
August 1993	107
September 1993	108
October 1993	76
November 1993	82
December 1993	74
January 1994	53
February 1994	58

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many inquiries are currently waiting to be dealt with in his Department's Stoke on Trent, North office relating to the Child Support Agency;

(2) how many staff, and at what grade, are employed and deal with inquiries in his Department's Stoke on Trent, North office in respect of the Child Suport Agency; and how many posts are vacant.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Ms Joan Walley, dated 17 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of enquiries outstanding and the number of staff at the Child Support Agency's Stoke on Trent North office.

At 10 March 1994, there were no outstanding written enquiries from members of the public, but nine telephone enquiries required further information before replies could be given.

Current staffing levels at the office are:

1 full-time Local Officer Grade I (LOI)—Executive Officer equivalent
2 part-time LOIs
2 full-time Local Officers Grade II (LOII)—Administrative Officer equivalent
3 part-time LOIIs

There are no current vacancies.

I hope this information is helpful.

Social Fund

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many Benefits Agency managers have requested a supplementary allocation to their social fund budget; what is his Department's response; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what percentage of applicants were turned down for a grant from the social fund on a monthly basis, campaign commencing April 1992 and concluding in March 1993 both for the west midlands and nationally; what reasons were given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Jim Cunningham, dated 17 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about whether Benefit Agency (BA) District Managers have asked for additional funds for their Social Fund (SF) budget, and the number of Social Fund grant refusals and the reasons for refusal in the West Midlands and nationally.

I can confirm that one request was made in 1993-94 for additional funds for the SF discretionary budget. As a result of severe flooding in the Llandudno area during June 1993, an additional allocation of £155,000 for grants and £10,000 for loans was made to the North Wales Coast District.

You also asked for the percentage of applicants refused a grant in 1992-93 in the West Midlands and nationally. I am unable to supply details specifically for the West Midlands area. Statistics are available by BA Territory, Area and District. I have, therefore, provided information for the BA's Area of Midlands South West which consists of the Districts of Birmingham Chamberlain, Birmingham Heartlands, Birmingham North West, Birmingham South East, Birmingham South West, Coventry, Hereford and Worcester and finally Warwickshire.

Information on the SF is not kept by applicant but by application. The percentage of grant applications refused monthly for Midlands South West and nationally for the period 1 April 1922 to 31 March 1993 is given at Annex A. I must point out that the majority of Community Care Grant applications are refused

because the basic eligibility criteria are not met. The reasons for refusal for Midlands South West and Nationally for the same period are given at Annex B and Annex C respectively.

Annex A

Percentage of community care grants (CCGs) refused in Midlands South West and nationally by month in the financial year 1992-93

Month/Year	Midlands South West	Nationally
April 1992	76·87	70·50
May 1992	70·43	71·17
June 1992	78·12	74·22
July 1992	76·91	73·52
August 1992	78·56	73·73
September 1992	75·14	73·59
October 1992	73·44	73·97
November 1992	75·96	73·43
December 1992	86·09	79·73
January 1993	69·58	70·58
February 1993	83·17	72·23
March 1993	71·96	70·16

Annex B

Reasons for refusal of community care grants (CCGs) by month for BA Midlands South West in the Financial year 1992-93

Month	Reference: A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
April	254	2,790	4	26	149	126	5	12	12	4	205	57
May	258	2,423	6	10	146	95	5	10	6	3	183	51
June	335	3,140	3	27	163	139	4	13	15	9	242	68
July	282	3,151	3	20	165	134	6	12	13	10	226	68
August	267	2,880	4	18	126	194	5	12	10	7	210	71
September	283	2,982	4	19	142	164	3	17	13	4	255	65
October	254	3,206	6	12	145	101	6	22	7	11	258	57
November	267	3,223	5	8	148	83	5	15	5	5	263	74
December	239	2,745	9	14	125	68	6	14	6	3	232	49
January	279	2,674	4	17	145	81	3	25	9	4	207	49
February	324	3,328	2	17	168	115	4	19	4	10	201	44
March	327	3,343	3	10	167	110	4	10	17	4	154	48

Codes

A Not in receipt of Income Support (IS)
B Direction 4 not satisfied
C Applicant excluded by Direction
D Requested amount below minimum allowable
E Repeat application
F Item excluded by Direction
G Alternative item available
H Help available from another source
I Savings over £500 meet cost
J Savings over £1,000 meet cost (customer or partner over 60)
K Insufficient priority
L Other reasons

Note: Total reasons for refusal may not equal total refusals as applications may be refused for more than one reason.

Annex C

Reasons for refusal of community care grants (CCGs) by month nationally for the Financial year 1992-93

Month	Reference: A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
April	5,209	50,989	475	327	2,599	1,898	106	207	129	70	5,965	1,278
May	4,711	47,647	393	270	2,326	1,815	90	230	107	92	5,679	1,178
June	5,707	56,177	403	311	2,547	2,230	147	244	150	102	7,356	1,501
July	5,692	55,782	435	317	2,820	2,312	136	260	147	118	7,770	1,501
August	4,862	48,593	371	231	2,550	2,257	125	254	140	96	6,873	1,309
September	5,331	55,299	370	306	2,735	2,536	120	286	134	99	7,818	1,367
October	5,616	58,831	530	286	2,876	2,146	135	277	140	120	8,498	1,348
November	5,793	62,268	526	311	3,036	2,058	150	279	116	129	8,524	1,436
December	4,755	48,288	376	249	2,345	1,595	99	219	112	82	6,433	1,136
January	5,022	51,165	351	273	2,596	1,960	109	258	144	104	6,193	1,246
February	5,560	60,086	496	295	2,603	2,189	131	280	126	106	6,157	1,324
March	6,416	67,053	506	274	3,038	2,385	123	308	141	101	7,127	1,640

Codes

A Not in receipt of Income Support (IS)
B Direction 4 not satisfied
C Applicant excluded by Direction
D Requested amount below minimum allowable
E Repeat application
F Item excluded by Direction
G Alternative item available
H Help available from another source
I Savings over £500 meet cost
J Savings over £1,000 meet cost (customer or partner over 60)
K Insufficient priority
L Other reasons

Note: Total reasons for refusal may not equal total refusals as applications may be refused for more than one reason.

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Hague: The code of practice will reinforce and build on this Department's existing arrangements for the provision of information. Requests will be handled as part of the normal business process, keeping procedures as simple as possible. Decisions on the release of information will be taken by the unit with primary responsibility for the policy, action or decision. Internal reviews where an applicant complains that information has been unreasonably withheld will be carried out by someone of senior rank within the same area but who had no involvement in the original decision.

In recent months the Department has published a number of papers including "The growth of social security"—July 1993; "Containing the cost of social security"—October 1993—and "Equality in State Pension Age"—December 1993. Customer charters have been published by the Benefits Agency—December 1993; the Contributions Agency—January 1994—and the Child Support Agency—April 1993. Statements on standards of service are displayed in local offices and each agency reports publicly on performance against targets. A customer charter will be published by the War Pensions Agency after its launch in April 1994.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants living in *(a)* local authority and *(b)* private sector rented accommodation were found to have made fraudulent claims for housing benefit in each year since 1989; and what was the total amount paid out by local authorities to claimants later found to have made fraudulent claims for housing benefit in each year recovered by local authorities from claimants in each year.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available.

Family Benefit

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his current estimate of eligible households in the Huddersfield and Dewsbury areas who do not claim family benefit.

Mr. Burt: Take-up figures for family credit are not available on a regional basis. The latest estimates for take-up of family credit for Great Britain for 1991 are that 64 per cent. of eligible families were claiming it, and that 71 per cent. of available benefit was being claimed[1].

As at 18 February 1994, 2,283 families in Huddersfield, and 2,868 families in Dewsbury were receiving family credit.

[1] "Families, Work and Benefits"—Policy Studies Institute, June 1993.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for the last 12 months how many parliamentary questions he has referred to one of his Department's agencies for answer; and what percentage of parliamentary questions to his Department this represents.

Mr. Hague: In the period 1 March 1993 to 28 February 1994, 2,775 parliamentary questions were received by the Department. Of these, 463, which is 17 per cent. of the total, were referred to and answered by the chief executive of one of the Department's agencies.

DEFENCE

Disabled Employees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested can be found in the 18 March 1994 issue of the magazine "Independent", copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Royal Naval museum, Portsmouth.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 January 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Admiral Morton *(Chair)*
Dr. Knight, NMM
Captain Pack, SOF
Rear Admiral Morris, SNR
Councillor Emery-Wallis
S. Thomas, PCC
O. Aisher
M. Drummond
T. Ferrers-Walker
Lord Strathcona
A. Jaffray
P. Trumper
Mr. and Mrs. J. McCarthy

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mine Clearance Equipment

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the export of mine clearance equipment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mine clearance equipment is covered by the Export of Goods (Control) Order of 1992 and as such requires a licence before export. All applications for such exports are considered on a case by case basis.

Multilateral Trade Organisation

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made as to the effect on sovereignty of article 16, paragraph 4, of the agreement establishing the multilateral trade organisation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Article XVI, paragraph 4 of the agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation, as it is now to be known, has no effect on national sovereignty. Under this paragraph, the parties to the agreement undertake to ensure the conformity of their laws and regulations with the obligations under the WTO agreement and its annexed agreements. The purpose of this is to ensure full implementation of the GATT agreement by the

parties to it. Parties to a treaty always need to ensure the conformity of their domestic legislation with their obligations under the treaty in order to avoid any breach of those obligations.

Middle East

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urge upon the European Union and United Nations the need for an international observer force to be established in the occupied territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: European Foreign Ministers issued a statement on 7 March supporting the establishment in the occupied territories of an international presence and declaring the willingnes of their states to participate. With our support, the United Nations is considering a resolution which would call for an international presence.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what approaches he has had about his willingness for the United Kingdom to play a role in an international observer force in the occupied territories; by whom; and what was his response.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs told Nabil Sha'ath, political adviser to Chairman Arafat, when he called on him on 3 March, that if an international civilian observer presence is agreed upon for the occupied territories, Britain will not be absent.

Indonesia

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Indonesian Government on their human rights record.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised this issue with the Indonesian Government when he visited Indonesia in April 1993. We regularly discuss human rights issues with Indonesia in other bilateral contacts and in international bodies.

Intelligence Services

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the official functions of the Secret Intelligence Service and GCHQ.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to clauses 1 and 3 of the Intelligence Services Bill, which is before Parliament.

Public Interest Immunity

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *828*, if the documents which were the subject of claims by his Department for non-disclosure on public interest immunity grounds were disclosed to Lord Justice Woolf and Mr. Justice Pill in the High Court during proceedings concerning Mr. Lorrain Osman; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 15 March 1994]:* Nine documents, for which public interest immunity had been asserted and upheld in earlier proceedings, were examined by Lord Justice Woolf and Mr. Justice Pill in the course of Mr. Lorrain Osman's seventh application for habeas corpus.

North-West Kurdistan

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the proposals for a ceasefire in north-west Kurdistan, south-east Turkey, put forward by Abdullah Ocalan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The resolution of their Kurdish problem is a matter for the Turkish Government, provided it encompasses full respect for human rights. We understand their reluctance to enter into negotiations with terrorists.

General Pinochet

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who authorised an entry visa to the United Kingdom for General Augusto Pinochet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* Chilean nationals do not require visas to visit the United Kingdom. General Pinochet did not apply for prior entry clearance at the British embassy in Santiago before making his recent private visit.

EDUCATION

Secondary Schools

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will name four or more secondary schools within the residential sector occupied new, extended, or modified buildings for which he has recently approved significant capital expenditure and which are over 90 per cent. full.

Mr. Forth: Such information on LEA-maintained boarding schools is not centrally available.

Since the financial year 1989-90 the Secretary of State has made capital grants to the following non-maintained special schools which meet the criteria in question:

	£
The Mary Hare Grammar School for the Deaf—age range 11-19—Newbury	400,000
Royal School for Deaf Children—age range 4-19—Margate	237,000
The West of England School—age range 3-19—Exeter	460,000
St. John's Residential School—age range 7-19—Brighton	469,000

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Boswell: The code of practice will reinforce and build on the Department's existing arrangements for the provision of information. A considerable amount of

information is already provided on request to the public through routine correspondence. In addition, the annual publication of performance tables is increasing the amount of information available to parents and others on the achievements of schools and colleges; while the parents, further education and higher education charters also emphasise the importance of information for all those involved.

Amyl Nitrate

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he is taking to stop the use of amyl nitrate in schools.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 1 March, *Official Report*, column 774-75.

Higher Education Funding Council

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what analysis he has made of the effect of the system of categories of quality assessment currently used by the Higher Education Funding Council for England on the recruitment of overseas students;

(2) what consideration he has given to abolishing the categories of quality assessment currently used by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in favour of a single quality threshold.

Mr. Boswell: Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, responsibility for all aspects of the system of quality assessment rests with the funding council. It is currently considering recommendations arising from an evaluation of the quality assessment process in its first full year of operation. My right hon. Friend will look to the council to take decisions on those recommendations, having regard to the need for helpful information for students and others, and for the council itself in respect of its funding decisions; and to the desirability of encouraging improvements in the quality of teaching and learning as well as assuring that it meets minimum requirements.

Technology Colleges

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *131*, if he will place in the Library information extracted from the management plans of the 12 schools listed in his announcement of 28 February that identifies and quantifies their key targets, including in particular targets for the achievements of pupils.

Mr. Robin Squire: No, for the reason given in my earlier answer. Schools did not necessarily prepare their management plans with any expectation that they would become public documents.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will describe the arrangements he has made, or intends to make, in order to monitor progress by each of the 12 schools listed in the announcement of 28 February towards the key targets of their management plans; what reports he expects to receive; and by whom such progress will be audited or independently reviewed.

Mr. Robin Squire: All of the schools approved to start as technology colleges on 1 September 1994 will be required to submit to the Department a report on progress towards their targets in December 1995, and annually thereafter.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the areas in which the management plans of each of the 12 schools listed in his announcement of 28 February identified key targets for achievement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Each of the schools' plans includes one or more targets relating to increased curriculum provision in the specialist subjects of technology, science and mathematics; one or more targets relating to increased take-up of such provision by pupils; and one or more targets relating to improved test and examination attainment in these subjects.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *131*, whether parents of registered pupils at the 12 schools listed in his announcement of 28 February have a right to inspect the school's management plan; and whether the governing body will be expected to provide a factual summary of the management plan in the next annual report to parents, including in particular targets for the achievements of pupils.

Mr. Robin Squire: These are matters for the governing bodies of the schools.

Student Unions

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number and costs of his Department's inquiries into student union funding since 1979.

Mr. Boswell: Since 1979, the Department's inquiries into the funding of student unions have included work preparatory to the introduction of new arrangements for the funding of student unions from the academic year 1981-82, following criticism of the previous arrangements by the Committee of Public Accounts in 1978; and work related to the Government's current proposals for student union reform which followed the survey of student unions published by the Department in 1989. It is not possible to disaggregate the costs of these activities from other work of the officials involved.

Disabled People

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many registered disabled people are employed in his Department; and what percentage this is of the total.

Mr. Forth: This information is contained in the magazine "Independent" which has been published today and placed in the Library.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Car Allowances

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Lord President of the Council on what basis hon. Members' car allowance is calculated; when this was last reviewed; and what plans he has for review in the near future.

Mr. Newton: Since 1984 hon. Members' car allowance has been calculated on the basis of the "Peyton formula". The rates were last revised with effect from 1 April 1991. As the information hitherto used for such revision is no longer available in the form required by the relevant resolution, I am currently considering how best to establish a secure basis for future updating.

HEALTH

Ministerial Offices

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of receptions held by Ministers in her Department in 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The cost of such receptions is included in the expenditure for the Department which is published in the annual report. Copies of the latest edition which covers this period was published on 7 March and have been placed in the Library.

Continuing Care Beds

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS continuing care beds there were in each year since 1979.

Mr. Bowis: Information collected by the Department on numbers of beds does not separately identify those used for continuing care. It is a matter for district health authorities to determine the level and type of care required taking into account the needs of the local population.

Limb Defects

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many *(a)* upper limb and *(b)* lower limb defects occurred in children born within each district health authority in the Trent regional health authority by year for the last four years;

(2) if she will make a statement on the incidence of upper limb defects in Trent regional health authority and Doncaster health authority areas.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the tables.

Number of children born wih upper limb defects (ICD 755.2) in each district health authority in the Trent Regional Health Authority 1989-1992*

District Health Authority	1989	1990	1991	1992
North Derbyshire	0	0	0	0
South Derbyshire	3	0	0	0
Leicestershire	1	1	1	1
North Lincolnshire	0	2	2	0
South Lincolnshire	1	0	2	1
Bassetlaw	0	1	0	—
Central Nottinghamshire	3	0	0	—
Nottingham	3	1	3	4
Barnsley	0	1	3	0
Doncaster	0	1	2	1
Rotherham	0	0	1	0
Sheffield	1	1	5	4
North Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	2

Number of children born with lower limb defects[1] (ICD 755.3) in each district health authority in the Trent Regional Health Authority 1989-1992

District Health Authority	1989	1990	1991	1992
North Derbyshire	0	0	0	1
South Derbyshire	1	0	0	0
Leicestershire	0	0	1	1
North Lincolnshire	0	0	0	0
South Lincolnshire	1	0	0	1
Bassetlaw	0	1	1	—
Central Nottinghamshire	1	0	0	—
Nottingham	1	0	0	1
Barnsley	1	1	1	0
Doncaster	0	1	1	0
Rotherham	0	0	0	1
Sheffield	1	0	1	1
North Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	0

Note:
In 1992 North Nottinghamshire was created from a merger between Bassetlaw and Central Nottinghamshire.
[1]International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) on 1 March, *Official Report,* c. *678,* for details on investigations on babies born with limb defects. For information on Trent regional health authority, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 14 March, *Official Report,* c. *536.*

Passive Smoking and Asthma

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the link between passive smoking and asthma.

Mr. Sackville: Reports published in 1992 by the Royal College of Physicians and the United States Environmental Protection agency found that passive smoking is causally associated with additional episodes and increased severity of asthma in children who already have the disease. With regard to the induction of asthma in previously asymptomatic children, the EPA concluded that there is insufficient evidence of a causal link. The agency also reported that passive smoking had subtle but significant effects on the respiratory health of adults.

The Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health will be reviewing the available research findings on this issue at the earliest opportunity. The asthma working group of the Committee on the Effects of Air Pollutants is also examining data in this sector.

NHS Regulatory Body

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce a regulatory body for the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has statutory responsibility for the functions delegated to national health service authorities and trusts. Furthermore, the chief executive of the NHS Management Executive, as accounting officer for the national health service, is accountable to Parliament through the Public Accounts Committee. There is no justification for introducing a further regulatory body for the National Health Service.

Hospital Treatment

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the average length of stay in hospital for patients *(a)* in London and *(b)* outside London; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Sackville: Comparable figures giving the average length of stay in hospital for patients in London and outside London are not available. The available figures in 1989-90 for the four Thames regional health authorities, plus the special health authorities, which include London and the rest of England are shown in the table.

Average length of stay in days

	All specialities	*Acute sector*
Thames regional health authorities	20·39	6·30
Rest of England	17·74	6·18

Suicide

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to ensure that "The Health of the Nation" targets on reducing suicide rates are reached.

Mr. Bowis: We are taking action to improve our understanding of suicide, to develop comprehensive local services for mentally ill people and to enhance good practice in the management of psychiatric conditions. Specific action already taken includes the funding of the confidential inquiry into homicides and suicides by mentally ill people, issue of the "Mental Illness Key Area Handbook" to national health service and local authority managers of mental health services and a series of initiatives under the 10-point plan to reinforce community care for mentally ill people we announced on 12 August 1993. Full details of action taken at national level during the first 16 months of "The Health of the Nation" initiative are given in "The Health of the Nation: One Year On", a copy of which is available in the Library.

London Initiative Zone

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money allocated to the London initiative zone has been re-allocated to projects outside the London initiative zone area.

Dr. Mawhinney: Resources made available for the London initiative zone are allocated exclusively for use on projects within the zone area.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was allocated in revenue and capital, for the current financial year to the London initiative zone; and how much remained uncommitted on 1 March.

Dr. Mawhinney: The total resources of £40 million identified for the London initiative zone in 1993-94 was initially split between £20 million capital and £20 million revenue. The resources are a combination of central funds and local contributions. The total central resources have been fully allocated to the Thames regional health authorities which have flexibility within LIZ to transfer resources between revenue and capital as necessary and have responsibility for allocations within their region.

Medium Secure Beds

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what date the planned 1,000 medium secure beds will be available.

Mr. Bowis: There are currently over 600 medium secure unit beds available. A further 580 additional beds are planned nationally and we expect these to be open by 1996, taking the total to over 1,200.

Ritchie Report

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consult the Secretary of State for the Home Department and police representatives following the recommendation in the Ritchie report that procedures and documentation relating to section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 should be standardised.

Mr. Bowis: We are considering this and other relevant recommendations of the report in consultation with the Home Department.

Mental Illness

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to achieve significant improvement in the social functioning of mentally ill people.

Mr. Bowis: We plan to secure signficant improvements in the social functioning of mentally ill people by improving information and understanding of mental illness, developing comprehensive local services for mentally ill people, and continuing the development of good practice in the management of mental illness. The mental illness specific grant introduced in 1991 and increased to £36 million for 1994-95 is designed to help local authorities develop services to improve the social functioning of people with a mental illness. It has already supported over 800 projects, helping 64,000 people. Overall spending on mental health is over £2 billion per year.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will inquire into the care and treatment of psychiatric patients attending accident and emergency units at general hospitals.

Mr. Bowis: A number of initiatives are taking place which are examining the range of service provision available for the mentally ill including the provision of emergency care in accident and emergency departments.

Salmonella

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of salmonella enteritidis food poisoning were recorded monthly in each year since 1988 *(a)* in total and *(b)* by health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library.

Although there was a 1 per cent. increase in the number of salmonella enteritidis reports between 1992 and 1993, during the same period the number of cases of human illness from all salmonellas dropped by 2 per cent.

Guy's Hospital

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the evidence on which the decision to close Guy's hospital was based.

Dr. Mawhinney: No decision has been made to close Guy's hospital.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what implications the proposed changes at Guy's hospital, south London, will have on the meeting of targets set by her patients charter initiative.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is the responsibility of local health authorities working with the trust to ensure that patients charter standards are met. Local health authorities and clinicians at the trust have argued strongly that patient care would be improved by concentrating clinical services on one site.

Blood

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent England has been self-sufficient in blood supplies in each of the past five years; and how any surplus has been used or any deficit met.

Mr. Sackville: In general, England has been self-sufficient in blood. Blood has a limited shelf life. Collections by the National Blood Transfusion Service are geared to maintaining that sufficiency and not to providing blood surplus to our requirements. Short-term deficits in supply have occasionally been met by obtaining blood from other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what quantity of blood donated through the Blood Transfusion Service has gone to the private health sector in each of the last five years; and what proportion this forms of total donations.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available. Much of the donated blood is processed and supplied to various users in a range of different forms.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 15 March, *Official Report, c. 567,* for information about the percentage of whole blood supplied to the private sector.

Mersey Regional Health Authority

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current age and salary of the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority; and how many days, or part days absence from work he has taken in the last 12 months for *(a)* holiday, *(b)* sickness, *(c)* business and *(d)* other reasons.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Donald Wilson is 71 and as chairman of Mersey regional health authority receives an annual remuneration of £20,925.

Information concerning Sir Donald's attendance is not available centrally.

Private Patients' Fees

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total of private patients' fees outstanding at the end of each financial year since 1979 for each regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available in the form requested. This is a matter for the individual health authorities and trusts.

Private Practice Earnings Limits

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received advocating reappraisal of the private practice earnings limits of consultants employed in the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: There have been discussions with the medical profession about the application of the 10 per cent. limit on private practice earnings.

Equipment (NHS Hospitals)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost of theft and unauthorised borrowing of equipment from NHS hospitals by private medical service providers and those engaged in private medical practice for each of the past five years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally; however, national health service trusts are expected to maintain procedures which take account of all possible losses and safeguard public assets.

Private Residential Homes

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will list those concessions and rebates applicable to owners of private residential homes available under the Disabled Persons Act 1978.

Mr. Bowis: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible, if he will clarify which Act he has in mind, there being no Disabled Persons Act 1978.

Gender Selection

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to extending the power of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Agency to cover clinics which offer gender selection for social reasons.

Mr. Sackville: Sperm separation techniques used at clinics offering sex selection, for social reasons are considered to have no scientific basis. There are no plans for legislation to extend the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority's powers in this area.

Child Care

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide, for the United Kingdom and each local authority in the United Kingdom, latest estimates of *(a)* the number of full-time child care places, including nursery school places, for children under five, *(b)* the number of part-time child care places, including nursery school places, for children under five, *(c)* the total number of full-time and part-time child care places, including nursery school places, for children under five, *(d* the number of children under five and *(e)* the percentage of children under five who have a full-time or part-time child care place.

Mr. Bowis *[holding answer 11 March 1994]:* Information on places and percentages of children is not availble in the form requested, as figures on day care and nursery schools are collected on a different basis.

The latest information available centrally about the number of day care places for the under fives is as follows:

— for England, in "Children's day care facilities at 31 March 1992, England". This includes information about the number of places in relation to the population under five expressed as a rate per 1,000 children for each local authority;

— for Scotland, in "Statistical Bulletin Services for Children 1991 and 1992" (but exclude an estimated 6,500 places in day nurseries, children's centres and family centres in the registered sector).

— for Wales, in "Activities of Social Services Departments: Year ended 31/3/92"; and,

— for Northern Ireland, copies of this information will be placed in the Library.

Information collected centrally does not separately identify full-time and part-time places. Information about nursery school provision is collected in England by the Department for Education whose statistical bulletin 11/93 "Pupils under five years of age in schools in England—January 1992", shows the information available for January 1992 about participation rates of children under five being taught in maintained nursery schools and classes, independent schools and special schools. For figures about the provision of nursery education in maintained nursery and primary schools January 1993 in England I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education gave to the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 21 January, *Official Report*, columns 857-59.

Figures for nursery schools in Wales are given in "Statistics of Education and Training in Wales: Schools No. 2 1994", figures for Scotland are given in "Statistical Bulletin Provision for Preschool Children No. Edn/A/1992/11" and for Northern Ireland will be placed in the Library.

Copies of all the relevant publications are in the Library.

Population figures at 30 June 1991 and 30 June 1992 by local authority, which are appropriate to the different types of day care and nursery school provision described in these publications, will be placed in the Library.

NHS Employees

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will seek to amend the wording of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 to clarify the position with regard to the continuity of redundancy and unfair dismissal rights of NHS employees whose employer is transferring to trust status and whose contract contains a mobility clause, permitting or requiring them to work at more than one site;

(2) what assessment has been made by her Department of the implications of the Employment Appeals Tribunal verdict in the case of Northern general hospital NHS trust *v.* Gale for the continuity of redundancy and unfair dismissal rights of NHS employees whose employer is transferring to trust status and whose contract contains a mobility clause, permitting or requiring them to work at more than one site.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 14 March 1994]:* The National Health Service Management Executive has considered the employment appeal tribunal judgment and concluded that consequential amendments to the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 are not required.

Section 6(1)(b) of this Act provides for the employment rights of any person employed by a health authority who is working at more than one unit to be protected on transfer to a trust if that person is designated under a "scheme" made by the health authority specified in the establishment order of a trust.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fines (Non-Payment)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of people imprisoned for non-payment of fines or other debts due to magistrates courts during the most recent year for which records are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 18 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your Question asking what was the total number of people imprisoned for non-payment of fines or other debts due to magistrates courts during the most recent year for which records are available.

The latest available provisional information is for 1993. During that year 22,754 persons were received into Prison service establishments in England and Wales from Magistrates courts for non-payment of fines and non-criminal offences involving non-payment of debt: (these include non-payment of wife maintenance, child maintenance, arrears under an affiliation order, rates/community charge or "other" debts).

Receptions[2] into Prison Service establishments, England and Wales by type of custody, 1992-93[1]

Type of custody	*Year* 1992	1993
Males		
Untried[2]	47,593	51,047
Convicted unsentenced[2]	19,099	30,038
Immediate custody[2]	48,968	49,530
Fine defaulters and non-criminal	21,917	25,646
Females		
Untried[2]	2,376	2,663
Convicted unsentenced[2]	1,178	1,566
Immediate custody[2]	2,198	2,382
Fine defaulters and non-criminal	1,189	1,590

[1] Provisional figures.

[2] A person initially received as untried and subsequently received as convicted unsentenced is counted in both sets of figures. A person subsequently received as a sentenced prisoner is counted separately in those figures.

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the implications for the operation of his Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Howard: The code of practice will reinforce and build on my Department's existing arrangements for the provision of information. Arrangements are being made to implement the code in the Home Office and a copy of the guidance notes on these arrangements will be placed in the Library of the House following publication of the code of practice.

Equal Opportunities

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to the key recommendations of the Black Training and Enterprise Group in the Department of Environment's draft bidding guidance for the single regeneration budget; if he will make it his policy that projects in disadvantaged black communities currently funded under section 11 or via the ethnic minority grant will be protected; and if he will reconsider his decision to abolish the ethnic minority grant.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be taking into account all responses received in relation to the draft bidding guidance document circulated by his Department, including that of the Black Training and Enterprise Group. We have been pleased to note the group's positive comments about the ethnic minority grant which we introduced. We consider that it is entirely right that the funding of such activities should be embraced by the single regeneration budget in future.

Mrs. Sandra Howard

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department was informed of the reasons why Mrs. Sandra Howard was recently rejected as a magistrate by the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee; how such information was communicated; by whom; to whom; and under what authority.

Mr. Howard: The Lord Chancellor's advisory committee has not yet reached a final decision on the application by Mrs. Sandra Howard to become a magistrate.

Refusal of Entry

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether it remains the practice for Ministers to accept written representation from hon. Members in cases where refusal of entry has occurred; what change there has been in this practice; and why hon. Members are advised to telephone the chief immigration officer when letters have been written in such cases to Ministers in his Department.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As the power to admit or refuse entry to the United Kingdom is vested in the immigration officer, not Ministers, hon. Members are encouraged to contact the Immigration Service direct to make representations. Written representations submitted to Ministers which the Immigration Service has not had the opportunity to consider are sent to the port concerned for consideration. Ministers will become involved only if the hon. Member has new and compelling information which the Immigration Service believes is not strong enough to overturn a decision to refuse entry. The practice has existed since 1989.

Manslaughter

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were *(a)* charged, *(b)* prosecuted and *(c)* convicted of manslaughter in each of the last three years in cases which involved the suspects driving a motor vehicle.

Mr. Maclean: The following table gives the information requested:

Persons dealt with for offences of manslaughter where the driving of a motor vehicle was involved—England and Wales

	Charged	*Prosecuted*	*Convicted*
1990	10	10	8
1991	12	10	3
1992	2	2	2

In addition, a further two persons in 1990, two in 1991 and four in 1992 were convicted of manslaughter where the suspect was driving a motor vehicle, but where the charges and prosecutions had been for offences of murder.

Figures are as at 27 August 1993; they are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and the courts, or as further information becomes available.

Information for 1993 is not yet available.

Campsfield House Detention Centre

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many detainees of Campsfield House detention centre are *(a)* asylum seekers, *(b)* appellants against refusal and *(c)* awaiting deportation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance has been issued to staff at Campsfield House detention centre where detainees refuse food.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Guidance based on Prison Service procedures has been issued to staff at the Campsfield House detention centre responsible for the care of those detainees refusing food. An immigration detainee refusing food for more than three days is offered advice and treatment by the Campsfield House medical team and this is repeated on a daily basis as part of the detailed monitoring of the individual's medical condition. Treatment would be administered only with the individual's consent.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the total number of detainees held at Campsfield House detention centre by *(a)* country of origin, *(b)* those held for less than one month, *(c)* one to six months and *(d)* more than six months.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in respect of detainees held at Campsfield House on 15 March 1994.

	Number
(a) Nationality	
Algeria	3
Angola	4
Bangladesh	6
Cameroon	1
China	2
Colombia	3
Cote d'Ivoire	4
Cyprus	1
Ethiopia	7
Ghana	28

	Number
India	27
Jamaica	1
Kenya	8
Liberia	4
Malawi	1
Niger	1
Nigeria	28
Pakistan	2
Peru	1
Philippines	2
Poland	1
Romania	5
Sierra Leone	3
Somalia	3
Sri Lanka	8
Sudan	1
Togo	1
Turkey	6
Uganda	4
Zaire	8
Nationality doubtful	5
Total	179

	Number
(b) Overall length of detention (including any detention elsewhere)	
Less than one month	*29*
One to six months	*139*
More than six months	*11*
Total	*179*

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he first received reports of hunger strikes at Campsfield House detention centre.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 18 February 1994.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) of 28 February, *Official Report*, column *580*, what estimates he has made of the cost of criminal injuries compensation in 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Mr. Maclean: The latest estimates of spend on criminal injuries compensation in 1995-96 and 1996-97, in cash terms, are £209 million and £152 million respectively.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of claimants who will receive *(a)* between one half and two thirds and *(b)* less than half the amount of compensation under his proposed scheme for compensation than under the current scheme.

Mr. Maclean: Based on the data acquired from the case sampling survey undertaken to establish the tariff scheme it has been estimated that about 8 per cent. of beneficiaries under the tariff scheme could receive between half and less than two thirds of what they might have expected under the current scheme, and about 11 per cent. could receive less than half.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provisions he has made for training the employees of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board before the new compensation scheme is applied on 1 April.

Mr. Maclean: Many of the staff of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, who will in future serve the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, are already familiar with the provisions of the tariff scheme because of their involvement in the preparation of the detailed rules and guidance for it, much of which reflects the provisions of the current scheme. A training programme, which is currently running, is intended to ensure that sufficient numbers are equipped to deal expeditiously with the first cases received on or after 1 April.

Security Service

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the functions of the Security Service relate to the official functions of the Secret Intelligence Service and GCHQ.

Mr. Howard: The functions of the Security Service are set out in the Security Service Act 1989 and those of the Secret Intelligence Service and GCHQ in the Intelligence Services Bill, which is currently before Parliament. Further details of the agencies' functions are set out in the "Central Intelligence Machinery" booklet which is available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

National Anti-vivisection Society

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent investigation by the National Anti-vivisection Society into St. Mary's hospital medical school and Toxicol Laboratories Ltd.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have asked the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate for a report on the allegations made.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Royal Palaces

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 14 March, *Official Report*, column *481*, what is the range of all actual rents paid at each of the royal palaces for all accommodation; how many heads of department in the royal household have furnishing costs paid by his Department; and how much has been spent in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sproat: I will reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *611*, what in money terms is the range of all those actual rental payments for grace and favour accommodation in the occupied royal palaces; how many rents make up the £69,000; how much relates to each palace; how much of the rent is received by the royal household and how much by his Department; and by what criteria it is determined which rentals are paid to the royal household and which to the Department.

Mr. Sproat: I will reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Libraries (Donations)

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what restrictions currently exist to prevent libraries from accepting donations from members of the public to support book-buying; and in what ways donations from the public can be made to public libraries.

Mr. Sproat: Public libraries are free to accept donations from members of the public and it is common for libraries to receive donations of books and other materials as well as bequests. In seeking to encourage donations, however, a public library authority would have to bear in mind its statutory obligation under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 not to charge for its book lending and reference service.

Playing Fields

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many London playing fields are listed in the register of playing fields.

Mr. Brooke: The register of recreational land lists 5,191 pitches on 1,288 sites in Greater London.

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many playing fields are listed in the London borough of Lambeth.

Mr. Brooke: The register of recreational land lists 69 playing pitches on 10 sites in the London borough of Lambeth.

National Lottery

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list, for each of the five bodies chosen by him as channels of distribution for the proceeds of the national lottery *(a)* the number of staff who will be employed in the lottery unit, *(b)* the estimated annual salaries bill for these staff and *(c)* the estimated annual overheads for each lottery unit.

Mr. Brooke: The distributing bodies named in section 23 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 are currently developing their administrative arrangements for handling applications for lottery funds. It is too early to make estimates of the total number of staff that will be required or the total costs involved.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure that are women.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The total number of staff by grade and the percentage of women in each grade within the Department of National Heritage excluding its two executive agencies, the Historic Royal Palaces and the Royal Parks, are listed in the following table:

DNH staff as at 28 February 1994

Grade	*Total number in grade*	*Of which female (per cent.)*
1A	1	—
G3	4	25
G4	1	—
G5	16	25
G6	5	80
G7	44	25
SEO	15	47
HEOD	4	50
HSOD	1	—
AT	3	100
HEO	46	37
EO	57	37
AO	55	45
AA	29	52
SPS	4	100
PS	18	100
Typist	6	100
SGB1	1	100
SGB2	10	70
SIO	4	—
IO	4	25
CUR E	2	100
CUR G	3	—
Librarian	1	100
Assistant Librarian	1	100
Assistant Statistician	1	—
Totals	336	45

SCOTLAND

Scottish Homes

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent by Scottish Homes in each of the last five financial years on the purchase and distribution of *(a)* golf balls, *(b)* umbrellas, *(c)* sweat shirts, *(d)* scarves and *(e)* ties marked with a Scottish Homes imprint or logo.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is a matter for Scottish Homes. I have asked its chairman, Sir James Mellon, to write to the hon. Member.

Forestry Review Group

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland further to his answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, column *376*, if he will say which Ministers were represented on the forestry review group.

Sir Hector Monro: The forestry review group comprised officials from the Scottish Office, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Welsh Office, the Forestry Commission, the Department of the Environment, HM Treasury, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Prime Minister's policy unit.

Public Bodies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list each organisation, agency and body for which he has responsibility for the appointment of members; if he will list the number of appointments he makes to each body; if he will list other organisations which have the right of appointment to any of these bodies; if he will publish a table showing the *(a)* name of, *(b)*

occupation or former occupation of, *(c)* salary, honorarium or annual payment made to and *(d)* date of appointment of each member; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Details of membership of those bodies listed in the publication "Public Bodies" are normally available in their annual reports, as indicated in the publication. The latest edition of "Public Bodies" is available in the Library of the House. Public bodies should always be ready to provide a list of their membership and the organisation's postal address at which members may be contacted.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report,* column *471,* when he expects to be able to announce publication of a document for Scotland similar to that published by the Secretary of State for Wales entitled, "Public Bodies: Appointments made by the Secretary of State for Wales" which would list detailed information concerning appointments made to public bodies in Scotland.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Details of membership of those bodies listed in the publication "Public Bodies" are normally available in their annual reports, as indicated in the publication. The latest edition of "Public Bodies" is available in the Library of the House. Public bodies should always be ready to provide a list of their membership and the organisation's postal address at which members may be contacted.

Nursery Education

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of three and four-year-old children in the Borders and Lothian regions are in maintained sector education.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The latest available information for September 1993, shows, provisionally, that the percentages of the three and four-year-old population attending education authority nursery, primary and special schools in Borders and Lothian regions are 27·8 per cent. and 56·9 per cent. respectively. Because many nursery schools admit pupils during the school year, final figures for session 1993-94 are expected to be higher.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep Imports

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many live sheep have been imported from *(a)* Poland and *(b)* Spain during (i) 1993 and (ii) 1994; how many of the animals from each country have been condemned as unfit for human consumption; how many suffered from caseous lymphadenitis; what assessment he has made of the risk of that condition being spread to United Kingdom sheep; if it is a contagious diseases; and how many died in transit.

Mr. Soames: In 1993 one consignment, consisting of 201 sheep, was imported from Spain. There were no imports from Poland. To date in 1994 three consignments, comprising a total of 722 sheep, have been imported from Spain and three consignments, totalling 917 sheep, have been imported from Poland.

Information on the numbers of carcases from each consignment which were condemned as unfit for human consumption is not available centrally.

Information available to date indicates that evidence of caseous lymphadenitis was found at post-mortem inspection in a small number of animals in one of the consignments from Spain and in two of the consignments from Poland. Caseous lymphadenitis is a contagious disease which is common throughout the world wherever sheep are raised. Caseous lymphadenitis does occur in sheep in this country but it is not a notifiable disease. As all the sheep imported so far into Great Britain from Spain and Poland were sheep for immediate slaughter, there is no risk of their spreading caseous lymphadenitis to United Kingdom sheep.

One sheep from Spain and two from Poland—in one consignment—were found to be dead on arrival.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks were made in the case of each consignment of live sheep imported from Poland and Spain in 1993 and 1994 that a route plan had been drawn up and that the animals had been fed and watered as required by directive 91/628/EEC; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Checks are carried out at the place of destination to ensure that Community health and welfare requirements have been met in accordance with the EC veterinary checks directives 90/425 and 91/496 and the protection of animals during transport directive 91/628. An inspection must also be carried out at the place of departure, or place of entry into the Community.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the transmission of bovine spongiform encephalopathy from cows to their offspring and the evidence for the possibility of this.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend the Minister gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) on 21 February, *Official Report,* column 72.

Bovine Immunodeficiency Virus

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for Humberside and the three Yorkshire counties how many cows in herds tested proved bovine immunodeficiency virus positive in the latest convenient period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: During limited work on the development of a serological test for bovine immunodeficiency virus carried out by the Department's Central Veterinary Laboratory in 1990, blood samples from 31 cattle in Humberside and the counties of Yorkshire were tested and one was found to be seropositive to the test which was used. These results have not been validated. Clinical disease caused by infection with BIV has never been identified in Great Britain.

Agricultural Imports

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what would be the annual cost to the United Kingdom producers of removing quantitative restrictions, customs duties and import levies on the agricultural products listed in annex to article 21 and protocol 3 of the European agreements with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania.

Mr. Soames: The provisions of Article 21 and protocol No. 3 of each of these agreements are already in place, along with all other trade arrangements set out in the Europe agreements. There is no evidence that those have had a direct impact on the costs of United Kingdom producers of the commodities concerned. If markets for any of the products covered by the agreements were to be seriously undermined as a result of the concessionary import terms, the possibility exists of taking safeguard action.

Poultry Slaughtering

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many poultry *(a)* flocks and *(b)* birds were slaughtered in each year since 1988 and in 1994 to date.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of poultry flocks and birds compulsorily slaughtered in Great Britain because of salmonella infection each year since the introduction of the policy in March 1989 are set out in the following table.

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*Total*
Flocks slaughtered							
Layers	81	68	62	53	8	0	272
Layer breeders	1	4	9	3	3	1	21
Broiler breeders	3	27	30	17	17	6	100
Total	85	99	101	73	28	7	393
Birds slaughtered							
Layers	1,012,193	693,855	257,038	356,477	20,691	0	2,340,254
Layer breeders	6,043	17,573	43,320	13,614	22,535	3,036	106,121
Broiler breeders	21,789	249,016	381,265	169,930	185,002	58,050	1,065,052
Total	1,040,025	960,444	681,623	540,021	228,228	61,086	3,511,427

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money has been paid since 31 March 1993, as compensation to farmers for slaughtered poultry; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Since 31 March 1993, £436,431 has been paid in compensation for poultry flocks compulsorily slaughtered because of confirmed salmonella infection.

In July 1993, the Government announced that they had reviewed the existing legislative provisions for compensation in respect of slaughtered poultry and concluded that they found an unsatisfactory basis for dealing with poultry slaughtered because of salmonella infection. They therefore proposed to amend the Animal Health Act 1981, following consultation with industry, so as to provide a clear statutory basis for the payment of compensation for salmonella infected birds. In the meantime, the Government would pay full compensation for all birds compulsorily slaughtered because of salmonella. Payments made to all owners of flocks slaughtered since the policy began in March 1989 were adjusted in August 1993 at a cost of £1,048,768.

Animal Transportation

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many animals imported from *(a)* Poland and *(b)* Spain were inspected at British ports in the last year; what involvement the staff had in these inspections; and what action is being taken to protect the welfare of any future animals imported from Poland and Spain.

Mr. Soames: In the last year there have been no inspections at British ports of animals imported from Poland or Spain. Inspections are carried out at the place of destination to ensure that welfare and health requirements have been met. An inspection must also be carried out at the place of departure, or place of entry to the EC. We have asked the German authorities to ensure that all consignments of sheep entering the Community from Poland are subject to rigorous checks.

Open Government

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the implications for the operation of her Department of the code of practice on open government.

Mr. Jack: The application of the code will involve the allocation of some extra resources to this task, but this will be limited since in general it is consistent with the Ministry's existing arrangements for the provision of information.

Eggs

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what were the figures for egg consumption in each county of the United Kingdom for each year since 1988;

(2) what were the annual figures for egg consumption in *(a)* the north, *(b)* the south, *(c)* the east and *(d)* the west of England for each year since 1988;

(3) what were the figures for egg consumption in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* England for each year since 1988.

Mr. Jack: Estimates of household consumption of eggs are provided by the Ministry's national food survey, which covers households in Great Britain, but not Northern Ireland. This survey provides estimates for each country within Great Britain and for each standard region within

England, but not for each county. The estimates, which are expressed in terms of average numbers of eggs per person per week, exclude eggs used in manufacturing or catering and institutions.

Number per person, per week

Year	Great Britain	England	Wales	Scotland
1988	2·67	2·58	2·39	3·62
1989	2·29	2·25	2·09	2·82
1990	2·20	2·17	2·14	2·61
1991	2·25	2·27	2·23	2·17
1992	2·08	2·06	2·15	2·28

Number per person, per week

Year	North	Yorkshire and Humberside	Regions of England: North West	East Midlands	West Midlands	South West	South East/ East Anglia
1988	3·31	3·00	2·55	2·70	2·42	2·78	2·27
1989	2·87	2·69	2·08	1·93	2·26	2·42	2·06
1990	2·89	2·38	2·28	2·19	1·90	2·30	1·98
1991	2·72	2·35	2·30	1·93	2·09	2·37	2·24
1992	2·32	2·20	2·00	2·00	2·05	2·12	2·00

North-east Drift Net Fishery

Mr. Beith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer to the right hon. Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) on 1 March, *Official Report*, column 645, what arrangements she has made to consult representatives of north-east drift net fishermen about proposals to extend the close season for the fishery.

Mr. Jack: As I previously indicated, we are currently considering a request that the opening date for the north-east coast salmon drift net fishery be postponed. If we conclude that there is a case for a change in the current arrangements, we will ensure that those affected are consulted before any decisions are taken. They would, in addition, have the opportunity to object formally to the proposed byelaw when it was published, and any such objections would be taken into account by the Minister when deciding whether or not it should be confirmed.

Less-favoured Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, column 592, if she will provide the same information from the annual farm census for farms within an area coterminous with each of the local surveys conducted by the universities and colleges in connection with the annual farm business survey.

Mrs. Shephard *[holding answer 10 March 1994]:* The information requested is shown in the following tables for those farms covered by the Farm Business Survey, that is, larger than eight ESU classified in the June 1992 agricultural census as cattle and sheep farms in the less-favoured areas as a whole or in the severely disadvantaged areas. Unweighted farm business survey results do not provide valid estimates for comparison with census results.

Cattle and sheep (LFA) farms: averages per farm, June 1992 census (England) holdings 8 ESU and over

Province	Farm area (hectares)	Farm area (acres)	Livestock Units: Sheep (lsu)	Cattle (lsu)	Total cattle & sheep (lsu)
Newcastle	164	405	55	64	118
Askham Bryan	131	324	45	53	98
Manchester	100	247	41	52	93
Nottingham	122	301	34	56	89
Exeter	94	232	37	68	105

Cattle and sheep (SDA) farms (a): averages per farm, June 1992 census (England) holdings 8 ESU and over

Province	Farm area (hectares)	Farm area (acres)	Livestock Units: Sheep (lsu)	Cattle (lsu)	Total cattle & sheep (lsu)
Newcastle	177	437	57	62	120
Askham Bryan	149	368	49	52	100
Manchester	125	309	48	50	98
Nottingham	142	351	37	58	95
Exeter	109	269	43	68	111

(a) Includes farms classified as SDA specialist sheep, SDA specialist beef and SDA mixed cattle and sheep.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Metric Weights

Mr. Purchase: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to publish the amendment to the Price Marking Order 1991 in respect of shops switching from imperial to metric weights for certain categories of foods.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is my intention that legislation amending the Price Marking Order 1991 should be laid in Parliament before the summer recess as part of a set of measures implementing the units of measurement directive.

Mr. Purchase: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he intends to ask the EC for a further derogation to avoid the final stage, on 1 January 2000, of switching to metric weight for goods sold loose.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are no plans at present to seek a further derogation.

Mr. Purchase: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide an early public information programme to help consumers understand the switch to metric weights on 1 January 1995.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government are considering what, if any, public information programme should be provided to supplement any action taken by retailers.

Biotechnology

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the expenditure on, and the results of, the "biotechnology means business" programme; and what future proposals he has for technology transfer in biotechnology.

Mr. Sainsbury: The DTI's expenditure on the "biotechnology means business" awareness-raising programme amounted to £420,000. The pilot campaign reached an audience of some 30,000 companies, nine regional seminars were held and 557 expressions of interest from companies resulted. The pilot has confirmed the value of promoting awareness of commercial opportunities of biotechnology and a successor initiative is under consideration.

The Independent

Mr. Moss: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a further statement on the proposed transfer of *The Independent.*

Mr. Heseltine: Pursuant to the reply given on 24 February, *Official Report,* column *317.* Following a period of consultation in which interested parties had the opportunity to submit comments, I can now announce my decisions.

The first application related to an offer made for all of the shares in Newspaper Publishing, owner of *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday,* by a consortium comprising Promotora de Informaciones, Espresso International Holding and Mirror Group Newspapers. My consent was sought without an inquiry by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission under section 58(3)(a) of the Fair Trading Act 1973.

In the light of the inquiries which my Department has conducted into the financial position of Newspaper Publishing, and of representations received by my Department during the consultation phase, I am satisfied that *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday* titles are not economic as going concerns and as separate newspapers and that, if the papers are to continue, the case is one of urgency. I have in addition decided to exercise the discretion given to me under section 58(3)(a) of the Fair Trading Act 1973 to give consent to the consortium's offer for Newspaper Publishing without a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The second application, from Independent Newspapers plc of Ireland was similarly based on section 58(3)(a) but related to an increase in the level of its shareholding above the level which triggers the need for my consent.

Having regard to the financial analysis to which I have referred, and to representations on this application received during the consultation phase, I am satisfied that the criteria set out in section 58(3)(a) are met in relation to this application also. I accordingly give my consent to the increased shareholding in Newspaper Publishing by Independent Newspapers plc without a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

I have considered whether my consent in relation to either or both of these applications should be qualified by conditions, including in relation to editorial independence. Usually the relationship between publisher and editor is defined contractually in the light of the publisher's appraisal of the market opportunity. I have concluded that, in this case, the public interest does not require me to take a different view or to stipulate conditions in relation to either application.

The consortium's offer for Newspaper Publishing has also been cleared by the EC Commission under the European Community merger regulation.

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Martlew: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the projects for which he gave approval under the non-fossil fuel obligation in *(a)* the first tranche and *(b)* the second tranche giving (i) the type of project and (ii) the country in which it is located; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* Full lists of all projects which gained contracts under the first two renewables orders are given in the press releases issued by the Office of Electricity Regulation on 3 October 1990 and 6 November 1991 respectively, copies of which I have placed in the Library of the House.

British Coal Privatisation

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what budget provision he has made in 1993-94 for consultations in connection with the restructuring and privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: There is no separately identifiable budget for consultations in connection with the restructuring and privatisation of British Coal. However, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him of 19 January 1994, *Official Report,* column *649,* which gave the 1993-94 provision for consultancies.

WALES

NHS Management Vacancies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had from *(a)* the Institute of Health Services Management and *(b)* others in relation to the approval of systems set up to approve the advertising and filling of clerical and management vacancies in the NHS in Wales; how many clerical staff are required within his Department to operate this approved system; and what reporting system to Ministers has been set up to monitor the success of his system.

Mr. Redwood: I have not received direct representations from the Institute of Health Service Management but I have discussed the matter with chairmen of health authorities. The amount of clerical staff time involved is minimal and NHS management staff numbers are routinely collected on a quarterly basis which will enable monitoring to take place.

Health Policy Division Merger

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *634*, what consequential amendments in the accounting and audit trail within his Department will arise from the merging of the health policy division previously accountable via the permanent secretary with the NHS directorate in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Accountability for the Welsh Office's votes will be set out in the supply estimates to be published on 24 March.

Groundwater Notices

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation concerning the Ordnance Survey maps used in issuing the groundwater notices and covering letters, both as to dates of survey maps used, breaches of copyright and the compensation fee paid to the Ordnance Survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Civil Servants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of persons employed and *(b)* the percentage of this figure who are women.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 March 1994]:* The position at 1 January 1994 is given in the following table:

Grade	*Total in Grade*	*Female Percentage of Total*
Grade 1	1	0
Grade 2 and equivalent	2	0
Grade 3 and equivalent	13	8
Grade 4 and equivalent	6	33
Grade 5 and equivalent	60	15
Grade 6 and equivalent	76	18
Grade 7 and equivalent	195	27
SBO and equivalent	146	18
HBO and equivalent	307	36
AT/HBO'Ds and equivalent	23	52
EO and equivalent	496	58
AO and equivalent	662	72
AA and equivalent	491	63
Total	2,479	53

Footnote:
(i) Part-time staff are counted as one.
(ii) Figures exclude casual staff.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what indemnities have been sought by the Balfour Beatty-Costain consortium in relation to the construction contract for the Cardiff bay barrage.

Mr. Redwood: Balfour Beatty and Costain sought clarification from the corporation of the funding arrangements which would apply if Cardiff Bay development corporation were to be dissolved before the construction contract ended. Their attention has now been drawn to the legislation relating to the dissolution of urban development corporations. No indemnity has been given.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 239**

SESSION 1993–94

7th March, 1994—18th March, 1992

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instruments etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading 'Speaker's rulings and statements'.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates and Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates, etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions.*

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Comm = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

A1
Dual carriageways 511w
Gateshead 510–1w

A1-M1 link
Road construction 10w

A27
Planning blight 5w

A56
Road traffic 653w

A75
Road traffic 57–61w
Road works 57w

A259
Road traffic 511w

ABB Transportation
636w

Abortion
308w, 439w, 725w
Congenital abnormalities 87–8w
Northern Ireland 866–7w
St George's Hospital Tooting 88w
South Yorkshire 306w

Access to countryside
Inheritance tax 98w, 220w

Accident and emergency departments
Greater London 440w
Hospital consultants 158w
Mentally ill 888w
St Albans Hospital 305w
South Yorkshire 564w

Accounting
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 23–4w

Accounting officers
Dept of Trade and Industry 211w
Ministry of Defence 401w

Acid rain
871w

Adams, Mrs Irene
Debates etc.
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 917

Administration of justice
Judges 557w
Northern Ireland 142–4w

Administrative receivers
Company liquidations 211–2w

Advertising
260w
Centre for Policy Studies 437w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 488w
Dept of Health 88w, 347–8w, 438w
Grant maintained schools 623w
Home Office 588w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 281–2w, 384w
Northern Ireland Office 350–1w
Treasury 99w

Advertising controls
Baby milks 88w
Pornography 413w

Advice & Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1994
Debates etc.
(16.03.94) 927–35

Advice & Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1994
Debates etc.
(16.03.94) 927–35

Advisory bodies
Judicial Studies Board 757w

Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service
Public appointments 640w

AEA Technology
see United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

Aerospace industry
280
Government assistance 248w
Manpower 433–4w

Age of consent
EC countries 600w

Aggregates
Dredging 790–1w

Agricultural land
Wales 284w

Agricultural marketing
Milk 607–8w

Agricultural production
489w

Agricultural products
Eastern Europe 901–2w

Agricultural subsidies
729w
Beef 489–90w
Cereals 601w
Common Agricultural Policy 388w
Norway 261–2w
Oilseed rape 606w
Potatoes 66–7w

Agricultural surpluses
EC law 604w

Agricultural workers
814w
Wales 695w

Agriculture
Deregulation initiative 607
Environment protection 604w
Parliamentary questions 388w
Waste management 42w

Agriculture Select Committee
(08.03.94) 258

Aid financed trade
312–3w, 449w, 586w, 683–4w, 740w
Indonesia 740w
Malaysia 100w, 114w, 449w, 684w, 740w
Thailand 586w

Ainger, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 755, 759, 795–6, 803, 823–5
Questions
Air pollution control, Nitrogen dioxide 874
Armed forces training, Indonesia 137
Birds, Coastal areas 371w
District health authorities, Managers 155w
Extractive industries, Departmental responsibilities 49w
Film industry, Finance 9
Health services, Dyfed 153w
Health services, Pembrokeshire 156w
Industry, Germany 521w
Interreg programme, Wales 612
NHS trusts 562w
NHS trusts, Audit 345w
NHS trusts, Contracts of employment 154w
NHS trusts, External financing limits 560w
NHS trusts, Finance 562w
NHS trusts, Financial targets 157w, 163–4w, 560–1w
NHS trusts, Managers 155w
Patients, Medical treatments 157w
Pembrokeshire Health Authority, Capital 155–6w
Pembrokeshire NHS Trust, Capital investment 156w
Pembrokeshire NHS Trust, Health service staff 155w

Ainger, Mr Nick—continued
Petroleum exploration licences 300–1w
Police authorities 385
Ports, Oil pollution control 315w
Rural areas 298w
Rural areas, Wales 362–3w
Rural Development Commission, Publications 298–9w

Ainsworth, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 637, 642–3, 649–50, 655
Questions
Arts sponsorship 51w
Employment opportunities 150
National lottery 11

Ainsworth, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Contaminated Land Bill, 1R (15.03.94) 745–7
Questions
Bail hostels, West Midlands 393–4
Central Manchester Development Corporation, Urban development grants 461w
Child safety, Local government expenditure 581–2w
City grants, Foleshill gas works 462w
Dept of the Environment, Government buildings 416–7w
Electric vehicles, Coventry 572w
Engines, Research finance 573w
Euston Station, Railway timetables 651w
Exhaust emission controls 573w
Foreign investment in UK, Japan 279
Government grants 462w
Groundwork trusts, Expenditure 370–1w
Income support, Administrative delays 219w
Political refugees 593w
Political refugees, Immigrant detainees 591–2w
Social fund, Coventry 711w
Standard spending assessments 461w, 580w
Standard spending assessments, Council housing 293–4w, 788w
Standard spending assessments, Homelessness 291–3w, 582w
Urban development grants 462w

Air force
Armed forces pensions 92w
Armed forces training 89w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 134
Defence expenditure 90w
Engineers 198–9w
Iraq 132
Repairs and maintenance 398w

Air force bases
93w
Yorkshire and Humberside 750–2w, 855–8w

Air force strength
90–2w
9 Squadron 420w

Air pollution
789w, 880
Asthma 157w, 559–60w, 788w, 829w
Construction materials 582–3w
Health hazards 800w, 828–9w
Hospital admissions 800w
Road traffic 787–8w
Wales 800w

Air pollution control
787–9w
Fees and charges 299–300w
Nitrogen dioxide 874
Solid fuels 871–2w
Sulphur dioxide 871w

Air pollution monitoring
785w, 874–5
Urban areas 880
Wales 366w

Air routes
Poland 647–8w

Air safety
Smoke hoods 507w

Air traffic
Consolidated fund debates (17.03.94) 1090–103
RAF Finningley 749–50w
Wandsworth Borough Council 649w

Air Training Corps
RAF Halton 517–8w

Air transport
USA 408w

Air travel
Civil servants' visits abroad 645–6w, 873w

Aircraft
RAF Finningley 749–50w

Airmisses
Humberside Airport 691w
Leeds-Bradford Airport 691w
Tornado aircraft 398w

Airport tax
Humberside Airport 221w, 651–2w
Leeds-Bradford Airport 221w, 651–2w

Airports
Crime 654w
Noise control 122w

***Aitken, Mr Jonathan**, Minister of State for Defence Procurement*
Questions
Air force, Engineers 198–9w
Armed conflict, Merchant ships 133
Armed forces, Merchant ships 132–3
Arms trade, Indonesia 859w
Arms trade, Malaysia 95–6w, 399w
Arms trade, Philippines 749w
British Aerospace, Defence procurement 253w
Civil service manpower, Ministry of Defence 859w
Computers in government departments, Ministry of Defence 748w
D-Day landings, Festivals and special occasions 133
Defence contracts, Malaysia 755–6w
Defence costs study 201–2w
Defence equipment, Repairs and maintenance 398w
Defence expenditure 93w
Defence Export Services Organisation 748w
Defence Export Services Organisation, Public appointments 253w, 420w
Defence procurement 253–5w, 655w, 859w
Devonport Dockyard, Trident submarines 655w
European fighter aircraft 144–5
European fighter aircraft, Defence procurement 144
Ferranti, Company liquidations 198w
Hydrographer of the Navy, Defence procurement 142
Jet Provost aircraft, Defence procurement 516–7w
Landing platforms, Defence procurement 754w
Lynx helicopters, Defence procurement 398w
Master Information Exchange Agreement 392w
Military aircraft, Defence procurement 91w
Military aircraft, Indonesia 852w
Minesweepers, Defence procurement 141
Ministry of Defence, Contracts for services 852w
Ministry of Defence, Performance standards 852w
Non-departmental public bodies, Ministry of Defence 753w
Nuclear non proliferation 136
Orders and regulations, Ministry of Defence 754w

***Aitken, Mr Jonathan**—continued*
Procurement Executive 252–3w
Radar, Defence procurement 140–1
RFA Sir Bedivere, Shipbuilding 754w
Rosyth Dockyard 200w
Rosyth Dockyard, Shipbuilding 200–1w
Rosyth Dockyard, Unemployment 201w
Smiths Industries, Military aircraft 253w
Tanks 199w
Trident 135–6
Trident submarines 136

Albania
Serbia 22–3w

Albert Memorial
8
Repairs and maintenance 51w

Alcoholic drinks
383
Attorney General 485w
Dept for Education 531w
Dept of Health 343w
Dept of National Heritage 685w
Dept of Social Security 707w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 340w
Home Office 499w
Imports 330w
Ministry of Defence 516w
Northern Ireland Office 496w
Prime Minister 100w
Scottish Office 737w
Treasury 455w
Welsh Office 365w

Alcoholic drinks duties
821w
Tax evasion 98w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1234–40

Algae
Allergies 726w

Algeria
478w
Immigrants 503w

***Alison, Rt Hon Michael**, Second Church Estates Commissioner*
Debates etc.
Pastoral (Amendment) Measure 1994 (08.03.94) 249–50
Redundant Churches Fund Order 1994 (16.03.94) 894–5
Questions
Church Commissioners, Finance 540w
Church Commissioners, Investment 540–1w, 613, 672w
Clergy, Early retirement 613–4
Clergy, Pay 540w, 612–3
Clergy, Resignations 541–2w
Theology, Educational institutions 541w

Allason, Mr Rupert
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 419

Allen, Mr Graham
Questions
Campsfield House Detention Centre 780w
Derelict land 460–1w
Directorate of Telecommunications, Prisons 176–7w
EC immigration 174–5w
Electoral Register, Publicity 360w
Free movement of people, European economic area 362w
House of Commons divisions 513w
Immigrant detainees, Self-mutilation 767w
Immunity certificates 319w, 759w, 861w
Immunity certificates, Disclosure of information 730w
Judges, Recruitment 757–8w
Police accountability 389
Political refugees 500w
Political refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina 360w
Political refugees, Immigration controls 500w

***Allen, Mr Graham**—continued*
Refugees, Research 176w
Structural adjustment, Subsaharan Africa 673w

Allergies
Algae 726w
North West region 726w

Alton, Mr David
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 644
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 342
Video nasties (16.03.94) 989
Video nasties, Public petitions (16.03.94) 989
Questions
Abortion 439w
Amniocentesis tests 439w
Arbitration schemes 174w
China 449w
China, Family planning 483–5w
China, Overseas aid 484w
City challenge, Liverpool 108w
East Timor 473–4w
Handicapped drivers, Parking 405–6w
Legal aid 761–2w
Legal Aid Board, Manpower 760w
Legal Aid Board, Performance standards 761–2w
Legal Aid Board, Redundancy 554–6w
Legal aid scheme 553–7w
Legal aid scheme, Legal costs 760–1w
Legal aid scheme, Liverpool 555w
Legal aid scheme, Solicitors 553–6w
Mental health community care 307w
Mental patients 725w
Northern Ireland government 741–2, 1001
Northern Ireland government, Political parties 840w
Planning permission, Water supply 290–1w
Prisoners' transfers, Northern Ireland 411–2w
Surrogate motherhood 558–9w

Amateur arts
7
Arts finance 7

Ambulance services
Emergency calls 719w
Medals (08.03.94) 259–64
South Yorkshire Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust 564w

Amenity beds
NHS trusts 839w

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc.
Hospital radio (17.03.94) 1045–8
Questions
Commission for the New Towns, Basildon 786–7w
Educational standards, Disclosure of information 236–7w
International Year of the Family 833w
Marriage, Young people 833w
Young offenders, Basildon 383

Ammunition
Waste disposal 858w

Amniocentesis tests
439w

Amyl nitrite
Schools 883w

***Ancram, Mr Michael**, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office*
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 84, 117–22
Questions
Abortion, Northern Ireland 866–7w
Administration of justice, Northern Ireland 142–4w
Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, Sex discrimination 705–6w

Ancram, Mr Michael—continued
Blood transfusion services, Northern Ireland 497–8w, 844–5w
Bovine tuberculosis, Northern Ireland 259w
Cereals, Northern Ireland 436w
Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 839–40w
Community care, Northern Ireland 841w
Crime, Northern Ireland 142w
Day care of children, Northern Ireland Dept of Health and Social Services 867w
Dental charges, Northern Ireland 868w
Dental services, Northern Ireland 436–7w, 618w
Eastern Health and Social Services Board, Equal opportunities 259w
Fish, Poaching 348w
Fish conservation, Lough Neagh 497w
Fish farming, Northern Ireland 435–6w
Fish farming, Waste disposal 349w
Fisheries, Northern Ireland 436w
Fishing catches, Lough Neagh 497w
Hospital beds, Northern Ireland 867–8w
Hospital consultants, Northern Ireland 839w
Integrated schools, Northern Ireland 842w
Lough Neagh, Fish conservation 496–7w
Northern Ireland government 151w, 497w, 842w, 1007–9
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Equal opportunities 255–60w
Outdoor education, Northern Ireland 617–8w
Playing fields, Northern Ireland 844w
Salmon, Poaching 348w
Student numbers, Northern Ireland 841–2w
Surgery, Hospital waiting lists 74–5w
Teacher training, Manpower 352w
Teachers, Manpower 351–2w
Western Health and Social Services Board, Religious discrimination 144w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Questions
National Week of Science Engineering and Technology 487w
Nuclear non proliferation 136
Smiths Industries, Military aircraft 253w

Anderson, Ms Janet
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 456–9

Animal experiments
Birds 233w
St Mary's Hospital Medical School London 896w

Animal products
Tigers 871w

Animal welfare
Export of live animals 607w
Orders and regulations 670w
Pets 14w
Pigs 65w
Prosecutions 177–8w

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986
Questions
233w

Antelopes
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 605w

Antrim
Ferries 1002–3

Apples
Intervention stocks 490w

Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994
Debates etc.
(07.03.94) 39–122

Appropriations in aid
Northern Ireland (07.03.94) 39–122

Arable farming
279w

Arbitration schemes
174w

Architectural conservation
Cathedrals 611w
Historic buildings 611–2w

Armed conflict
Bosnia-Herzegovina 134, 420–1w, 473w
Kurds 882w
Merchant ships 133
Sudan 340–1w, 472w

Armed forces
Blood sports 519w
Ceremonies 197–8w
Chemical weapons 852–3w
Drug abuse 518w
HIV infection 518w
Homosexuality 420w
Merchant ships 132–3

Armed forces casualties
Armed forces training 749w

Armed forces civilians
520w

Armed forces deployment
143, 202w, 520w, 657–8w
Army 141
Bosnia-Herzegovina 133–5, 142–3, 146–7, 198w, 200w, 420–1w, 859w
Iraq 132
Northern Ireland Military Reaction Force 656w
USA 139–40, 752–4w
Yugoslavia 517w, 860w

Armed forces discharges
Homosexuality 420w
Pregnant women 519w

Armed forces education allowances
397w

Armed forces housing
860w

Armed forces officers
RAF Strike Command 655–6w

Armed forces pensions
93w
Air force 92w

Armed forces recruitment
Navy 202w

Armed forces reserves
401w

Armed forces strength
199w

Armed forces training
137
Air force 89w
Armed forces casualties 749w
Indonesia 137

Armed forces women
198w
Maternity leave 94w

Armenia
Council of Europe 243w

Armoured fighting vehicles
394–6w

Arms to Iraq Inquiry
645w
Witnesses 745w

Arms trade
170w
Export credit guarantees 251–2w
Indonesia 474w, 859w
Malaysia 95–6w, 399w
Philippines 749w

Army
Armed forces deployment 141
Inquiries 203w
Official hospitality 395–6w
Redundancy 94–5w, 141–3

Army strength
CFE Treaty 243w

Arnold, Mr Jacques
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 418
Channel tunnel, Railway network (17.03.94) 1056–9
Punjab, Human rights (17.03.94) 1059
Questions
Business questions 1026

Arnold, Sir Thomas
Questions
Air force, Engineers 198–9w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 645w
Belize, Overseas aid 700w
Debts, Cuba 571w
Development agencies, North West region 467w
Intergovernment conference 1996 448w
Millennium Commission, Public appointments 610–1w
Orchestras, Arts Council grants 611w
Paris club, Debt rescheduling 220–1w
Student grants, Handicapped students 625–6w
Unemployment 728

Arrests
Police 228–30w
Police training 358–9w

Arthritis
Medical research 724w

Arts Council
213w, 311w

Arts Council grants
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra 8–9
Drama 480w
Orchestras 611w

Arts finance
Amateur arts 7
National lottery 11

Arts sponsorship
51w

Ashby, Mr David
Questions
Jobclubs 727–8

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 146–7
Pre-school education 1012–3

Ashford
Railway network 8w

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Questions
Age of consent, EC countries 600w

Assisted places scheme
Scotland 54w, 733w
Wales 283w

Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts
686w
Sex discrimination 705–6w

Asthma
Air pollution 157w, 559–60w, 788w, 829w
Children 346w
Medical research 346w
Nitrogen dioxide 874
Passive smoking 886w

Astra Training Services
636w, 732

Atkins, Mr Robert, Minister of State, Dept of the Environment
Questions
Air pollution 789w
Air pollution, Asthma 788w
Air pollution, Road traffic 787–8w
Air pollution control 787–9w
Air pollution control, Fees and charges 299–300w

Atkins, Mr Robert—continued
Air pollution control, Nitrogen dioxide 874
Air pollution control, Solid fuels 871–2w
Air pollution control, Sulphur dioxide 871w
Air pollution monitoring 785w, 874–5
Animal products, Tigers 871w
Batteries, Recycling 679w
Birds, Coastal areas 301–2w, 371w
Cadmium, Research 790w
Cardiff Bay barrage 675w
Cardiff Bay barrage, Environment protection 871w
Coastal areas, Special areas of conservation 369w
Countryside Commission 583w
Derelict land 460–1w
Dogs 878
Dogs, Local authority powers 463w, 878
Domestic energy conservation 678w
Domestic energy conservation, Private sector housing 789w
Energy conservation 295–6w
Energy conservation, Government departments 416w
Energy Conservation (Lighting) Bill 1993/94 867
Energy prices 866–7
Energy Saving Trust 867
Energy Saving Trust, Finance 293–4w, 866
Energy Saving Trust, Owner occupied housing 680w
Environment protection, EC law 290w
Environment protection, National vocational qualifications 789w
Environment protection, Research finance 787w
Groundwork trusts, Expenditure 370–1w
Hazardous wastes, Departmental circulars 870–1w
Hazardous wastes, Expenditure 680w
Hazardous wastes, Exports 40–1w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 43w
Hedges and ditches 299w
Home energy efficiency scheme 375w
Home energy efficiency scheme, Elderly 791–2w
Land pollution 110w
Members' correspondence 302w
Nature Conservancy Council for England, Countryside Commission 301w
North Sea, Sea pollution 111w
Nuclear power 874
Pennine Way 44w
Pollution, Coal mining 868
Pollution control, Treaties 44–5w
Radioactive waste disposal, Cumbria 45w, 579–81w
Radioactive waste disposal, Research 291w
Radioactive waste disposal, Treaties 282w
Radioactive wastes, Research finance 786w
"Reducing Emissions of Hazardous Chemicals to the Environment Consultation Paper" 788w
River Doe Lea, Water pollution 878
Rural areas 298w
Rural Development Commission, Publications 298–9w
Sellafield, Radioactive wastes 112w
Severn Trent Water, Water supply disconnections 296w
Sewage 678w
Sewage, Waste disposal 792w
Sheep dipping, Waste disposal 47w
Sites of special scientific interest 368–9w
Sites of special scientific interest, Management agreements 576–7w
Sites of special scientific interest, Prosecutions 576w
Sustainable development 679w
THORP, Dail Eireann 579w
THORP, Radioactive wastes 579–80w
Tipping of waste 41w
Tipping of waste, Taxation 578w
Tipping of waste, Water pollution 785w, 869w
UK Panel on Sustainable Development 297w

Atkins, Mr Robert—continued
UN Commission for Sustainable Development 583w
UN Environment Programme, UK contributions 578–9w
Warren Spring Laboratory, Closures 583w
Waste management, Licensing 41–2w
"Watch Your Waste" 112w
Water charges 296w, 673w
Water pollution 677w
Water pollution, Coal mine closures 867–8
Water supply, Lead pollution 299w
Water supply disconnections 296w, 679w
Water supply disconnections, Coventry 296w
Water supply disconnections, Greater London 581w
Water supply industry, Water charges 109–10w
Westhay Moor 369w

Atkinson, Mr David
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties, Tax evasion 98w
Ballistic missiles 199w
CFE Treaty, Army strength 243w
Council of Europe, Armenia 243w
Council of Europe, Azerbaijan 244w
Hotels, Change of use 459–60w
Local Government (Compensation for Redundancy & Premature Retirement) Regulations 1993 297w
Retirement pensions, Elderly 320–1w
Tenant eviction 370w
UN Commission on Human Rights 244w

Atkinson, Mr Peter
Questions
Crown immunity, Town and country planning 375w
National lottery 686w

Attorney General
1011
Alcoholic drinks 485w
Computers in government departments 738w
Immunity certificates 576w
Office furniture 485w
Official hospitality 485w

Audit
Contracts for services 403–4w
NHS trusts 345w

Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England and Wales
Sick leave 291w

Austin-Walker, Mr John
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 561–5, 570
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 448
Turkey, Kurds (17.03.94) 1165–70
Questions
Business questions 1028
City pride 677w
Council tax, Transitional arrangements 792w
Crime, Greater London 387
East London river crossing, Compulsory purchase 512w
Kosovo, Human rights 23w
Kurds, Armed conflict 882w
London Ambulance Service, Emergency calls 1013
Northern Ireland government 1009
Retirement pensions, Energy prices 321–2w
Serbia, Albania 22–3w
Sportsgrounds, Safety 4
War pensions, Energy prices 322w

Average earnings
Wales 520–1w

Axle weights
Buses 408w, 650w

Ayrshire
Congenital abnormalities 262w

Ayrshire and Arran Health Board
Educational qualifications 542w
Resignations 379–80w

Azerbaijan
Council of Europe 244w

Baby milks
Advertising controls 88w
Dental health 87w

Back to basics policy
464w, 584w

Bail
386
Habitual offenders 229w, 390–1

Bail hostels
226w, 361w
Closures 225w
Prisoners on remand 225w
West Midlands 225–6w, 230w, 393–4

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 310–2
Questions
Cabinet papers 813w

Balance of payments
274

Balance of trade
820w

Baldry, Mr Tony, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment
Debates etc.
Local government (17.03.94) 1193–4
London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL), 2R (14.03.94) 688, 701–6
Sites of special scientific interest, Solent (16.03.94) 994–8
Questions
Aggregates, Dredging 790–1w
Air pollution, Construction materials 582–3w
Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England and Wales, Sick leave 291w
Building industry 865
Building industry, Sponsorship 865
Building regulations 300w
Central Manchester Development Corporation, Urban development grants 461w
Child safety, Local government expenditure 581–2w
City challenge, Bolton 791w
City challenge, Liverpool 108w
City grants, Foleshill gas works 462w
City pride 677w
Civil service agencies, Dept of the Environment 371w
Commission for the New Towns, Basildon 786–7w
Computers in government departments, Dept of the Environment 416w
Council tax, Billing 42–3w
Council tax, Colchester 371w
Council tax, Ipswich 47w
Council tax, Lewisham 577–8w
Council tax, Non-payment 43w
Council tax, Transitional arrangements 43w, 792w
Council tax, Valuation 43w
Councillors 291w
"Countrywide" 577w
Crime prevention, Government grants to local authorities 47–8w
Day care of children, Dept of the Environment 462w
Departmental responsibilities, Greater London 682–3w
Dept of the Environment, Government buildings 416–7w
Dept of the Environment, Ministers 371–2w
Dept of the Environment, Non-departmental public bodies 869w

Baldry, Mr Tony—continued
Environmental health officers, Manpower 682w
Extractive industries, Departmental responsibilities 49w
Flags, Planning permission 505w
Government buildings, Dept of the Environment 868w
Government buildings, Repairs and maintenance 38–40w, 680w
Government contracts 295w
Government grants 462w
Government grants to local authorities 111–2w
Government grants to local authorities, Northumberland 106–7w
Government grants to local authorities, Wandsworth 374w
Isle of Dogs enterprise zone 792–3w
Leeds Development Corporation, Employment opportunities 108–9w
Listed buildings, Demolition 107w
Livera Foods, Government grants 49w
Local authorities, EC grants and loans 372–3w
Local authorities, Energy analysis 879
Local Government (Compensation for Redundancy & Premature Retirement) Regulations 1993 297w
Local government expenditure 289–90w
Local government finance, Lancashire 680–1w
Local government reform 369–70w, 581w
Local government reform, Cleveland 577w
Local government reform, Isle of Wight 370w
Local government revenue, Greater Manchester 374–5w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept of the Environment 681–2w
Open government, Dept of the Environment 870w
Opencast mining, Birch Coppice 578w
Orders and regulations, Dept of the Environment 682w
Petroleum exploration licences 300–1w
Planning permission, Opencast mining 295w
Planning permission, Supermarkets 865
Planning permission, Water supply 290–1w
Planning permission, Wind power 461w
Plymouth Development Corporation 109w
Public records, Local government functions 679w
Race bank, Dredging 791w
Single regeneration budget 372w, 462w, 676w, 872, 880
Single regeneration budget, Ethnic minorities 870w
Sports facilities, Planning permission 676w
Standard spending assessments 289w, 373w, 461w, 580w, 676w
Standard spending assessments, Council housing 293–4w, 788w
Standard spending assessments, Greater Manchester 374w
Standard spending assessments, Homelessness 291–3w, 582w
Taxation, Ealing 869w
Taxation, Lewisham 869–70w
Urban development grants 462w
Urban programme, Bradford 683w
Urban programme, Government grants to local authorities 45–7w
Vocational guidance 297w
Vocational guidance, Finance 790w
Wandsworth Borough Council, John Archer School 871w
Wind power 107w

Ballistic missiles
199w

Ballycastle
Ports 1003

Banana Trade Advisory Committee
279w

Bank charges
Clearing banks 32–3w

Bank notes
221w

Bank of England
Economic policy 822–4w

Bankruptcy
208–10w
Nadir, Asil 741w

Banks, Mr Matthew
Questions
British Shipbuilders, External financing limits 797w
Business questions 1024

Banks, Mr Robert
Questions
Menwith Hill 138
NATO 517w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 414
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1237, 1241, 1243, 1253–60, 1286
Harding, Peter, Points of order (18.03.94) 1290
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 641, 647–53
Parliamentary broadcasting, Points of order (07.03.94) 21
Roads, Greater London (17.03.94) 1060–3
Questions
Animal experiments, Birds 233w
Animal products, Tigers 871w
Birds, Scotland 661w, 733w
Business questions 1021
Charterline 402–3w
Church Commissioners, Investment 613
Citizen's Charter 20
Exports, Steel leghold traps 267
Grand National 413w
Official gifts 319w
Pinochet, Augusto 882w
Pinochet, Augusto, Security 781w
Prime Minister, Official gifts 100w
Solicitors, Training 618
Tourist industry, Taxation 10

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 45, 53, 79, 111–4
Business questions (10.03.94) 413
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 536
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 357–8
Questions
Air pollution 880
Broadcasting controls, Sinn Fein 12
Business questions 1019
Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, Northern Ireland 844w
Iron and steel industry 248w
Northern Ireland government, Political parties 840w
Open government 17
Parliamentary buildings, Rents 512–3w
Radioactive waste disposal, Cumbria 45w
Ulster Young Militants 706w

Barristers
Criminal injuries compensation 865–6w
Legal representation 861w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Questions
Energy Saving Trust, Finance 866
European works councils 734
Tobacco duties, Tax yield 97w
Tobacco Manufacturers' Association 164w

Basildon
Commission for the New Towns 786–7w
Young offenders 383

Bates, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 26

Bates, Mr Michael—continued
Business questions (10.03.94) 421
City technology colleges (17.03.94) 1051–4
Commonwealth Institute (17.03.94) 1054
Members' speeches, Points of order (09.03.94) 286
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 302
Questions
Business questions 1026
West, Frederick, Homicide 331–2w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Debates etc.
Insolvency, Contracts of employment (14.03.94) 622
Questions
Manufacturing industries 270
Pollution, Coal mining 868

Batteries
Recycling 679w

Battle, Mr John
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 654, 665–71
Questions
Council house rents 871
Homelessness, Council housing 45w

Bayerische Moteren Werke
see BMW

Bayley, Mr Hugh
Questions
ABB Transportation 636w
Ferranti, Company liquidations 198w
Forestry 55w
Hospital beds, Political refugees 563w
Immigrant detainees, Medical treatments 502w
Income tax, Yorkshire and Humberside 32w
Political refugees 590–1w
Political refugees, Immigrant detainees 501w, 591w

BBC
Efficiency scrutinies 52w
Local broadcasting 52w

Beaches
Water pollution 675w

Beauforts Dyke
Explosives 520w

Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 412
Questions
Council tax 1011–2

Bed and breakfast accommodation
Local government expenditure 48w

Bedding
Maternity services 534w

Beef
Agricultural subsidies 489–90w

Beer
Measurement 574–5w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 44–5, 57–8, 63–8, 79, 90, 109
Questions
Contracts, Malaysia 740w
Ferries, Antrim 1003
Fish, Poaching 348w
Fish conservation, Lough Neagh 497w
Fish farming, Northern Ireland 435–6w
Fish farming, Waste disposal 348–9w
Fisheries, Northern Ireland 436w
Fishing catches, Lough Neagh 497w
FL Steelcraft, Government grants 695w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 612w

Beggs, Mr Roy—continued
Independent Commissioner for the Holding Centres, Annual reports 496w
Lough Neagh, Fish conservation 496–7w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Tenancy agreements 843–4w
Power failures, Northern Ireland 75w
Salmon, Poaching 259w, 348w
Shipbuilding 270
Water treatment, Waste disposal 351w

Beith, Rt Hon A J
Debates etc.
Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 27–8, 34
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (16.03.94) 888
Pastoral (Amendment) Measure 1994 (08.03.94) 253–6, 258
Redundant Churches Fund Order 1994 (16.03.94) 891, 896, 900–2
Questions
Fisheries, North East region 903w

Belfast
Hospital beds 867–8w

Belize
Defence equipment 400w
Overseas aid 700w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Questions
Trade agreements, Malaysia 274–5

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Questions
Birmingham City Council, Local government expenditure 1011
Capital punishment, Equipment 355–6w
Heathrow Airport, Bombings 398
Northern Ireland government, Political parties 840w

Benefits Agency district offices
Closures 138w

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 405

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc.
British Railways Order Confirmation Bill, 1R (08.03.94) 131
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 659–62
Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Bill, Money res (10.03.94) 507–8, 511–2
Questions
Bail 386
Gas supply industry 268
Police custody, Greater Manchester 354w

Bennett, Paul
Criminal proceedings 781w
Immunity certificates 704w, 739w
Prosecutions 739w

Benzodiazepines
Compensation 70w

Berry, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 524–33, 557, 560

"Best Sex Guide"
437–8w

Betting and gaming duties
Horse racing 414–5w
Weather 222w

Betting shops
Gaming machines 358w
Tax yields 324w

Betts, Mr Clive
Questions
Council tax 873
Hydrocarbon oil duties 273w

Biffen, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 413
EC enlargement (17.03.94) 1030–2

Billing
Council tax 42–3w

Biodiversity
Fisheries 384–5w

Biotechnology
905w

Birch Coppice
Opencast mining 578w

Birds
Animal experiments 233w
Coastal areas 301–2w, 371w
Scotland 371w, 661w, 733w

Birmingham
Schools 25w

Birmingham City Council
Education officers 26w
Local government expenditure 1011

Biwater
11w

BL
see Rover Group

Black Training and Enterprise Group
893w

Blackcurrants
Food imports 64w, 388w

Blackpool and the Fylde College
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education 338w

Blair, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 294, 301–10, 332–4
Questions
Drug crimes 383–4
Prisoners, Social security claims 586w
Social security abuse, Prisoners 708–9w

Blakenhurst Prison
Prison population 12–3w
Prison staff 13w
Prisoners' outings 14–5w
Prisoners' transfers 13w

Blind
Wales 284–5w

Blood
889w

Blood sports
Armed forces 519w

Blood transfusion services
348w
NHS and private practice 567w, 889w
Northern Ireland 497–8w, 844–5w
Scotland 548–52w
Wales 367–8w

Blunkett, Mr David
Questions
Baby milks, Advertising controls 88w
Blood transfusion services 348w
Blood transfusion services, Northern Ireland 497–8w, 844–5w
Blood transfusion services, Scotland 550w
Blood transfusion services, Wales 367–8w
Day surgery, Hospital waiting lists 165–6w
Dental services 836–8w
English National Board for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting, Redundancy 441w

Blunkett, Mr David—continued
Extra contractual referrals 167w, 567–8w
Extra contractual referrals, Codes of practice 167w
Gender selection 890w
Health Education Authority 445w
Health Information Service 166w
Health services, Greater London 88w
Hospital beds 167w
Hospital consultants 836w
Hospital consultants, Pay 890w
Hospital waiting lists 167w
Medical equipment, Theft 890w
Medical research 162w
Monopolies and Mergers Commission, Private health services 835w
NHS, Tobacco industry 566–7w
NHS and private practice 838w
NHS trusts, Contracts of employment 891–2w
Pregnancy, Prescription drugs 160–1w
Private patients 568w
Private patients, Fees and charges 889–90w
South Yorkshire Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust, Manpower 535w

BMW
Rover Group 18w

Board of Inland Revenue
see Inland Revenue

Boateng, Mr Paul
Questions
Benzodiazepines, Compensation 70w
Civil proceedings, Court rules and procedures 68w
Criminal injuries compensation 503–4w, 763w
Judicial Studies Board, Advisory bodies 757w
Legal aid scheme 71–4w
Legal aid scheme, Contracts for services 71–2w
Legal aid scheme, Redundancy 71–3w
Public Record Office 615

Bolton
City challenge 791w

Bombings
Heathrow Airport 394, 398

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 402
Questions
Defence equipment, Belize 400w

Booth, Mr Hartley
Debates etc.
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 586–8

Borders region
Pre-school education 899w

Bosnia-Herzegovina
Air force 134
Armed conflict 134, 420–1w, 473w
Armed forces deployment 133–5, 142–3, 146–7, 198w, 200w, 420–1w, 859w
Light Dragoons 859w
Ministerial statements (10.03.94) 399–410
Political refugees 360w
Prisoners 449w

Boswell, Mr Tim, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education
Questions
Civil service manpower, Dept for Education 849w
Computers in government departments, Dept for Education 323w
Discretionary student grants 624w
Doncaster College, College governors 703w
Further education colleges, Building repairs 530w
Further education colleges, College governors 625w

Boswell, Mr Tim—continued
Further education teachers, Contracts of employment 25–6w
GCE A Level 532w
Government buildings, Dept for Education 532w
Higher education admission 623–4w
Higher Education Funding Council for England 883w
Higher Education Funding Council for England, Universities 133w
Mallinson, Bill, Inquiries 128w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept for Education 702w
Nurses' training, Higher education teachers 847w
Open government, Dept for Education 882–3w
Orders and regulations, Dept for Education 702w
Science education 619w
Student grants: Handicapped students 625–6w
Student numbers 322–3w
Student numbers, Inner London boroughs 845–6w
Student unions, Finance 884w
Universities, Redundancy 132–3w

Bottle banks
Recycling 524w

Bottomley, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 751
Northern line (17.03.94) 1138
Pastoral (Amendment) Measure 1994 (08.03.94) 256
Questions
Criminal Justice Royal Commission, Immunity certificates 597w
Deportation 232w
Deregulation initiative 272
Ferries, Antrim 1002–3
Illegal immigrants 231w
Immunity certificates, Ministers 802w
Incapacity benefit 321w
Invalidity benefits, Social security benefits, rules 320w
Judgments 803w
Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler Management Consultants 406–7w
Life expectancy 557w, 826–7w
Open government 17
Road accidents, Death 260w
Road accidents, Northern Ireland 261w
Sewage 678w
Taxis, Mobility of disabled 118w
Transport Research Laboratory 406w

Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia, Secretary of State for Health
Questions
Official engagements 84–5w

Bovine immunodeficiency virus
389w
Yorkshire and Humberside 900w

Bovine somatotropin
EC action (17.03.94) 1067

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
Antelopes 605w
Compensation 452w
Germany 818w
Transmissable encephalopathies 900w
Waste disposal 494w

Bovine tuberculosis
Northern Ireland 259w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Questions
Pigs, Animal welfare 65w

Bowis, Mr John, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Debates etc.
Homicide, Doncaster (09.03.94) 372–80
Questions
Asthma, Children 346w
Brain, Injuries 161w
Buchanan, Michael, Mental health community care 727w
Children in care, Holidays abroad 308w
Community care 306–7w
Community care, Government grants to local authorities 308w
Community care, Hospital discharges 165–6w
Compulsorily detained mental patients 888w
Day care of children 890–1w
Day care of children, Dept of Health 537–8w
Day care of children, OECD countries 447w
Drug abuse, Medical rehabilitation 304–5w
Handicapped, Government grants to voluntary organisations 89w
Health services, Travelling people 161w
Hospital beds, Continuing care units 885w
Incontinence, Medical treatments 164–5w
International Year of the Family 833w
Long stay patients, Hospital closures 157w
Members' correspondence 167w
Mental health community care 307w
Mental hospitals, Hospital beds 84w
Mental patients 725w
Mental patients, Hospital beds 834w
Mental patients, Hospital wards 725w
Mentally ill 888w
Mentally ill, Accident and emergency departments 888w
Mentally ill, Crimes of violence 445–6w
Mentally ill, Police training 84w
Multiple sclerosis, Medical treatments 161–2w
Nursing homes, Inspections 559w
Pay beds, Trent Regional Health Authority 721w
Peto Institute 728–9w
Residential care, Mentally disadvantaged 722w
Residential care, Rate rebates 890w
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, Government grants to voluntary organisations 89w
Secure accommodation 84w
Secure psychiatric units, Hospital beds 447w, 888w
Senses, Medical research 566w
Social workers, Hospitals 165w
Suicide 887w
Teenage pregnancy, Care proceedings 343w

Boyes, Mr Roland
Debates etc.
Children, Corporal punishment (17.03.94) 1064–5
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 907, 913–7
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Attorney General 485w
Alcoholic drinks, Dept for Education 531w
Alcoholic drinks, Dept of Health 343w
Alcoholic drinks, Dept of National Heritage 685w
Alcoholic drinks, Dept of Social Security 707w
Alcoholic drinks, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 340w
Alcoholic drinks, Home Office 499w
Alcoholic drinks, Ministry of Defence 516w
Alcoholic drinks, Northern Ireland Office 496w

Boyes, Mr Roland—continued
Alcoholic drinks, Prime Minister 100w
Alcoholic drinks, Scottish Office 737w
Alcoholic drinks, Treasury 455w
Alcoholic drinks, Welsh Office 365w
Betting shops, Gaming machines 358w
Business questions 1024
Children in care, Holidays abroad 308w
Falkland Islands, Mines 96w
Fires, Death 1[illegible]-2w
Grant maintained schools, Wandsworth 238w
Indirect taxation, Tax yields 568w
Ministers' private offices, Dept of Social Security 628w
Office furniture, Attorney General 485w
Office furniture, Dept for Education 530w
Office furniture, Dept of Health 343w
Office furniture, Dept of National Heritage 685w
Office furniture, Dept of the Environment 785w
Office furniture, Dept of Transport 508w
Office furniture, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 340w
Office furniture, Home Office 499w
Office furniture, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 490w
Office furniture, Ministry of Defence 401w
Office furniture, Northern Ireland Office 496w
Office furniture, Prime Minister 100w
Office furniture, Scottish Office 737w
Office furniture, Treasury 455w
Office furniture, Welsh Office 287w
Official hospitality, Attorney General 485w
Official hospitality, Dept for Education 531w
Official hospitality, Dept of Employment 713w
Official hospitality, Dept of Health 885w
Official hospitality, Dept of National Heritage 685w
Official hospitality, Dept of Social Security 707w
Official hospitality, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 340w
Official hospitality, Home Office 500w
Official hospitality, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 490w
Official hospitality, Ministry of Defence 516w
Official hospitality, Northern Ireland Office 497w
Official hospitality, Prime Minister 703w
Official hospitality, Welsh Office 288w
Tax yields, Betting shops 324w
Tax yields, Gaming machines 324w

Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Debates etc.
Edgware Hospital, Hospital closures (18.03.94) 1303

Bradford
Urban programme 683w

Bradley, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 157–9, 163–72, 180, 201–2, 222, 234–6, 237, 240–3

Brain
Injuries 161w, 525w
Tumours 829–30w

Brakes
Railway freight transport 510w

Brandreth, Mr Gyles
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 303

Brandreth, Mr Gyles—continued
Questions
Amateur arts, Arts finance 7
Chartermark scheme 15
"Family Law", Matrimonial property 97w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 1007

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Questions
Government laboratories 14
Manufacturing industries 269

Brazier, Mr Julian
Debates etc.
Insolvency, Contracts of employment (14.03.94) 623
Questions
Employment 729–30
Nuclear non proliferation 136

Bridgend
Local government reform 608–9

Bridges
Buses 509w
Northern Ireland 76–7w

Bridgewater, Carl
Homicide 358w

Bristol
Dental services 158–9w
Dentists 342–3w

British Aerospace
Defence procurement 253w
Directors 795w
Government shareholding 795w
Redundancy 240–1w

British Antarctic Survey
Government grants 487–8w

British Broadcasting Corporation
see BBC

British Coal Corporation
Consultants 906w
Privatisation 245w, 250–1w, 332w, 906w

British dependent territories
Police 113–4w

British Gas
268
Wales 602

British Nationality (Hong Kong) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R order read (11.03.94) 591

British Rail
Government grants 116–7w
Pension funds 512w
Privatisation 121w, 507w, 794w
Public service obligation grant 508w

British Railways (No 2) Order Confirmation Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (09.03.94) 265
Rep* (15.03.94) 727
3R* (16.03.94) 863

British Railways (No 3) Order Confirmation Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (09.03.94) 265
Rep* (15.03.94) 727
3R* (16.03.94) 863

British Railways Order Confirmation Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
(08.03.94) 131
2R* (16.03.94) 863
Rep* (17.03.94) 995

British residents abroad
Hong Kong 114w
Social security recipients 36w

British Shipbuilders
External financing limits 797w

British Telecom
Regulatory system 210w

British Waterways Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
(08.03.94) 131

Broadcasting controls
Sinn Fein 12, 50–1w

Broadcasting licences
Channel Four 53w

Broadcasting programmes
Exports 53w

Broadcasting reception
Parliamentary broadcasting 52w

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter, Secretary of State for National Heritage
Questions
Albert memorial, Repairs and maintenance 51w
Alcoholic drinks, Dept of National Heritage 685w
Arts Council 213w, 311w
Arts sponsorship 51w
Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts 686w
BBC, Efficiency scrutinies 52w
BBC, Local broadcasting 52w
Broadcasting controls, Sinn Fein 12
Broadcasting programmes, Exports 53w
Cathedrals, Architectural conservation 611w
Channel Four, Broadcasting licences 53w
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Arts Council grants 8–9
Drama, Arts Council grants 480w
Film, Exports 51w, 481w
Film industry 9, 52w
Film industry, Finance 9
Historic buildings, Architectural conservation 611–2w
Listed buildings, Hampstead 3–4
Millennium Commission, Public appointments 610–1w
Museums and galleries, Scotland 11
National lottery 11, 50w, 450w, 686w, 897w
National lottery, Arts finance 11
Office furniture, Dept of National Heritage 685w
Official hospitality, Dept of National Heritage 685w
Orchestras, Arts Council grants 611w
Parliamentary broadcasting 100–1w
Parliamentary broadcasting, Broadcasting reception 52w
Physical education 52w
Playing fields, Greater London 897w
Playing fields, Lambeth 897w
Press, Photographs 7
Press, Trials 6–7
Press Complaints Commission 6
Shalfleet bridge, Listed buildings 213w
Sinn Fein, Broadcasting controls 50–1w
Television licences, Fees and charges 101w
Visual arts, Export controls 12

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Crime, Rural areas (17.03.94) 1040–1
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (16.03.94) 889
Recess motions (17.03.94) 1065–8
Questions
Agricultural production 489w
Agricultural subsidies, Beef 489–90w
Business statements 1017–8
Butter, Prices 385–7w
Cereals, Agricultural subsidies 601w
Cereals, Prices 386w
Cereals, Set-aside schemes 386w
Common agricultural policy 66w, 275–6w, 601–2w
Common agricultural policy, Agricultural subsidies 388w
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 488–9w
Common agricultural policy, UK contributions to EC budget 275w

Brown, Mr Nicholas—continued
Dairy farming, Production quotas 279w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Accounting 23–4w
Intervention prices 489w
Linseed, Prices 277w
Milk, Prices 274w
Newspaper press, Retail trade 204w
Oilseed rape, Prices 276–7w
Olive Oil, Prices 273–4w
Parliamentary broadcasting 100–1w
Parliamentary broadcasting, Broadcasting reception 52w
Personal savings, Taxation 98w
Potatoes, Prices 277–8w
Rice, Prices 275w
Sugar, Prices 387w
Tobacco, Prices 274w
Wines, EC internal trade 196–7w

Browning, Mrs Angela
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 559, 580–3
Questions
Exports, Malaysia 274

Bruce, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 417
Calling of Members, Points of order (07.03.94) 22
Select committees, Points of order (09.03.94) 287
Questions
Cellular phones, Crime prevention 247–8w
Devolution, Wales 611
Energy prices 866–7
Gas supply industry 268
Solicitors, Training 618
Television licences 5

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Insolvency, Contracts of employment (14.03.94) 621–2
Questions
Business questions 1018
Cold weather payments, Scotland 712–3w
Housing benefits, Social security abuse 879w
Small businesses, Loans 267

Bryn-y-Neuadd Hospital
Mentally disturbed offenders 366w

Buchanan, Michael
Mental health community care 727w

Buckinghamshire
Hospitals 345w

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 402
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 143

Building industry
742–3, 865
Northern Ireland 842w
Sponsorship 865
Taxation 99w

Building regulations
300w

Building repairs
Dreghorn 377w
Further education colleges 530w
RAF Innsworth 394w
Scottish Homes 377w

Building societies
Profits 222w

Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1994
Debates etc.
(07.03.94) 23–38

Burden, Mr Richard
Questions
Car industry, Takeovers 281–2

Burglary
356w
Yorkshire and Humberside 597w

Burns, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Motorways, M25 (17.03.94) 1063–4
Parliamentary broadcasting, Points of order (07.03.94) 21
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 456, 474, 479
Questions
Capital gains tax 435w
Civil service, Pay 33–4w
Dept for Education, Cash limits 849w
Government securities, Economic policy 822–4w
Gypsies, Essex County Council 110w
Home energy efficiency scheme 375w
Industry, Leicester 271
Labour market, International conferences 824–5w
Land pollution 110w
Local government borrowing 435w
Radar, Defence procurement 140–1
Sheltered employment 338–40w
Unemployment benefits, Voluntary work 631w

Burt, Mr Alistair, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (17.03.94) 1121–5
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 155–7, 163–4, 182, 186, 189, 195–201, 221–2
Questions
Benefits Agency district offices, Closures 138w
Capital rules 480w
Child benefit 36w
Child Support Agency 213–4w, 875–6w
Child Support Agency, Members' correspondence 134–5w, 321w, 708w
Family credit 218w
Family credit, Lewisham 135w
Family credit, Lone parents 628w
Family credit, Take-up 879w
Housing benefits, Council tenants 479w
Housing benefits, Doncaster 136–8w, 707–8w
Housing benefits, Private rented housing 218w
Housing benefits, Social security abuse 879w
Housing benefits, Tenants 38w, 136–8w
Income support, Administrative delays 219w
Income support, Students 628–9w
Jobseeker's allowance, Social security recipients 140w
Joyce, Christine, Widows' benefits 708w
Maintenance, Children 37–8w, 134–5w, 141w, 213–7w, 411w
Maintenance, Departmental forms 37w
Maintenance, Social security benefits reductions 214w, 874–5w
Means tested benefits, Capital rules 321w
Poverty, Children 217w
Rents 410w
Restart programme, Social security benefits reductions 141w
Social security abuse, Prisoners 708–9w
Social security benefits, Energy prices 630–1w
Social security benefits, Greater London 630w
Social security benefits rules 479–80w
Unemployment benefits, Expenditure 874w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits rules 139w, 630w
World Summit for Social Development 217–8w

Bus lanes
Greater London 652–3w

Buses
Axle weights 408w, 650w
Bridges 509w
EC countries 650w
Exports 748w
Road safety 650w
Safety belts 5w, 687w, (17.03.94) 1044–5

Business motions
(11.03.94) 588

Business questions
1018–28

Business start-up scheme
183w

Business statements
(10.03.94) 411–21, 101[illegible]–8

Butcher, Mr John
Questions
Industrial production 276

Butler, Mr Peter
Questions
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Compensation 452w
Integrated administration and control system, Departmental forms 494w
Science and technology research, Government assistance 204w

Butter
Prices 385–7w

Butterfill, Mr John
Questions
Crossrail 10–1w

Buy outs
Greater Manchester Buses 864w

Byers, Mr Stephen
Questions
Arms trade, Export credit guarantees 251–2w
Defence procurement 655w
Drug crimes, Crime prevention 381–2
Fine defaulters, Prison sentences 172w
Grant maintained schools, Insurance 428w, 430w
Grant maintained schools, School admission 427–8w
Grant Maintained Schools Centre, Government grants 428–30w
Information Technology Services Agency 411w
Legal aid, Expenditure 97w
Overseas aid 12w

Bypasses
506–7w
Ministerial powers 272w

Cabinet papers
813w

Cable systems
338w
Rural areas 337–8w

Cadmium
Research 790w

Calderdale and Kirklees Training and Enterprise Council
732

Callaghan, Mr Jim
Questions
Employment level, Statistics 240w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 181–2w
Part-time employment, Employment protection 431w

Callaghan, Mr Jim—continued
Unemployment 181w
Unemployment, North West region 181w
Youth unemployment, North West region 181w

Campbell, Mrs Anne
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 466

Campbell, Mr Menzies
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 403
Legal aid, Advice & assistance (Scotland) regulations (16.03.94) 931

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Questions
Dental services, Northumberland 158w
Government grants to local authorities, Northumberland 106–7w
Northumberland Training and Enterprise Council, Government grants 63w
Wansbeck Hospital, Redundancy 159w

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc.
Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 25, 31, 35–8
Oral question time intervention (08.03.94) 128
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 437–8
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 192
Questions
Biwater 11w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 142–3
Cars, Imports 467w
Defence procurement 859w
Imports, Malaysia 468–9w
Lloyd's of London 469–70w
Malaysia, Aid financed trade 684w
Northern Ireland government 497w
Rover Group 284

Campsfield House Detention Centre
780–1w
Immigrant detainees 781w, 894–5w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 416
Legal aid, Advice & assistance (Scotland) regulations (16.03.94) 928
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 354
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 922–4
Questions
Business questions 1024–5
Chemical Weapons Convention 701w
Fishery protection, Scotland 658w
Freshwater fishing, Scotland 734w
Northern Ireland government 1009–10

Cancer
Children 829w
Consolidated fund debates (17.03.94) 1074–89
Medical treatments 83w
Ovaries 827–8w
Skin disorders 538w

Cancer hazards
Electromagnetic interference 835w

Cann, Mr Jamie
Debates etc.
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 214–5
Questions
Council tax, Ipswich 47w
Jet Provost aircraft, Defence procurement 516–7w

Cannabis
Fines 170w

Capital
Pembrokeshire Health Authority 155–6w
Pembrokeshire NHS Trust 155–6w
Railtrack 270–1w

Capital gains tax
435w

Capital punishment
Equipment 355–6w

Capital rules
480w
Means tested benefits 321w

Car allowances
Members 884–5w

Car boot sales
Scotland 376w

Car industry
278–9, 465–6w, 1013–4
France 704w
Japan 249w
Malaysia 467w
Production 247w
Takeovers 279, 281–2

Caravan sites
Meriden Hall 297w

Carbon dioxide
Wales 450w

Carbon monoxide
Domestic gas appliances 275

Cardiff Bay barrage
36w, 675w, 907–8w
Environment protection 871w

Care proceedings
Teenage pregnancy 343w

Caribbean
State visits 704w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 751, 754, 773, 784–8, 790, 793, 807, 810, 821
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 937, 960–2, 969
Questions
Average earnings, Wales 520–1w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Prisoners 449w
Bryn-y-Neuadd Hospital, Mentally disturbed offenders 366w
Cancer hazards, Electromagnetic interference 835w
Company liquidations, Administrative receivers 211–2w
Development Board for Rural Wales 603
Fire services, Wales 353w
Hammersmith Hospital, Charing Cross Hospital 83w
Immunity certificates 576w
Jury disqualification, Deaf 405w
National lottery 450w
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Disclosure of information 646w, 881–2w
Overseas aid, Cost effectiveness 314w
Public appointments, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 67–8w
Unemployment 728–9
Vocational guidance, Finance 790w
Wines, Wales 366–7w

Carrington, Mr Matthew
Questions
Visual arts, Export controls 12

Cars
Imports 467w
Rover Group 206w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 415
House of Commons standing orders, Points of order (07.03.94) 21
Treaty on European Union, Points of order (14.03.94) 628
Questions
EC budget 435w
EC integration 474w
Treaty on European Union 584w

Cash limits
Dept for Education 849w
Dept of Transport 115w

Casualties
East Timor 804w

Cathedrals
Architectural conservation 611w
Wales 698w

Catterick
Wild boar 396w

Cattle
Export of live animals 493w

Cellular phones
Crime prevention 247–8w
Theft 179–80w

Central Arbitration Committee
Public appointments 640w

Central line
Railway closures 269w

Central Manchester Development Corporation
Urban development grants 461w

Central Statistical Office
Contracts for services 575w

Centre for Policy Studies
Advertising 437w

Cereals
601w
Agricultural subsidies 601w
Intervention stocks 491w
Northern Ireland 436w
Prices 386w
Set-aside schemes 386w

Ceremonies
Armed forces 197–8w

CFE Treaty
Army strength 243w

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Advertising 488w
Civil service agencies 401–2w
Civil service manpower 784w
Immunity certificates 646w
Interviews 784w
Non-departmental public bodies 693w
Orders and regulations 693w
Parliamentary questions 488w, 645w, 784w
Public appointments 488w
Women's employment 784w

Chancellor of the Exchequer
see Treasury

Change of use
Hotels 459–60w
Housing 459–60w

Channel Four
Broadcasting licences 53w

Channel tunnel
European Passenger Services 121w
Fires 122–3w, 434w
Industrial accidents 241–2w
Ministerial speeches 865w
Railway network 8w, 405w, 865w, (17.03.94) 1056–9

Charing Cross Hospital
Hammersmith Hospital 83w

Charities
Complaints 174w
Maladministration 173–4w
Overseas aid 235w
Scotland 377w
VAT 572w

Charterline
402–3w

Chartermark scheme
15
Yorkshire Water 15

Chelmsford
Motorways (17.03.94) 1063–4

Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment
Construction costs 392–4w

Chemical and biological warfare
Defence research 853–4w

Chemical weapons
Armed forces 852–3w

Chemical Weapons Convention
18w, 701w

Chessells Committee
see London Implementation Group

Child benefit
36w

Child safety
Local government expenditure 581–2w

Child Support Agency
213–4w, 875–6w
Consolidated fund debates (17.03.94) 1104–25
Members' correspondence 134–5w, 321w, 708w
Performance standards 215–6w

Children
Asthma 346w
Cancer 829w
Corporal punishment (17.03.94) 1064–5
Dental services 446–7w, 868w
Maintenance 37–8w, 134–5w, 141w, 213–7w, 411w, 479w
Play 3
Play facilities 50w
Poverty 217w
Road accidents 7–8w

Children Act 1989
Questions
532w

Children in care
Holidays abroad 308w

Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1994
Questions
839–40w

China
449w
Family planning 483–5w
Overseas aid 484w

Christmas
Prisoners' home leave 769–71w

Church Commissioners
Finance 540w
Investment 540–1w, 613, 672w

Churchill, Mr Winston
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 408

Citizen's Charter
20, 78w, 693w
Farmers 66w
Prisoners 598w
Publicity 20

City challenge
Bolton 791w
Liverpool 108w

City grants
Foleshill gas works 462w

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
Arts Council grants 8–9

City of London
Crime 388

City of Westminster
Government grants to local authorities 374w

City pride
677w, 877

City technology colleges
(17.03.94) 1031–4
School population 529w

Civil defence
Local government finance 352–3w

Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1994
Debates etc.
(16.03.94) 927–35

Civil proceedings
Court rules and procedures 68w

Civil rights
Handicapped (11.03.94) 524–85

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 414
Public petitions (11.03.94) 521
2R (11.03.94) 524–85
Questions
1024

Civil servants
Wales 521–2w

Civil servants' secondment
Manufacturing industries 796w

Civil servants' visits abroad
Air travel 645–6w, 873w

Civil service
Pay 33–4w, 434–5w

Civil service agencies
80w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 401–2w
Dept for Education 323w
Dept of Employment 514w
Dept of Health 440w
Dept of National Heritage 311w
Dept of Social Security 411w
Dept of the Environment 371w
Dept of Trade and Industry 746w
Dept of Transport 508–9w
Home Office 671w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 672w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 493w
Ministry of Defence 749w
Scottish Office 659w
Traffic areas 690–1w
Treasury 455w
Welsh Office 524w

Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal
Public appointments 641w

Civil service dispersal
Public Record Office 614

Civil service manpower
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 784w
Dept for Education 849w
Dept of Employment 812–3w, 862w
Dept of Health 838w
Dept of National Heritage 897–8w
Dept of Social Security 783w
Dept of the Environment 793w
Disabled workers 873–4w
Employment Service Agency 811–2w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 804–6w
Home Office 777–80w
Inland Revenue 568–9w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 758–9w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 818w
Ministry of Defence 859w
Scottish Office 825w
Welsh Office 908w
Women 862w

Clapham, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Industrial diseases benefits, Coal mining (16.03.94) 885–7
Social Security Regulations (Chronic Bronchitis & Emphysema) Amendment Bill, 1R (16.03.94) 885–7
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 250–1w

Clapham, Mr Michael—continued
GP fundholders, Finance 726w
NHS, Income 831w
Nuclear disarmament, Strategic nuclear weapons 139
Skilled workers 733

Clappison, Mr James
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 420
Questions
Council housing management, Disclosure of information 417w

Clark, Dr David
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 400–2
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 135, 420–1w
D-Day landings, Festivals and special occasions 133
Defence Export Services Organisation, Public appointments 420w
Defence procurement 253–5w
9 Squadron, Air force strength 420w
10 Squadron, Fees and charges 200w

Clark, Dr Michael
Questions
Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology 16
Peace keeping operations, Costs 200w

Clarke, Mr Eric
Questions
Army, Armed forces deployment 141

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Questions
Immunity certificates, Treasury 222–3w, 331w
Labour market, International conferences 824–5w
Local government borrowing 435w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Recess motions (17.03.94) 1068
World Bank (17.03.94) 1205–8, 1212–3
Questions
Aid financed trade 586w, 740w
Arms trade, Philippines 749w
Philippines, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 452w
Philippines, Overseas aid 482w
Philippines, Overseas Development Administration 450w
Thailand, Aid financed trade 586w

Clearing banks
Bank charges 32–3w

Clelland, Mr David
Questions
Tanks 199w

Clergy
Early retirement 613–4
Pay 540w, 612–3
Resignations 541–2w

Cleveland
Local government reform 370w, 577w

Clifton-Brown, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 639, 644
Questions
Bail 386
Church Commissioners, Investment 540–1w
Compulsorily detained mental patients 888w
Employment, EC law 273
Energy Saving Trust 867
Environmentally sensitive areas 602–4w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Management agreements 287–8w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Wales 363–4w

Clifton-Brown, Mr Geoffrey—continued
Grammar schools, Gloucestershire 236w, 532w
John Radcliffe Hospital, Complaints 558w
Lorries, Driving licences 650w
Lorries, Road tax 509w
Road haulage licences 271w
Take-away food shops, Licensing 361w

Closed circuit television
Crime prevention 17w

Clubs
169w
Fire regulations 169w

Clwyd
Employment 604
GP fundholders 152w
Unemployment 603–5

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 753, 829–30
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 489–94
Questions
Child benefit 36w
Civil service manpower, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 784w
Civil service manpower, Dept for Education 849w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Employment 812–3w, 862w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Health 838w
Civil service manpower, Dept of National Heritage 897–8w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Social Security 783w
Civil service manpower, Dept of the Environment 793w
Civil service manpower, Employment Service Agency 811–2w
Civil service manpower, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 804–6w
Civil service manpower, Home Office 777–80w
Civil service manpower, Lord Chancellor's Dept 758–9w
Civil service manpower, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 818w
Civil service manpower, Ministry of Defence 859w
Civil service manpower, Scottish Office 825w
Civil service manpower, Welsh Office 908w
Employment opportunities 730–1
General certificate of secondary education, Merseyside 849w
General certificate of secondary education, Mid Glamorgan 802w
Lone parent families, Scotland 53–4w
Pre-school education, Borders region 899w
Prime Minister, Jewellery 25w
School leaving, Scotland 660w
School population, Mid Glamorgan 802w
Women's employment, Scotland 123w

Coal
Imports 746–7w

Coal mine closures
247w
Employment rehabilitation 635–6w
Water pollution 867–8

Coal mining
Industrial accidents 514w
Industrial diseases benefits (16.03.94) 885–7
Manpower 203–4w
Pollution 868

Coastal areas
Birds 301–2w, 371w
Special areas of conservation 369w

Coastal erosion
813w

Coastal fishing
Dredging 815–6w

Coe, Mr Sebastian
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 443–7
Questions
Armed forces housing 860w
Missing persons 1014
Science and technology, Postgraduate education 78w

Coffey, Ms Ann
Questions
Child Support Agency, Members' correspondence 134w
Crime, Detection rates 355w
House renovation grants, North West region 48–50w
Hypermarkets 273

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
M11, Road construction (11.03.94) 593–8
Questions
Criminal records, Computer privacy 766w
Extradition, Italy 670w
Genetics, Data banks 764–5w
Intelligence services 881w, 896w
Intelligence Services Bill (HL) 1993/94 701w
Medical cards 831–2w
Mines, Export controls 246w
Travel cards, Greater London 690w

Colchester
Council tax 371w

Cold weather payments
782w
Scotland 712–3w

College governors
Doncaster College 703w
Further education colleges 625w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties 821w
Armed forces reserves 401w
Armed forces strength 199w
Drinking and driving, Research 691–2w
Emergency services, Telecommunications technology 302w
Sites of special scientific interest 676w
Stansted Airport 118w

Colwyn Borough Council
EC grants and loans 520w

Commemorative coins
330w

Commission for the New Towns
Basildon 786–7w

Committal proceedings
Crown Prosecution Service 803w

Committees for the Employment of People with Disabilities
Public appointments 716–7w

Common agricultural policy
66w, 112w, 275–6w, 388w, 601–2w, 814–5w
Agricultural subsidies 388w
Expenditure 489w
Fraud 488–9w
UK contributions to EC budget 275w

Common fisheries policy
664w

Commonwealth
147

Commonwealth Institute
(17.03.94) 1054–6

Community action
185–6w

Community care
306–7w
Government grants to local authorities 308w

Community care—continued
Hospital discharges 165–6w
Northern Ireland 841w

Community care grants
Prisoners' release 629w

Community health councils
Welsh language 154w

Community health services
Greater London 558w

Community nurses
Contracts for services 377–8w

Companies Act 1985
Questions
282

Companies political contributions
247w, 282–3
Deregulation initiative 271–2

Company accounts
Publicity 210–1w

Company investigations
272

Company liquidations
Administrative receivers 211–2w
Ferranti 198w

Company registration
212w

Competition
Dept of Trade and Industry 18w

Compulsorily detained mental patients
888w

Compulsory purchase
East London river crossing 512w
Salford 654w

Computer privacy
Criminal records 766w

Computers
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 19w

Computers in government departments
Attorney General 738w
Dept for Education 323w
Dept of National Heritage 312w
Dept of Social Security 781–2w
Dept of the Environment 416w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 448w
Home Office 671w
Ministry of Defence 748w
Northern Ireland Office 705w
Scottish Office 547w
Welsh Office 694w

Concessionary television licences
4–5

Conditions of employment
EC law 730

Confederation of British Industry
246w, 636w

Conflict of interests
Flood defence committees 197w
Levene, Peter 319w
Non-departmental public bodies 634w

Congdon, Mr David
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 536, 557–8
Questions
Married personal allowance 327w

Congenital abnormalities
885–6w
Abortion 87–8w
Ayrshire 262w
Medical research 723w
Scotland 665w
Sodium valproate 303w
Trent Regional Health Authority 535w, 831w

Congenital abnormalities—continued
Wales 723w
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 535w

Connarty, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Local government (17.03.94) 1175, 1177–85, 1187, 1194

Consolidated fund debates
Air traffic (17.03.94) 1090–103
Cancer (17.03.94) 1074–89
Child Support Agency (17.03.94) 1104–25
Fenchurch Street Station (17.03.94) 1216–24
Greater London (17.03.94) 1146–64
Local government (17.03.94) 1173–95
Northern line (17.03.94) 1126–45
Speaker's rulings and statements (10.03.94) 422
Turkey (17.03.94) 1165–72
World Bank (17.03.94) 1196–215

Consolidated Fund (No 2) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
(14.03.94) 715–8
1R (14.03.94) 718
2R* & 3R* (17.03.94) 1074

Constitutions
Republic of Ireland 1005

Construction costs
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment 392–4w
Pergau dam 684w
Prisons 17–8w
Wymondham bypass 653–4w

Construction Industry Training Board
Public appointments 642w

Construction materials
Air pollution 582–3w
Road construction 1w

Consultants
British Coal Corporation 906w
Dept of Transport 2–4w
Scottish Office 659–60w

Consumer expenditure
Food 605–6w

Consumers' Committee for Great Britain
Public appointments 273w

Contaminated Land Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (15.03.94) 747

Continuing care units
Hospital beds 885w

Contracts
Griffiths, Michael 282–3w
M11 314–5w
Malaysia 740w
Overseas Development Administration 235w
Scotland 542w

Contracts for services
18
Audit 403–4w
Central Statistical Office 575w
Community nurses 377–8w
Driving Standards Agency 115–6w
EC law 80w
Government departments 18, 404w
Legal aid scheme 71–2w
Ministry of Defence 852w
NHS 84w
United Kingdom Passport Agency 169–70w
Vocational guidance 644w

Contracts of employment
Dept of Social Security 480w
Further education teachers 25–6w
Hospital consultants 343w
Insolvency (14.03.94) 619–24
NHS trusts 154w, 891–2w

Convictions
Fraud 229w
Teachers 618w

Cook, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 403–4
Questions
Livera Foods, Government grants 49w
Local government reform, Cleveland 577w

Cook, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Insolvency, Contracts of employment (14.03.94) 620–1
Questions
British Gas 268
Car industry, Takeovers 279

Coombs, Mr Anthony
Questions
Road traffic, Research 2w
Small businesses, Venture capital 266–7
Sports, Schools 3
Transport infrastructure, Economic growth 1–2w

Coombs, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (17.03.94) 1112–4, 1118, 1124
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 537–8
Questions
Confederation of British Industry 246w
Domestic violence, Victim support schemes 587w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 841w
Maintenance, Children 479w
Science and technology 13
Tourist industry 2–3
Unemployment, Wales 605

Cope, Rt Hon Sir John, Paymaster-General
Questions
Airport tax, Leeds-Bradford Airport 221w
Alcoholic drinks, Imports 330w
Alcoholic drinks duties 821w
Alcoholic drinks duties, Tax evasion 98w
Betting and gaming duties, Weather 222w
Customs and Excise, Offices 868w
EC budget 435w
Excise duties, Tax evasion 457–8w
Hydrocarbon oil duties, Tax yields 569w
Insurance premium tax, Tax yields 571–2w
Tax yields, Betting shops 324w
Tax yields, Gaming machines 324w
Tobacco duties, Tax yields 97w
VAT, Charities 572w
VAT, Doncaster 456–7w
VAT, Energy prices 572w, 822w
VAT, Sports facilities 222w
VAT, Tax evasion 222w
VAT, Tax yields 457w
VAT, Unpaid taxes 819–20w

Copeland
English Industrial Estates Corporation 332–3w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 305
Questions
Army, Inquiries 203w
Export of live animals, Animal welfare 607w
Film industry 9
Foreign investment in UK, Japan 278
Handicapped drivers, Road tolls 654w
Norman Shaw buildings, Parliamentary building maintenance and repair 127w
Northern Ireland government, Political parties 840w
Parliamentary buildings, Energy conservation 127w

Corbett, Mr Robin—continued
Residential care, Rate rebates 890w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Political refugees, Points of order (15.03.94) 748
Questions
Algeria 478w
Armed forces deployment 657–8w
Arrests, Police training 358–9w
Asthma, Children 346w
Asthma, Medical research 346w
Bridgewater, Carl, Homicide 358w
British Antarctic Survey, Government grants 487–8w
British Rail, Pension funds 512w
Business questions 1022–3
Campsfield House Detention Centre, Immigrant detainees 894–5w
Davis, Sammy, Deportation 504w
Dept of Social Security, Performance related pay 480w
East Timor, Human rights 340w
East Timor, Military attaches 340w
GP fundholders, Greater London 346w
Haiti 477w
Immigrant detainees, Hunger strikes 504w
Immigrants, Algeria 503w
Immigrants, Yugoslavia 503w
London Implementation Group 345–6w
Northern line, Modernisation 315w
University College Hospital, Finance 346w
Warren Spring Laboratory, Closures 583w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 404–5
Pastoral (Amendment) Measure 1994 (08.03.94) 252–3
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 134
Business questions 1018

Cornton Vale Prison
Prisoners' transfers 267w, 419w

Cornwall
Departmental responsibilities 465w
Languages education 528w

Cornwall Healthcare NHS Trust
Legal costs 723w

Corporal punishment
Children (17.03.94) 1064–5

Corston, Ms Jean
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 558
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 451–2, 470–3
Questions
Armed forces casualties, Armed forces training 749w
Cancer, Ovaries 827–8w
Dental services, Bristol 158–9w
Dental services, NHS and private practice 830w
Dentists, NHS 342–3w
Disability working allowance 782w
Family credit, Lone parents 628w
Maintenance, Social security benefits reductions 874–5w
Parental leave, EC law 736–7
Poverty, Children 217w
World Summit for Social Development 217–8w
Young offenders, Prisons 224w
Young offenders, Remand in custody 360–1w

Cost effectiveness
Overseas aid 314w

Cost per pupil
238–40w
London boroughs 423w
Scotland 658–9w
Secondary education 625w
Wales 523w

Cottage hospitals
Hospital closures 53w
Scotland 53w

Cunningham, Mr James
Questions
Northern Ireland government 1000

Council house rents
301w, 870–1

Council house sales
Local government revenue 286–8w
Scottish Homes 1014
Wales 286–8w

Council house waiting lists
871–2

Council housing
674w, 676w
Dampness 124–5w
Homelessness 45w
Scotland 124–5w
Standard spending assessments 293–4w, 788w
Wales 288–9w

Council housing management
Disclosure of information 417w
Tenants' rights 417w
Wales 452w

Council of Europe
Armenia 243w
Azerbaijan 244w
Private Members' motions (18.03.94) 1234–90
UK delegations 647w

Council tax
396, 674–5w, 867–70, 872–4, 1011–2
Billing 42–3w
Colchester 371w
Ipswich 47w
Lewisham 577–8w
Local government reform 876
Non-payment 43w
Rents 870
Transitional arrangements 43w, 792w, 876
Valuation 43w, 220w

Council tenants
Housing benefits 479w

Councillors
291w

Counterfeit manufacturing
Drugs 719–20w

Countryside Commission
583w
Nature Conservancy Council for England 301w

"Countrywide"
577w

County courts
Administrative delays 70–1w
Debt collection 498w

Court rules and procedures
Civil proceedings 68w

Courts
Disclosure of information 862–3w

Cousins, Mr Jim
Questions
Biotechnology 905w
British Aerospace, Directors 795w
British Aerospace, Government shareholding 795w
Central Statistical Office, Contracts for services 575w
Cold weather payments 782w
Driving Standards Agency 647–8w
Energy Saving Trust, Owner occupied housing 680w
Highways Agency 863w
Industrial investment 265–6
Information Technology Services Agency 709w
Ryrie rules 740w
Single regeneration budget, Dept of Transport 863w

Coventry
Electric vehicles 572w
Social fund 711w
Water supply disconnections 296w

Cox, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Buses, Safety belts (17.03.94) 1044–5
Business questions (10.03.94) 417
Questions
Bus lanes, Greater London 652–3w
Buses, Axle weights 408w, 650w
Buses, Bridges 509w
Buses, EC countries 650w
City pride 677w
Dept of the Environment, Non-departmental public bodies 869w
Drug crimes, Greater London 12w
Kenya, Food aid 481w
Life imprisonment 768w
Prison staff, Crimes of violence 355w
Rent assessment panels, Wandsworth 578w, 580w
Segregation of prisoners 769w
Wandsworth Borough Council, Air traffic 649w
Wandsworth Borough Council, John Archer School 871w

Craig, John S
Custody (10.03.94) 513–9

Cran, Mr James
Questions
Industrial investment 265

Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia
Death 738w

Crianlarich
Railway freight transport 56–7w

Crime
Airports 654w
City of London 388
Detection rates 355w
Greater London 387, 389–90
Northern Ireland 142w
Rural areas (17.03.94) 1038–42

Crime prevention
Cellular phones 247–8w
Closed circuit television 17w
Drug crimes 381–2, 393
Expenditure 769w
Government grants to local authorities 47–8w
Local authorities 391
Street lighting 173w, 233–4w

Crimes of violence
Mentally ill 445–6w
Prison staff 355w

Criminal appeals
Long, George 763w

Criminal injuries compensation
357w, 503–4w, 763w
Barristers 865–6w
Northern Ireland 865–6w

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
Annual reports 599–600w

Criminal injuries compensation scheme
145–6, 224w, 413w, 895–6w
Expenditure 895w
Northern Ireland 844w

Criminal Justice Act 1948
Questions
Prosecutions 669w

Criminal Justice & Public Order Bill 1993/94
Questions
161w, 386, 390–1, 764–6w

Criminal Justice Royal Commission
Immunity certificates 597w

Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) (Prescribed Proceedings) Regulations 1994
Debates etc.
(16.03.94) 927–35

Criminal proceedings
Bennett, Paul 781w

Criminal records
Computer privacy 766w

Crisis loans
218w
Doncaster 875w

Cross border cooperation in Ireland
840w, 1001

Crossrail
10–1w

Crown immunity
Ministry of Defence 854–5w
Town and country planning 375w

Crown Prosecution Service
Committal proceedings 803w

Cryer, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 417–8
EC enlargement (17.03.94) 1030
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R and Money res (15.03.94) 848–51
Pastoral (Amendment) Measure 1994 (08.03.94) 256–8
Redundant Churches Fund Order 1994 (16.03.94) 895, 899–900
Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Bill, Money res (10.03.94) 508
Select committees, Points of order (09.03.94) 287
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 435
Questions
Business questions 1023
Menwith Hill, Official visits 138
Unemployment 738

Cuba
Debts 571w
Foreign relations 804w

Cumbria
Radioactive waste disposal 45w, 579–81w

Cunningham, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 656
Questions
Health Management Trust 85–7w
Peto Institute 728–9w
Railway stations, Closures 863w
Severn Trent Water, Water supply disconnections 296w
Social fund 876–8w
Water supply, Lead pollution 299w
Water supply disconnections 296w
Water supply disconnections, Coventry 296w

Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Questions
English Industrial Estates Corporation, Factories 332w
English Industrial Estates Corporation, Land 333w
Turkey, Human rights 448w
Turkey, Official visits 448w

Curriculum
Swimming 10
Welsh language 450–1w

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 424, 447, 464, 482–3

Curry, Mr David, Minister of State, Dept of the Environment
Questions
Council tax 674–5w, 867–70, 872–4
Council tax, Transitional arrangements 876
Crown immunity, Town and country planning 375w

Curry, Mr David—continued
East Sussex County Council 877
Gypsies, Essex County Council 110w
Hotels, Change of use 459–60w
Housing, Change of use 459–60w
Local government constituencies, Staffordshire 297w
Local government corruption 677w, 876
Local government reform 876–7
Local government reform, Staffordshire 675w
Standard spending assessments, Liverpool 673–4w
Town & Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 872w

Custodial treatment
356w
Northern Ireland 350w

Custody
Craig, John S (10.03.94) 513–9

Customs & Excise Management Act 1979
Questions
457–8w

Customs and Excise
Offices 868w

Cycling
Road traffic offences 178–80w

Dafis, Mr Cynog
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 766, 821
Questions
Air pollution monitoring, Wales 366w
Citizen's Charter, Farmers 66w
Council housing, Wales 288–9w
Energy Saving Trust, Finance 866
Hydrocarbon oil duties 453w
Landslips, St Dogmaels 522w
Milk Marketing Board 34w
Orimulsion, Wales 365w
School population, Wales 633w
Science and technology research, Wales 14–5
UK Panel on Sustainable Development 297w
UN Commission for Sustainable Development 583w

Dail Eireann
THORP 579w

Dairy farming
Production quotas 279w

Dairy products
Prices 279w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 407
Legal aid, Advice & assistance (Scotland) regulations (16.03.94) 927–30
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 750
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 906, 912
Questions
Air pollution, Construction materials 582–3w
Armed forces deployment, Iraq 132
Business questions 1021
Cathedrals, Architectural conservation 611w
Employment opportunities, Local government reform 638w
Genetics, Screening 85w
Historic buildings, Architectural conservation 611–2w
Iraq, Malnutrition 646w
Iraq, Overseas aid 148
Iraq, Sanctions 244w, 703–4w
Murrell, Hilda, Homicide 356–7w
Western Honduras, Rio Tinto Zinc 113w

Dampness
Council housing 124–5w
Housing improvement 125w

Dangerous drugs
Scotland 735–6w

Darling, Mr Alistair
Debates etc.
Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 23–7, 33–4
Questions
Immunity certificates, Attorney General 576w
Immunity certificates, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 646w
Immunity certificates, Dept of Health 567w
Immunity certificates, Dept of Social Security 632w
Immunity certificates, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 701w
Immunity certificates, Home Office 598w
Immunity certificates, Prime Minister 646–7w
Immunity certificates, Scottish Office 737w
Immunity certificates, Treasury 572w
Immunity certificates, Welsh Office 634–5w
Insurance premium tax, Tax yields 571–2w
Life insurance 452–3w
Nadir, Asil, Bankruptcy 741w
Scottish Homes, Council house sales 1014

Data banks
Genetics 764–5w

Davidson, Mr Ian
Questions
Drug abuse, Armed forces 518w
HIV infection, Armed forces 518w

Davies, Mr Bryan
Debates etc.
Calling of Members, Points of order (07.03.94) 21
Questions
Higher Education Funding Council for England 883w
Student unions, Expenditure 486w

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 791–4
Questions
Legislative process 762–3w
Railway transport, West Wales 601

Davies, Mr Quentin
Questions
Distillers Group, Takeovers 747w
Manufacturing industries 269

Davies, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 756, 762–72, 805, 807–8, 811, 815
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 937, 949–50
Questions
Council house sales, Local government revenue 286–8w
Forestry Review Group 633w
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL) 1993/94 609
Milk Marque, Wales 526w
Nursery schools, Wales 288w
Recycling, Bottle banks 524w
Recycling, Supplementary credit approvals 524w
Unemployment, Clwyd 604–5

Davis, Mr David, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Office of Public Service & Science
Questions
Advertising, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 488w
British Antarctic Survey, Government grants 487–8w

Davis, Mr David—continued
Charterline 402–3w
Citizen's Charter 20, 78w
Citizen's Charter, Publicity 20
Civil servants' visits abroad, Air travel 645–6w, 873w
Civil service agencies, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 401–2w
Civil service manpower, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 784w
Civil service manpower, Disabled workers 873–4w
Contracts for services, EC law 80w
Government laboratories 14
Inventions 14
Non-departmental public bodies, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 693w
Science and technology, Postgraduate education 78w
Science and technology research, Inventions 14
Science and technology research, Wales 14–5
Science and technology research, Women 18–9

Davis, Sammy
Deportation 17w, 504w

Davis, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Insolvency, Contracts of employment (14.03.94) 622
Questions
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison population 12–3w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison staff 13w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prisoners' outings 14–5w
Prison staff, Funerals 15w
Prisoners, Funerals 14w

Day, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 328

Day care of children
890–1w
Dept for Education 31–2w, 529w
Dept of Employment 191w
Dept of Health 89w, 537–8w
Dept of National Heritage 312w
Dept of Social Security 38w
Dept of the Environment 112w, 462w
Dept of Trade and Industry 251w
Home Office 17w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 67w, 494–5w
Ministry of Defence 96w
Northern Ireland Dept of Health and Social Services 867w
OECD countries 447w
Scottish Office 61w, 737w
Treasury 223–4w
Welsh Office 36w, 526–7w

Day surgery
Hospital waiting lists 165–6w

D-Day landings
Festivals and special occasions 12–3, 133, 199w, 311w, 656–7w

Deaf
Jury disqualification 405w
Wales 284–5w

Death
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 738w
Fires 180–2w
Heart pacemakers 82w
Occupied territories 472w
Prisoners' transport 359–60w
Road accidents 260w

Debt collection
County courts 498w

Debt rescheduling
Paris club 220–1w

Debts
Cuba 571w

Decorations for Gallantry (Display) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (09.03.94) 288–91

Defence contracts
Malaysia 755–6w

Defence costs study
201–2w

Defence equipment
Belize 400w
Repairs and maintenance 398w

Defence expenditure
93w, 198w
Air force 90w
Yugoslavia 478w

Defence Export Services Organisation
748w
Public appointments 253w, 420w

Defence industries
Diversification 125w
Scotland 125w

Defence procurement
253–5w, 655w, 859w
British Aerospace 253w
European fighter aircraft 144
Hydrographer of the Navy 142
Jet Provost aircraft 516–7w
Landing platforms 754w
Lynx helicopters 398w
Military aircraft 91w
Minesweepers 141
Radar 140–1

Defence research
Chemical and biological warfare 853–4w

Defence research establishments
202w

Democracy
Russia 478w

Demolition
Listed buildings 107w

Denham, Mr John
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 419
World Bank (17.03.94) 1196–205, 1210
Questions
Entrance project, Southampton 512w
Minesweepers, Defence procurement 141
Prisoners' release, Community care grants 629w
Sports facilities, Planning permission 676w

Denmark
Fisheries 280–1w

Dental charges
Northern Ireland 868w

Dental health
445w
Baby milks 87w

Dental services
836–8w
Bristol 158–9w
Children 446–7w, 868w
Huddersfield 835w
NHS 159w
NHS and private practice 830w
Northern Ireland 436–7w, 618w
Northumberland 158w
Scotland 123w, 736–8w
Wales 451–2w, (15.03.94) 855–62

Dentists
Bristol 342–3w
NHS 342–3w
Patients 830–2w
Pay 380–4w
Scotland 380–4w

Departmental circulars
Hazardous wastes 870–1w

Departmental correspondence
North Circular Road 648–9w

Departmental forms
Integrated administration and control system 494w
Maintenance 37w
NHS 727w

Departmental publications
Dept of Health 88w
Welsh language 695–6w

Departmental responsibilities 465w
Cornwall 465w
Extractive industries 49w
Greater London 682–3w

Deportation 232w
Davis, Sammy 17w, 504w
Prisoners 595–6w
Ruppert, Bryan 586w
Zimbabwe 471w

Dept for Education
Alcoholic drinks 531w
Cash limits 849w
Civil service agencies 323w
Civil service manpower 849w
Computers in government departments 323w
Day care of children 31–2w, 529w
Disabled workers 884w
Government buildings 532w
Non-departmental public bodies 702w
Office furniture 530w
Official hospitality 531w
Open government 882–3w
Orders and regulations 702w
Telephone services 237w
Women's employment 849w

Dept of Employment
Civil service agencies 514w
Civil service manpower 812–3w, 862w
Day care of children 191w
Non-departmental public bodies 719w, 812w
Official hospitality 713w
Open government 810w
Orders and regulations 812w
Public appointments 431w
Telephone services 240w

Dept of Health
Advertising 88w, 347–8w, 438w
Alcoholic drinks 343w
Civil service agencies 440w
Civil service manpower 838w
Day care of children 89w, 537–8w
Departmental publications 88w
Disabled workers 564w
Immunity certificates 567w
Non-departmental public bodies 728–9w
Office furniture 343w
Official hospitality 885w
Open government 834w
Orders and regulations 728w
Public appointments 80–1w
Telephone services 343–4w
Women's employment 838w

Dept of National Heritage
Alcoholic drinks 685w
Civil service agencies 311w
Civil service manpower 897–8w
Computers in government departments 312w
Day care of children 312w
Office furniture 685w
Official hospitality 685w
Telephone services 312w
Women's employment 897–8w

Dept of Social Security
Alcoholic drinks 707w
Civil service agencies 411w
Civil service manpower 783w
Computers in government departments 781–2w

Dept of Social Security—continued
Contracts of employment 480w
Day care of children 38w
Government buildings 479w
Immunity certificates 632w
Members' correspondence 783w
Ministers' private offices 628w
Non-departmental public bodies 709–10w
Official hospitality 707w
Open government 879w
Orders and regulations 707w
Parliamentary questions 879–80w
Performance related pay 480w
Telephone services 409–10w
Women's employment 783w

Dept of the Environment
Civil service agencies 371w
Civil service manpower 793w
Computers in government departments 416w
Day care of children 112w, 462w
Expenditure 110–1w
Government buildings 416–7w, 868w
Ministers 371–2w
Non-departmental public bodies 681–2w, 869w
Office furniture 785w
Official visits 368w
Open government 870w
Orders and regulations 682w
Travelling expenses 368w
Women's employment 793w

Dept of Trade and Industry
Accounting officers 211w
Civil service agencies 746w
Competition 18w
Day care of children 251w
Deregulation initiative 747w
Gas consumption 453–4w
Government buildings 466w
Immunity certificates 204w, 471w
Legal opinion 211w
Non-departmental public bodies 739w
Offices 280–1
Orders and regulations 799w
Public appointments 19w
Telephone services 335–6w

Dept of Transport
Cash limits 115w
Civil service agencies 508–9w
Consultants 2–4w
Government buildings 649w
Non-departmental public bodies 686w, 688w
Office furniture 508w
Orders and regulations 687w
Single regeneration budget 863w
Statutory sick pay 2w
Telephone services 316w

Deregulation initiative 272
Agriculture 607
Companies political contributions 271–2
Dept of Trade and Industry 747w
Environment protection 248w
Food hygiene 273–4
Food shops 272–3
Legislation 845w
Markets 250w
Welsh Office 607

Derelict land 460–1w

Desert storm syndrome 400–1w
Medical research 419w

Design Council 470w

Detection rates
Crime 355w
Racial attacks 413–4w

Deva, Mr Nirj Joseph
Debates etc.
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 587

Development agencies
North West region 467w

Development Board for Rural Wales 602–3

Devlin, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
House of Commons divisions, Points of order (09.03.94) 363
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 758
Questions
Armed forces training 137
Housing associations, Teesside 864

Devolution
Wales 611

Devonport Dockyard
Trident submarines 655w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 920
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 199, 231
Questions
Housing benefits, Tenants 136–8w
Retirement pensions 137–40w
State Earnings Related Pension Scheme 409w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Questions
Prisoners' release 391
Solicitors, Training 618
Trident submarines 139
Unemployment 738–9

Dicks, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 531, 544–7
Terrorism, Points of order (11.03.94) 521–2, (14.03.94) 626
Questions
IRA 740

Diesel fuel
Hydrocarbon oil duties 272w

Dir89/617/EEC 799w

Dir91/156/EEC 42w

Dir91/321/EEC 196w

Dir92/43/EEC 7w

Dir92/56/EEC 431–2w

Dir92/85/EEC 139–40w

Director General of Water Services
see Office of Water Services

Directorate of Telecommunications
Prisons 176–7w

Directors
British Aerospace 795w
Welsh Development Agency 528w

Disability working allowance 782w
Lewisham 135w

Disabled facilities grants
Wales 522w

Disabled workers
Civil service manpower 873–4w
Dept for Education 884w
Dept of Health 564w
Health authorities 827w
Ministry of Defence 880w

Disciplinary proceedings
Doctors 723–4w
Hospital doctors 342w
Teachers 624–5w

Discretionary student grants
624w

Discrimination
Handicapped 147, 322w

Distillers Group
Takeovers 747w

District health authorities
Finance 720–2w
Greater London 720–2w
Managers 155w
Wales 155w

Dixon, Mr Don
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1271

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL), Points of order (14.03.94) 625–6
London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL), 2R (14.03.94) 677, 682, 684, 687–92, 701–2, 704–5, 707–9
Northern line (17.03.94) 1134–8, 1142–4
Questions
Channel tunnel, Fires 122–3w, 434w
Channel tunnel, Industrial accidents 241–2w
Crime, Airports 654w
Isle of Dogs enterprise zone 792–3w
"London Making the Best Better" 793–4w
Ministerial speeches, Channel tunnel 865w
North Circular Road, Departmental correspondence 648–9w
Railtrack, Fees and charges 270w
Railway transport, Telecommunications technology 407w
Railway travel, Government grants to local authorities 9w
Railway workers, Drug abuse 408–9w
Railway workers, Pensions 317–8w

Doctors
Disciplinary proceedings 723–4w
Freedom of expression 567w

Doctors' list of patients
Merseyside 565w
Patients' rights 565–6w

Dogs
878
Health hazards 536w
Legislation 175w
Local authority powers 463w, 878

Domestic energy conservation
678w
Private sector housing 789w

Domestic gas appliances
Carbon monoxide 275
Gas safety (07.03.94) 123–30

Domestic violence
Victim support schemes 587w

Doncaster
Crisis loans 875w
Employment 809–10w
Employment service local offices 514–5w
Homicide (09.03.94) 372–80
Housing benefits 136–8w, 707–8w
Industrial accidents 713–4w
Industrial injuries 629w
Invalidity benefits 631w, 782–3w
Jobclubs 515w
Low pay 637w
Part-time employment 637–8w
Railway fares 864–5w
Schools 128w
Social fund 710–1w
Social security benefits 219–20w
Special education 627w
Theft 766–8w
Unemployment benefits 139w, 514–5w
VAT 456–7w
Young offenders 593–4w
Youth employment 635w
Youth training 808w
Youth unemployment 717–8w

Doncaster College
College governors 703w

Doncaster Family Health Servics Authority
Expenditure 832w

Doncaster Prison
Prison accommodation 359w

Donohoe, Mr Brian H
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Scotland 54w
Assisted places scheme, Wales 283w
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board, Educational qualifications 542w
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board, Resignations 379–80w
Betting and gaming duties, Weather 222w
Building repairs, Scottish Homes 377w
Chemical Weapons Convention 18w
Congenital abnormalities, Ayrshire 262w
Congenital abnormalities, Scotland 665w
Dental services, Scotland 123w
Health authorities, Managers 162w
NHS, Public relations 307w
NHS, Telephone services 54w
NHS trusts, Scotland 542–4w
Post offices, Franchising 333–5w
Post offices, Redundancy 333w
Scottish health boards 545–8w
Telephone services, Dept for Education 237w
Telephone services, Dept of Employment 240w
Telephone services, Dept of Health 343–4w
Telephone services, Dept of National Heritage 312w
Telephone services, Dept of Social Security 409–10w
Telephone services, Dept of Trade and Industry 335–6w
Telephone services, Dept of Transport 316w
Telephone services, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 244w
Telephone services, Home Office 499–500w
Telephone services, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 389–90w
Telephone services, Ministry of Defence 518–9w
Telephone services, Scottish Office 661–2w
Telephone services, Treasury 222w
Telephone services, Welsh Office 522–3w

Dorrell, Mr Stephen, Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc.
Consolidated Fund (No 2) Bill, 1R (14.03.94) 718
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (16.03.94) 888–9
Questions
Advertising, Treasury 99w
Capital gains tax 435w
Civil service, Pay 33–4w, 434–5w
Civil service agencies, Treasury 455w
Employee share ownership schemes 323w
Government assistance to industry, Wales 635w
Immunity certificates, Treasury 572w
Income tax 326w
Income tax, Yorkshire and Humberside 32w
Indirect taxation, Tax yields 568w
Inheritance tax, Access to countryside 98w, 220w
Inheritance tax, Tax allowances 569–70w
Inland Revenue, Civil service manpower 568–9w
Inland Revenue, Information technology 323–4w
Investment, Interest rates 672w
Married personal allowance 327w
Oval cricket ground, Duchy of Cornwall 822w

Dorrell, Mr Stephen—continued
Personal savings, Taxation 98w
Personal tax allowances 327w
Profit sharing 571w
Standard of living 99w
Tax allowances, Health insurance 99w
Tax burden, Greater London 98w
Tax burden, Income tax 325–6w
Tax burden, Personal taxation 324–5w
Tax rates and bands 825w
Taxation, Building industry 99w
Taxpayers 327–30w, 673w
VAT, Tax collection 456w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Debates etc.
Legal aid, Advice & assistance (Scotland) regulations (16.03.94) 927–31
Questions
A75, Road traffic 57–61w
A75, Road works 57w
Assisted places scheme, Scotland 54w, 733w
Building repairs, Scottish Homes 377w
Charities, Scotland 377w
Contracts, Scotland 542w
Cornton Vale Prison, Prisoners' transfers 267w, 419w
Cost per pupil, Scotland 658–9w
Council housing, Dampness 124–5w
EC internal trade, Scotland 61w
Electoral Register, EC nationals 665–6w
Housing improvement, Government grants to local authorities 125w
MFV Copia, Shipping accidents 659w
Motorways, Scotland 734w
Outdoor education, Scotland 734w
Parole Board for Scotland 378w
Pre-school education, Borders region 899w
Prison accommodation, Scotland 826w
Prison visiting committees, Scotland 262–6w
Prisoners & Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 61w
Railway freight transport, Crianlarich 56–7w
Rescue services, Scotland 263w
School leaving, Scotland 660w

Dounreay
Radioactive waste disposal 55–6w
Radioactive wastes 112w

Dover, Mr Den
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 632

Dowd, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Local government, Greater London (17.03.94) 1150–4
Questions
Davis, Sammy, Deportation 17w
London Regional Passengers Committee 121w
NHS administration, Managers 563–4w
Railway stations, Greater London 268–9w
Rough Sleepers Initiative 458–60w
Student numbers, Inner London boroughs 845–6w

Drama
Arts Council grants 480w

Dredging
Aggregates 790–1w
Coastal fishing 815–6w
Race bank 791w

Dreghorn
Building repairs 377w

Drigg
Transport of radioactive materials 653w

Drinking and driving
Research 691–2w

Driving instruction
Schools 31w

Driving licences
Lorries 650w
Minibuses 6–7w

Driving Standards Agency
647–8w
Contracts for services 115–6w

Driving tests
Scotland 115w
Wales 115w

Drug abuse
Armed forces 518w
Medical rehabilitation 304–5w
Prisoners 381
Pupil exclusions 421w
Railway workers 408–9w
Surveys 597w
Young people 171w, 381–2

Drug crimes
355w, 382–4, 393
Crime prevention 381–2, 393
Greater London 12w
Prisoners 381

Drug prevention schemes
593w

Drug seizures
600w

Drug side effects
563w

Drugs
162–3w, 382–3
Counterfeit manufacturing 719–20w
Expenditure 145
Imports 559w
Parallel imports 726w

Drugs and crime
Police informers 503w

Drunkenness
Railway workers 408–9w

Dual carriageways
A1 511w

Duchy of Cornwall
Oval cricket ground 822w

Dumbartonshire Enterprise
124w

Duncan, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1245, 1267–70, 1276
Homosexuality, Prosecutions (14.03.94) 721
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 788–91
Oral questions, Points of order (16.03.94) 881
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 486
Questions
Business questions 1023–4
Bypasses, Ministerial powers 272w
Council tax 867–8

Duncan Smith, Mr Iain
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 473–8
Questions
Agricultural products, Eastern Europe 901–2w
Common agricultural policy 388w
Design Council 470w
EC enlargement 1015–6
Employment opportunities, EC countries 638w

Duncan Smith, Mr Iain—continued
Foreign investment in UK, Japan 281
GATT 818–9w
NHS, Departmental forms 727w

Dunn, Mr Bob
Questions
Air transport, USA 408w
Business questions 1019
Cash limits, Dept of Transport 115w
Employment 637w
Railway fares, Penalty fares 272w
Rent arrears, London boroughs 872–3w
Squatting 392
Transport Research Laboratory 115w
Vehicle Inspectorate 794–5w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc.
Cancer (17.03.94) 1074–9, 1085–6, 1088
European standing committees, Points of order (16.03.94) 882
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 170–1, 185–7, 196, 199
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 121w, 507w, 794w
Business questions 1020
Cancer, Medical treatments 83w
Consultants, Dept of Transport 2–4w
Driving Standards Agency, Contracts for services 115–6w
Driving tests, Scotland 115w
Legal aid, Sex discrimination 671w
Minibuses, Motor vehicle safety 120w
Railway freight transport, Brakes 510w
Sex discrimination 432–3w
Tipping of waste, Taxation 578w
Tipping of waste, Water pollution 785w, 869w

Durant, Sir Anthony
Questions
Albert memorial 8
Business questions 1020
Council tax 869

Duxford
Museums and galleries 396–7

Dwyfor
Standard spending assessments 365–6w

Dyfed
Health services 153w

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates etc.
Edgware Hospital, Hospital closures (18.03.94) 1302–3
Europe (18.03.94) 1292, 1299–300
Questions
Car industry, Production 247w
Council housing 674w
EC social policy 718w
Northern Ireland government 1008–9

Eagle, Ms Angela
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 444, 451–2, 460, 462
Questions
Astra Training Services 636w
Crime, Greater London 389–90
Dogs 878
Insurance premium tax 739–40

Ealing
Taxation 869w

Ear nose and throat
Medical equipment 562–3w
Prescriptions 563w

Early retirement
Clergy 613–4
London University 132–3w

East London river crossing
Compulsory purchase 512w

East Midlands
Skillcentres 645w
Urban programme 872

East Sussex County Council
877

East Timor
473–4w
Casualties 804w
Human rights 340w
Indonesia 20w
Military attaches 340w
UN resolutions 803w

Eastern Europe
Agricultural products 901–2w
Know-how Fund 466–8w

Eastern Health and Social Services Board
Equal opportunities 259w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Questions
Aerospace industry, Government assistance 248w
Capital rules 480w
Local government corruption 677w
Pupil exclusions, Manchester 703w
Social security benefits rules 479–80w

EC action
Bovine somatotropin (17.03.94) 1067
Electricity (17.03.94) 1067–9
Fisheries 279–80w
Natural gas (17.03.94) 1067–9

EC aid
234–5w
Philippines 482w

EC budget
435w

EC Cons Doc 8757/93
(17.03.94) 1067

EC countries
Age of consent 600w
Buses 650w
Employment opportunities 638w
Food imports 815w
Identity cards 170w
Unemployment benefits 874w

EC Draft 4911/92
(17.03.94) 1067–9

EC Draft 10761/93
(17.03.94) 1067

EC Draft 4616/94
(18.03.94) 1301

EC enlargement
742, 1012, 1015–6, (17.03.94) 1030–2, 1042–4

EC Foreign Affairs Council
245w, 474–7w

EC grants and loans
Colwyn Borough Council 520w
Local authorities 372–3w
Milk 495w
Ministry of Defence 753w
Northern Ireland 613–5w, 1010
Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund 614w
Regional aid 209w
Regional challenge 204–5w
Training 718w
Transport infrastructure 117w

EC immigration
174–5w

EC integration
474w, 821w

EC internal trade
Manufacturing industries 749w
Scotland 61w
Wines 196–7w

EC labour policy
731

EC law
Agricultural surpluses 604w
Conditions of employment 730
Contracts for services 80w
Employment 273
Environment protection 290w
Infant foods 196w, 603w
Maternity benefits 139–40w, 708w
Measurement 799w
Nature conservation 7w
Parental leave 736–7
Redundancy 431–2w
Road construction 509w
Working hours 730

EC nationals
Electoral Register 665–6w
Voting rights 588w

EC Social Charter
733

EC social policy
718w

EC Transport Commissioner
Railway transport 601

Economic growth
246w, 821–2w
Transport infrastructure 1–2w

Economic policy
148, 395–6
Bank of England 822–4w
Government securities 822–4w

Economic situation
Scotland 126w

Edgware Hospital
Hospital closures (18.03.94) 1302–8

Education
Local government expenditure 422–4w

Education officers
Birmingham City Council 26w

Educational assessment
Disclosure of information 146

Educational institutions
Theology 541w

Educational qualifications
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board 542w

Educational standards
Disclosure of information 236–7w

Efficiency scrutinies
BBC 52w

Eggar, Mr Tim, Minister for Energy
Questions
Accounting officers, Dept of Trade and Industry 211w
British Coal Corporation, Consultants 906w
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 245w, 250–1w, 332w
British Gas 268
Coal, Imports 746–7w
Coal mine closures 247w
Coal mining, Manpower 203–4w
Day care of children, Dept of Trade and Industry 251w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Gas consumption 453–4w
Domestic gas appliances, Carbon monoxide 275
Electricity tariffs 245w
Gas supply industry 268
Gas supply industry, Gas meters 267–8
Government buildings, Dept of Trade and Industry 466w
Manufacturing industries, Civil servants' secondment 796w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept of Trade and Industry 739w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 798w, 906w
Nuclear power 745w, 797w
Power industry 745–6w
Public appointments, Dept of Trade and Industry 19w

Eggar, Mr Tim—continued
Sellafield, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 250w
Sellafield, Nuclear safety 203w
Telephone services, Dept of Trade and Industry 335–6w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Computers 19w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Privatisation 246w
Wind power, Industrial accidents 583–4w
Wind power, Noise 797w

Eggs
Food consumption 902–4w

Egypt
WENA Hotels 19–20w

Elderly
Health services 267–8w
Home energy efficiency scheme 791–2w
Retirement pensions 320–1w

Electoral Register
11–2w
EC nationals 665–6w
Publicity 360w
Scotland 665–6w
Young people 15–6w

Electric vehicles
Coventry 572w

Electricity
EC action (17.03.94) 1067–9

Electricity consumption
Wales 801w

Electricity tariffs
245w

Electromagnetic interference
Cancer hazards 835w

Elimination of Poverty in Retirement Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R order read (11.03.94) 590

Elletson, Mr Harold
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (17.03.94) 1113
Questions
Coastal areas, Special areas of conservation 369w
North Sea, Sea pollution 111w
Oil pollution, Irish Sea 269w, 271w
Power industry, Exports 248–9w
Terrorism, Legislation 357w

Embassies
Expenditure 112–3w

Emergency calls
Ambulance services 719w
Lancashire Constabulary 587w
London Ambulance Service 1013

Emergency services
Telecommunications technology 302w

Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 30
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 351–5
Questions
Hotels, Televisions 2

Employee share ownership schemes
323w

Employment
637w, 729–30, 736–8
Clwyd 604
Doncaster 809–10w
EC law 273
London boroughs 163w
Statistics 735–6

Employment Appeal Tribunal
614

Employment level
714w
Statistics 240w

Employment opportunities
150, 730–1
EC countries 638w
Leeds Development Corporation 108–9w, 182–3w
Local government reform 638w
Overseas workers 644w
USA 638w

Employment policy
713w

Employment protection
Health service staff 891–2w
Overseas workers 20–1w
Part-time employment 431w

Employment rehabilitation
Coal mine closures 635–6w

Employment schemes
Expenditure 186–7w

Employment Select Committee
(08.03.94) 258

Employment Service Agency
811w
Civil service manpower 811–2w
Equal opportunities 516w
Wales 516w
Women's employment 811–2w

Employment service local offices
Doncaster 514–5w
Vacancies 514–5w

Empty housing
Nurses' homes 533w

Energy analysis
Local authorities 879

Energy conservation
295–6w
Government departments 416w
Parliamentary buildings 127w

Energy Conservation Bill 1993/94
Questions
866, 879

Energy Conservation (Lighting) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (08.03.94) 153–4
Questions
867

Energy policy
Wales 606–7

Energy prices
866–7
Handicapped 696w
Pensioners 135–6w
Retirement pensions 321–2w
Social security benefits 629–31w
VAT 135–6w, 572w, 822w
War pensions 322w

Energy Saving Trust
867
Finance 293–4w, 866
Owner occupied housing 680w

Engineering Construction Industry Training Board
Public appointments 641–2w

Engineering industries
Productivity 741–2w

Engineers
Air force 198–9w

Engines
Research finance 573w

English Industrial Estates Corporation
Copeland 332–3w
Factories 332w
Land 333w

English National Board for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting
Redundancy 441w

English Nature
see Nature Conservancy Council for England

English Tourist Board
6

Enright, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 417
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 438
Questions
Amateur arts 7
Chartermark scheme, Yorkshire Water 15
Companies political contributions 282
Funding Agency for Schools, Operating costs 133w
Government buildings, Dept for Education 532w
Government buildings, Dept of Social Security 479w
Government buildings, Dept of the Environment 868w
Government buildings, Dept of Trade and Industry 466w
Government buildings, Dept of Transport 649w
Government buildings, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 493–4w
Government buildings, Treasury 455w
Grant maintained schools, Insurance 237–8w
Grant Maintained Schools Mutual 237w
Nurses' homes, Empty housing 533w
Police Authority for Northern Ireland, Public appointments 842–3w
Standard spending assessments 676w

Enterprise allowance scheme
183w

Entertainment licensing
Hypnosis 598–9w

Entertainments
Hypnosis 567w

Entrance project
Southampton 512w

Entry clearances
Immigration officers 699–700w
Members' correspondence 893w

Environment protection
Agriculture 604w
Cardiff Bay barrage 871w
Deregulation initiative 248w
EC law 290w
Equipment 247w
Forestry 547w
Ministry of Defence 852w
National vocational qualifications 789w
Research finance 787w

Environmental health officers
Manpower 682w

Environmental impact assessment
Road construction 863w

Environmental Information Regulations 1992
Questions
63w

Environmental policy
Welsh Office 800w

Environmental Protection Act 1990
Questions
299–300w

Environmentally sensitive areas
602–4w
Essex 65w
Management agreements 287–8w
Wales 287–8w, 363–4w

Equal opportunities
Eastern Health and Social Services Board 259w
Employment Service Agency 516w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards 255–60w

Equal Opportunities Commission
Public appointments 643w

Equal pay
Wales 632w, 694–5w

Eritrea
Terrorism 472–3w

Essex
Environmentally sensitive areas 65w

Essex County Council
Gypsies 110w

Essex Police
383

Estimates days
Housing Corporation (14.03.94) 629–76, 713–4

Etherington, Mr Bill
Questions
Single regeneration budget 880
Tourist boards, Finance 5–6
Vocational guidance 182w

Ethics
NHS 303w

Ethnic minorities
Government grants to local authorities 763–4w
Juries 414w
Single regeneration budget 870w

Eurolink programme
Wales 364–5w

Europe
Private Members' motions (18.03.94) 1287–96

European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund
Northern Ireland 614w

European Coal and Steel Community
Iron and steel industry 277

European Council
341–2w

European economic area
Free movement of people 362w

European fighter aircraft
144–5
Defence procurement 144

European Parliament elections
Young people 15w

European Passenger Services
Channel tunnel 121w

European Regional Development Fund
Northern Ireland 614–5w

European Social Fund
Northern Ireland 613w, 615–6w
Training 807–8w
Wales 718w

European works councils
733–4

Euston Station
Railway timetables 651w

Evans, Mr David
Questions
Armed forces women 198w
Know-how Fund, Eastern Europe 466–8w
Romania, Know-how Fund 466w
Rover Group, Profits 283–4

Evans, Mr John
Questions
Unemployment 728

Evans, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 421
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 755–6, 763–4, 779, 782, 785, 807–15, 824
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 940, 943, 952–3, 955, 957–9
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 349

Evans, Mr Jonathan*—*continued
Questions
Agriculture, Deregulation initiative 607
Development Board for Rural Wales 602
Electricity consumption, Wales 801w
European Council 341–2w
Police authorities, South Wales 385

Evans, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1255
Europe (18.03.94) 1298–300
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R and Money res (15.03.94) 853
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 463
Questions
Hong Kong, Annual reports 114w
Manufacturing industries 270
Radio frequencies 336–7w

Evans, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 752
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 968–70, 974, 979
Questions
Building industry 742–3
Energy policy, Wales 607
Pigmeat, Wales 522w
Regional challenge, EC grants and loans 204–5w
Theology, Educational institutions 541w

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Bail, Habitual offenders 390–1

Evidence
Disclosure of information 803w
Video recordings 502w

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 416
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 531
Legal aid, Advice & assistance (Scotland) regulations (16.03.94) 929, 933–4
Questions
Business questions 1022
Confederation of British Industry 636w
EC internal trade, Scotland 61w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 55w
Osteoporosis, Screening 126w
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Contracts for services 169–70w

Excise duties
Tax evasion 457–8w

Exhaust emission controls
573w

Exhibitions
Upper Waiting Hall 845w

Explosives
Beauforts Dyke 520w

Export controls
Mines 246w, 880w
Visual arts 12

Export credit guarantees
275
Arms trade 251–2w

Export of live animals
Animal welfare 607w
Cattle 493w
Prosecutions 606–7w
Spain 66w
Switzerland 493w

Exports
Broadcasting programmes 53w
Buses 748w
Film 51w, 481w
Hazardous wastes 40–1w, 875–6
Malaysia 274
Power industry 248–9w
Sheep 66w
South East Asia 274
Steel leghold traps 267

Exservicemen
(17.03.94) 1032–5
Ministers 25w

External financing limits
British Shipbuilders 797w
NHS trusts 560w

Extra contractual referrals
167w, 567–8w, 727w
Codes of practice 167w

Extractive industries
Departmental responsibilities 49w

Extradition
Italy 670w
Republic of Ireland 1002

F15 aircraft
Noise 420w

Faber, Mr David
Questions
Infant foods, EC law 603w
Tesco, Government grants 523–4w

Fabricant, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 421
Calling of Members, Points of order (07.03.94) 22
Homosexuality, Prosecutions (14.03.94) 721, 723, 724
Insolvency, Contracts of employment (14.03.94) 624
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 301
Questions
Broadcasting controls, Sinn Fein 12
Foreign investment in UK, Japan 282
Magistrates, Age 617–8
Manufacturing industries, Wales 610
Profit sharing 571w
Satellite communications, Wales 521w
Science and technology policy, Megalab UK 19–20
Student numbers, Northern Ireland 841–2w

Factories
English Industrial Estates Corporation 332w

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Debates etc.
Homosexuality, Prosecutions (14.03.94) 719

Falkland Islands
Mines 96w

Family credit
218w
Lewisham 135w
Lone parents 628w
Take-up 879w

Family doctors
833w
Pay 158w, 285–6w
Wales 285–6w
Working conditions 565w

Family health services authorities
Wales 697w

"Family Law"
97w
Matrimonial property 97w

Family planning
China 483–5w
Tibet 484–5w

Farm business survey
904w

Farm incomes
813–4w
Marginal land 390–1w, 608–10w

Farmers
Citizen's Charter 66w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Questions
Iron and steel industry 277–8
Leeds Development Corporation, Employment opportunities 108–9w, 182–3w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 406
Questions
Local authorities, Energy Analysis 879

Federation of Street Traders' Union (London Local Authorities Act 1990) (Amendment) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R order read (10.03.94) 381, (17.03.94) 995

Fenchurch Street Station
Consolidated fund debates (17.03.94) 1216–24

Fenner, Dame Peggy
Questions
Council of Europe, UK delegations 647w
Measurement, EC law 799w

FEOGA
see European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund

Ferranti
Company liquidations 198w

Ferries
Antrim 1002–3

Festivals and special occasions
D-Day landings 12–3, 133, 199w, 311w, 656–7w
Road closures (10.03.94) 507–12, (11.03.94) 591

Fewston Transport
Motor vehicle safety 4–5w

Field, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 645–9
Sites of special scientific interest, Solent (16.03.94) 990–3, 996
Questions
Shalfleet bridge, Listed buildings 213w
Soil erosion, Floods 197w

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 344–5, 350
Questions
Church Commissioners, Investment 672w
Clergy, Resignations 541–2w
Health services, Travelling people 161w
Long stay patients, Hospital closures 157w
Northern Ireland government 24w, 151w, 844w

Film
Exports 51w, 481w

Film industry
9, 52w
Finance 9

Finance Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
Ways & means res (16.03.94) 888–9
Questions
435w

Financial Information Project Systems
West Midlands Regional Health Authority 302w, 534w

Financial institutions
Greater London 241w, 810–1w
Manpower 241w, 810–1w
Yorkshire and Humberside 806–7w

Financial targets
NHS trusts 157w, 163–4w, 560–2w

Fine defaulters
Northern Ireland 839w
Prison sentences 172w, 226–8w, 670w, 892w
Television licences 230–1w

Fines
Cannabis 170w

Fire prevention
Legislation 212w

Fire regulations
Clubs 169w

Fire services
Local government finance 352–3w
Merseyside 352w
Wales 353w, 363w

Firearms
391–2
Homicide 412–3w

Fires
Channel tunnel 122–3w, 434w
Death 180–2w

Fish
Minimum prices 495w
Northern Ireland 348w
Poaching 348w

Fish conservation
817w
Lough Neagh 496–7w

Fish farming
Northern Ireland 348–9w, 435–6w
Pesticides 64w
Waste disposal 348–9w

Fishburn, Mr Dudley
Questions
Industrial production 275–6

Fisher, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Redundant Churches Fund Order 1994 (16.03.94) 892–5
Questions
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Arts Council grants 8–9
Construction, Government grants 101–6w

Fisheries
Biodiversity 384–5w
Denmark 280–1w
EC action 279–80w
France 281w, 814w
North East region 903w
Northern Ireland 436w
Norway 492–3w
Scotland 662–3w

Fishery decommissioning scheme
817w

Fishery protection
Scotland 658w

Fishing catches
Lough Neagh 497w
Norway 491–2w

Fishing vessels
Scotland 662–3w
Submarines 202w, 398–9w

FL Steelcraft
Government grants 695w

Flags
Planning permission 505w

Flats over shops initiative
43–4w, 294w

Fleet Air Arm Museum
Public appointments 851–2w

Flood defence committees
Conflict of interests 197w
Public appointments 64–5w, 195–6w

Floods
387w
Soil erosion 197w

Flynn, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 418
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 525–6
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 789–90
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 949, 953, 958–9, 972–3
Oral question time intervention (07.03.94) 20
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 159–62, 192–5, 238–40
Questions
Air pollution, Asthma 829w
Air pollution, Health hazards 800w, 828–9w
Air pollution, Hospital admissions 800w
Air pollution, Road traffic 787–8w
Air pollution control 787w
Arms trade 170w
British Gas, Wales 602
Cannabis, Fines 170w
Church Commissioners, Finance 540w
Civil servants, Wales 521–2w
Departmental responsibilities, Cornwall 465w
Drug abuse, Young people 171w
Drug seizures 600w
Drugs and crime, Police informers 503w
Employment, Statistics 735–6
English Tourist Board 6
Languages education, Cornwall 528w
M4, Road traffic control 525w
Passive smoking, Asthma 886w
Science and technology research, Inventions 14
"Trends in Cost Effectiveness of Enforcement Activity in Illicit Heroin Market 1979–1990" 502–3w
Welsh language 35w

Foleshill gas works
City grants 462w

Food
Consumer expenditure 605–6w

Food aid
Kenya 481w

Food consumption
Eggs 902–4w

Food hygiene
85w
Deregulation initiative 273–4

Food imports
Blackcurrants 64w, 388w
EC countries 815w

Food poisoning
728w

Food shops
Deregulation initiative 272–3

Food stocks
606w

Food supply
Sudan 585w

Football Grounds (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994
Debates etc.
(16.03.94) 905–26

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Accounting 23–4w
Alcoholic drinks 340w
Civil service manpower 804–6w
Computers in government departments 448w

Foreign and Commonwealth Office—continued
Immunity certificates 113w, 701w
Office furniture 340w
Official hospitality 340w
Philippines 452w
Telephone services 244w
Women's employment 804–6w

Foreign investment in UK
Japan 250w, 278–9, 281–2
Manufacturing industries 246w
Northern Ireland 612w, 841w, 1007
Regional development agencies 798w
Wales 34w, 269–70, 605–6, 612

Foreign relations
Cuba 804w
Indonesia 803–4w
Turkey 21w

Foreign trade
Japan 743w

Forensic Science Service
Finance 671w

Forestry
55w
Environment protection 547w

Forestry Commission
376w
Land acquisition 55w

Forestry Review Group
633w, 1013

Forests
Scotland 733w

Former members
Public appointments 367w

Forsyth, Mr Michael, Minister of State for Employment
Questions
Channel tunnel, Fires 122–3w, 434w
Channel tunnel, Industrial accidents 241–2w
Civil service agencies, Dept of Employment 514w
Civil service manpower, Employment Service Agency 811–2w
Coal mining, Industrial accidents 514w
Community action 185–6w
Conditions of employment, EC law 730
Confederation of British Industry 636w
EC grants and loans, Training 718w
EC labour policy 731
EC social policy 718w
Employment 737–8
Employment opportunities 730–1
Employment opportunities, EC countries 638w
Employment opportunities, Local government reform 638w
Employment policy 713w
Employment schemes, Expenditure 186–7w
Employment Service Agency 811w
Employment Service Agency, Equal opportunities 516w
Employment service local offices, Vacancies 514–5w
European works councils 733–4
Industrial accidents, Doncaster 713–4w
Industrial health and safety 636w
Industrial health and safety, Disclosure of information 63w
Job interview guarantee scheme 187–8w
Job review workshops 190–1w
Jobclubs 189–90w, 727–8
Jobclubs, Doncaster 515w
Jobclubs, North West region 727
Jobplan workshops 183–4w
Low incomes 810w
Low pay, Doncaster 637w
Maternity leave 735
Minimum wage, USA 191w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept of Employment 719w, 812w
North Norfolk action 636w
Official hospitality, Dept of Employment 713w

Forsyth, Mr Michael—continued
Open government, Dept of Employment 810w
Orders and regulations, Dept of Employment 812w
Outdoor education, Safety standards 644w, 719w
Overseas workers, Employment opportunities 644w
Parental leave 737
Parental leave, EC law 736–7
Part-time employment, Doncaster 637–8w
Part-time employment, Employment protection 431w
Paternity leave 735
Productivity, Pay incentives 433w
Public appointments, Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service 640w
Public appointments, Central Arbitration Committee 640w
Public appointments, Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal 641w
Public appointments, Committees for the Employment of People with Disabilities 716–7w
Public appointments, Construction Industry Training Board 642w
Public appointments, Dept of Employment 431w
Public appointments, Engineering Construction Industry Training Board 641–2w
Public appointments, Equal Opportunities Commission 643w
Public appointments, Health and Safety Executive 643w
Public appointments, National Advisory Council on Employment of People with Disabilities 642–3w
Public appointments, National Council for Vocational Qualifications 643–4w
Public appointments, Race Relations Employment Advisory Service 715w
Public appointments, Remploy 641w
Public appointments, Sheltered Employment Consultative Group 642w
Redundancy, EC law 431–2w
Restart programme 184–5w
Telephone services, Dept of Employment 240w
Trade union membership 644w
Trade unions 635w
Unemployment 714–5w, 738–9
Unemployment benefits, Doncaster 514–5w
Wages councils, Women's employment 640w
Working hours 636–7w
Working hours, EC law 730
Workstart 184w, 241w

Forth, Mr Eric, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education
Questions
Disabled workers, Dept for Education 884w
Outdoor education 625w
Primary education, School population 847w
Private education, Complaints 626w
Pupil exclusions 421–2w
Pupil exclusions, Drug abuse 421w
Pupil exclusions, Greater London 623w
Pupil exclusions, Manchester 703w
Rutherford, Andrew, Public appointments 133w
School buildings, School population 847–9w
School discipline 532w
School meals, Nutrition and health 703w
School population 529w
School transport 26w
School transport, Road safety 25w
Schools, Amyl nitrite 883w
Science education 619–20w
Secondary education, Capital investment 882w

Forth, Mr Eric—continued
Sex education 236w
Special education 430–2w
Special education, Codes of practice 26–8w
Special education, Doncaster 627w
Teachers, Convictions 618w
Teachers, Disciplinary proceedings 624–5w
Telephone services, Dept for Education 237w

Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 498

Foster, Mr Don
Questions
Further education colleges, Building repairs 530w
Mallinson, Bill, Inquiries 128w
Prison education services, Local government expenditure 232–3w
School crossing patrols, Local government expenditure 273w
School transport 26w, 119w
Vocational guidance 297w

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (17.03.94) 1009
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 295–6
Questions
Armed forces deployment, USA 139–40
Building industry, Northern Ireland 842w
Business questions 1026
Citizen's Charter 78w
Deregulation initiative, Food hygiene 273–4
MFV Copia, Shipping accidents 656w, 659w, 692w
National lottery 50w
Scottish Ambulance Service 664–5w
Scottish Ambulance Service, Expenditure 664w

Foundation for Business Responsibilities
174w

Fox, Liam,
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 418
Questions
EC enlargement 742

Foyer hostel scheme
732–3

France
Car industry 704w
Fisheries 281w, 814w

Franchising
Post offices 333–5w

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 635–8
Questions
Crown Prosecution Service, Committal proceedings 803w
Evidence, Disclosure of information 803w

Fraud
Common agricultural policy 488–9w
Convictions 229w
Health service staff 533w
NHS 438w
Prosecutions 206w
Trials 208w

Free movement of people
European economic area 362w

Freedom of expression
Doctors 567w

Freeman, Rt Hon Roger, Minister of State for Transport
Debates etc.
Fenchurch Street Station (17.03.94) 1220–4
Questions
British Rail, Government grants 116–7w
British Rail, Pension funds 512w
British Rail, Privatisation 121w, 507w, 794w
British Rail, Public service obligation grant 508w
Central line, Railway closures 269w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 8w, 405w
Diesel fuel, Hydrocarbon oil duties 272w
European Passenger Services, Channel tunnel 121w
Euston Station, Railway timetables 651w
Freight facilities grant 653w
Freight transport 689–90w
Greater Manchester Buses, Buy outs 864w
International transport, Republic of Ireland 315–6w
Ministerial speeches, Channel tunnel 865w
Network SouthEast, Railway stations 508w
Railtrack 119–20w
Railtrack, Capital 270–1w
Railtrack, Fees and charges 270w
Railtrack, Finance 270w
Railtrack, Legal profession 270w
Railway closures 5–6w
Railway fares, Doncaster 864–5w
Railway fares, Penalty fares 272w
Railway freight transport, Brakes 510w
Railway stations, Closures 863w
Railway stations, Greater London 268–9w
Railway transport, Telecommunications technology 407w
Railway travel, Government grants to local authorities 9–10w
Railway workers, Drug abuse 408–9w
Railway workers, Pensions 317–8w
Transport police 794w

Freight facilities grant
653w

Freight transport
689–90w

French, Mr Douglas
Questions
Air safety, Smoke hoods 507w
Cellular phones, Theft 179–80w
Loans, Interest rates 573w
Missing persons 589–90w
Police, Gloucestershire 355w
Road traffic offences, Cycling 178–80w

Freshwater fishing
Scotland 734w

Fry, Sir Peter
Questions
Drug crimes 393

Funding Agency for Schools
Operating costs 133w

Funeral payments
Social fund 218w

Funerals
Prison staff 15w
Prisoners 14w

Further education colleges
Building repairs 530w
College governors 625w

Further education teachers
Contracts of employment 25–6w

Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 439, 448, 453, 490–1
Questions
Blood transfusion services, Scotland 548–52w

Fyfe, Mrs Maria—continued
Community nurses, Contracts for services 377–8w
Cornton Vale Prison, Prisoners' transfers 267w
Dangerous drugs, Scotland 735–6w
Glasgow Development Agency 736w
Hospitals 303w
Hospitals, Scotland 376w
NHS, Privatisation 378w
Scottish health boards, Public appointments 267w

Galbraith, Mr Sam
Debates etc.
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 918–20
Questions
Health Care International 734w

Gale, Mr Roger
Questions
Drugs 162–3w
Horses, Veterinary drugs 491w
Housing, Change of use 459–60w

Gallie, Mr Phil
Debates etc.
Legal aid, Advice & assistance (Scotland) regulations (16.03.94) 930, 932
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 910, 915–7, 921
Questions
Employment 736
Sudan, Armed conflict 340–1w

Gaming machines
Betting shops 358w
Tax yields 324w

Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Debates etc.
Select committees, Points of order (08.03.94) 248

Garnier, Mr Edward
Questions
Planning permission, Supermarkets 865

Garrett, Mr John
Debates etc.
Select committees, Points of order (08.03.94) 151
Questions
Contracts for services, Audit 403–4w
Contracts for services, Government departments 404w
Inland Revenue, Information technology 323–4w
Wymondham bypass, Construction costs 653–4w

Gas consumption
Dept of Trade and Industry 453–4w

Gas meters
Gas supply industry 267–8

Gas safety
275
Domestic gas appliances (07.03.94) 123–30

Gas supply industry
268
Gas meters 267–8

Gateshead
A1 510–1w

GATT
704w, 818–9w
Seeds 585w
World Trade Organisation 741w

GCE A Level
532w

Gender selection
890w

General Certificate of Secondary Education
Merseyside 849w
Mid Glamorgan 802w
Science education 618w

Genetic engineering
79–80w

Genetics
Data banks 764–5w
Screening 85w

George, Mr Bruce
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 408–9

Geriatric patients
Scottish health boards 267–8w

Germany
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 818w
Industry 521w

Gerrard, Mr Neil
Debates etc.
Gas safety, Domestic gas appliances (07.03.94) 125–6
Local government, Greater London (17.03.94) 1146–50, 1159
Questions
Political refugees, Immigrant detainees 501w
Squatting 392

Gill, Mr Christopher
Questions
"Best Sex Guide" 438w
UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UK contributions 313w

Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 414
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 430, 447, 450–6, 487
Questions
Business questions 1022
Export credit guarantees 275
Maternity leave 735
Nuclear power 874
Working hours 636–7w

Glamorgan
Railway travel 610–1

Glan Clwyd District General Hospital NHS Trust
608

Glasgow Development Agency
736w

Gloucestershire
Grammar schools 236w, 532w
Police 355w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Questions
Armed forces deployment, USA 140
Armed forces discharges, Pregnant women 519w
Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts 686w
Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, Sex discrimination 705–6w
Cornton Vale Prison, Prisoners' transfers 419w
EC grants and loans, Northern Ireland 1010
Museums and galleries, Scotland 11
Parole Board for Scotland 578w
Prison visiting committees, Scotland 262–6w
Prisoners & Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 61w

Godman, Dr Norman A—continued
Scottish Office, Consultants 659–60w
Submarines, Fishing vessels 398–9w

Golding, Mrs Llin
Questions
Drug abuse, Medical rehabilitation 304–5w
Evidence, Video recordings 502w
Infant foods 279w
Pupil exclusions 421–2w
School crossing patrols 120w
School transport 119w
Secure accommodation 84w

Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Questions
Aid financed trade 312–3w, 449w
Alcoholic drinks, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 340w
Belize, Overseas aid 700w
British dependent territories, Police 113–4w
China 449w
Civil service manpower, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 804–6w
Common agricultural policy 112w
Computers in government departments, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 448w
Cuba, Foreign relations 804w
East Timor 473–4w
East Timor, Casualties 804w
East Timor, Human rights 340w
East Timor, Indonesia 20w
East Timor, Military attaches 340w
East Timor, UN resolutions 803w
EC aid 234–5w
Embassies, Expenditure 112–3w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Accounting 23–4w
Hong Kong, Annual reports 114w
Hong Kong, British residents abroad 114w
Immunity certificates, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 113w, 701w
Indonesia, Arms trade 474w
Indonesia, Foreign relations 803–4w
Indonesia, Human rights 803–4w, 881w
Indonesia, Overseas aid 449w
Malaysia, Aid financed trade 114w, 449w
Office furniture, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 340w
Official hospitality, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 340w
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Disclosure of information 881–2w
Overseas aid 234w
Overseas aid, Charities 235w
Overseas aid, Cost effectiveness 314w
Overseas Development Administration, Contracts 235w
Pergau dam, Overseas aid 313w
Philippines, Overseas Development Administration 450w
South Korea, Military exercises 701w
Subsidiarity 584–5w
Telephone services, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 244w
UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UK contributions 313w
Zimbabwe, Public service pensions 235w

Goods vehicles
Road freight transport 687w
Road safety 6w

Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 407
Business questions (10.03.94) 420–1

Gordon, Ms Mildred
Debates etc.
London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL), 2R (14.03.94) 692–5, 698, 703, 711–2

Gordon, Ms Mildred—continued
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 440–3
Questions
Maintenance, Children 134–5w, 214–6w
Maintenance, Social security benefits reductions 214w

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Debates etc.
Council house sales, Points of order (15.03.94) 748
House of Commons divisions, Points of order (09.03.94) 335
Questions
Out of school childcare grant scheme 734–5
Overseas aid 147–8

Gorst, Mr John
Debates etc.
Edgware Hospital, Hospital closures (18.03.94) 1302–6
Questions
RAF Hendon, Property transfer 656w

Government
521w

Government assistance to industry
Wales 635w

Government buildings
Dept for Education 532w
Dept of Social Security 479w
Dept of the Environment 416–7w, 868w
Dept of Trade and Industry 466w
Dept of Transport 649w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 493–4w
Repairs and maintenance 38–40w, 680w
Treasury 455w

Government contracts
295w

Government departments
Contracts for services 18, 404w
Energy conservation 416w
Ministers 465w
Wales 634w

Government grants to local authorities
111–2w
City of Westminster 374w
Community care 308w
Crime prevention 47–8w
Ethnic minorities 763–4w
Housing improvement 125w
Northumberland 106–7w
Railway travel 9–10w
Urban programme 45–7w
Wandsworth 374w

Government grants to voluntary organisations
Handicapped 89w
National Alliance of Women's Organisations 172w, 360w, 500w
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation 89w

Government laboratories
14

Government securities
456w
Economic policy 822–4w

Government shareholding
British Aerospace 795w

GP fundholders
834w
Clwyd 152w
Expenditure 537w
Finance 726w
Greater London 346w
Lewisham 302–3w
Prescription drugs 834w
Private health services 726–7w

Grammar schools
Gloucestershire 236w, 532w

Grand National
413w

Grant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
Insolvency, Contracts of employment (14.03.94) 621
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 344
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 296
Questions
Business questions 1018–9
Museums and galleries, Duxford 396–7
Police, Local government functions 388

Grant, Mr Bernie
Questions
Deportation, Prisoners 595–6w

Grant maintained schools
424–8w, 528w
Advertising 623w
Government grants 28–31w
Greater London 620–4w
Insurance 23[illegible]–8w, 428w, 430w
Motor vehicle safety 25w
St Patrick's School Birkby 530w
School admission 427–8w
Sunderland 238w
Wandsworth 238w

Grant Maintained Schools Centre
Government grants 428–30w

Grant Maintained Schools Mutual
237w

Grants for education support and training
32w

Gravesham
Railway network (17.03.94) 1056–9

Greater London
Accident and emergency departments 440w
Bus lanes 652–3w
Community health services 558w
Consolidated fund debates (17.03.94) 1146–64
Crime 387, 389–90
Departmental responsibilities 682–3w
District health authorities 720–2w
Drug crimes 12w
Financial institutions 241w, 810–1w
GP fundholders 346w
Grant maintained schools 620–4w
Health services 88w
Hospital beds 836w
Local government (17.03.94) 1146–64
Maternity hospitals 533–4w
Maternity services 534w
Osteoporosis 725–6w
Patients 729w
Playing fields 897w
Primary health care 534w
Pupil exclusions 623w
Railway stations 268–9w
Roads (17.03.94) 1060–3
Schools 620–4w
Social security benefits 630w
Tax burden 98w
Terrorism 390
Travel cards 690w
Water supply disconnections 581w

Greater Manchester
Local government revenue 374–5w
Police custody 354w
Standard spending assessments 374w

Greater Manchester Buses
Buy outs 864w

"Green Forces"
854w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Questions
Animal welfare, Prosecutions 177–8w
Armed forces, Ceremonies 197–8w
Clergy, Pay 540w
Concessionary television licences 5
Criminal injuries compensation 357w
Debt collection, County courts 498w
Genetic engineering 79–80w
Mental hospitals, Hospital beds 84w
Official engagements 100w, 319w, 813w
Physical education 52w
Playing fields, Northern Ireland 844w
Police powers 389
Postal deliveries 337w
Public sector borrowing 744
Taxation, Ealing 869w
Trade union membership 644w

Greenway, Mr John
Questions
Employment 729

Griffiths, Michael
Contracts 282–3w

Griffiths, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Handicapped, Public petitions (11.03.94) 521
Questions
Council tax, Billing 42–3w
Pets, Animal welfare 14w

Griffiths, Mr Win
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 761, 774, 777, 796, 798–9, 811, 822, 827–9
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 945, 950, 968, 970–2
Questions
Iron and steel industry, European Coal and Steel Community 277
Local government reform, Bridgend 608–9
Outdoor education, Safety standards 719w
Water pollution 677w

Grocott, Mr Bruce
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 415
Members' conduct, Points of order (08.03.94) 152
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 303
Select committees, Points of order (09.03.94) 287
Questions
Back to basics policy 464w, 584w
European works councils 733–4

Groundwork trusts
Expenditure 370–1w

Group 4 Securitas
Prisoners' transport 359–60w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn,
Secretary of State for the Environment
Questions
Air pollution 880
Air pollution monitoring, Urban areas 880
Civil service manpower, Dept of the Environment 793w
Council house waiting lists 871–2
Day care of children, Dept of the Environment 112w
Dept of the Environment, Expenditure 110–1w
Hazardous wastes, Exports 875–6
Homelessness 674w
Housing Corporation, Public appointments 111w
Land registration, Local government functions 417–8w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn—continued
Local government finance 111w
Local government pensions 786w
Office furniture, Dept of the Environment 785w
Office of Water Services, Water charges 878–9
Official visits, Dept of the Environment 368w
Shopping centres, Planning permission 683w
Sites of special scientific interest 676w
"This Common Inheritance White Paper" 875
Water charges 879
Water pollution, Beaches 675w

Gunnell, Mr John
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 415
Insolvency, Contracts of employment (14.03.94) 623–4
Questions
Business questions 1027
Foreign investment in UK, Japan 281
Life imprisonment 777w
Life imprisonment, Parole 358w
"Permanent Secretarys Handbook" 256w, 402w
Planning permission, Opencast mining 295w
Tourist industry 2
Wharfedale Hospital 304w

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust
397

Guy's Hospital
889w
Hospital closures 533w

Gwent
Retail trade 523–4w

Gypsies
Essex County Council 110w

Habitual offenders
Bail 229w, 390–1
Plymouth 229w
Police cautions 356w

Hague, Mr William, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept for Social Security
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Dept of Social Security 707w
Civil service agencies, Dept of Social Security 411w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Social Security 783w
Computers in government departments, Dept of Social Security 781–2w
Dept of Social Security, Performance related pay 480w
Government buildings, Dept of Social Security 479w
Immunity certificates, Dept of Social Security 632w
Industrial injuries, Doncaster 629w
Information Technology Services Agency 411w, 709w
Maintenance, Children 479w
Maternity benefits, EC law 708w
Members' correspondence, Dept of Social Security 783w
Ministers' private offices, Dept of Social Security 628w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept of Social Security 709–10w
Official hospitality, Dept of Social Security 707w
Open government, Dept of Social Security 879w
Parliamentary questions, Dept of Social Security 879–80w
Pensioners, Energy prices 135–6w
Personal pensions 629–30w, 630w
Retirement pensions 137–40w
Retirement pensions, Elderly 320–1w
Retirement pensions, Energy prices 321–2w

Hague, Mr William—continued
Retirement pensions, Out-patients 711–2w
State earnings related pension scheme 409w
Telephone services, Dept of Social Security 409–10w
Unemployment benefits, Voluntary work 631w
War pensions 631w
War pensions, Energy prices 322w
War widows' pensions 255w

Hain, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 419–20
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 796, 815–9
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 949, 954
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 332w
Coal mining, Industrial accidents 514w
Royal Mail, VAT exemptions 212w
Small businesses, Loans 266
Water pollution, Coal mine closures 867–8

Haiti
477w

Hall, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (17.03.94) 1108
Questions
Local government reform 369–70w
Maintenance, Children 37–8w, 216–7w
Maintenance, Departmental forms 37w

Hamilton, Mr Neil, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs
Questions
Companies political contributions 247w, 282–3
Company accounts, Publicity 210–1w
Company investigations 272
Company liquidations, Administrative receivers 211–2w
Company registration 212w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Deregulation initiative 747w
Deregulation initiative 272
Deregulation initiative, Companies political contributions 271–2
Deregulation initiative, Environment protection 248w
Deregulation initiative, Food hygiene 273–4
Deregulation initiative, Food shops 272–3
Development agencies, North West region 467w
Distillers Group, Takeovers 747w
Employment, EC law 273
Fire prevention, Legislation 212w
Fraud, Prosecutions 206w
Fraud, Trials 208w
Hydrocarbon oil duties 453w
Hypermarkets 273
Insolvency 208–10w, 249–50w
Insolvency, Disqualifications 209w
Insolvency, Professional misconduct 207–8w
Insolvency Service, Information technology 207w
Insolvency Service, Privatisation 206–7w
Insurance, Road haulage industry 745w
Life insurance 452–3w
Lloyd's of London 469–70w
Markets, Deregulation initiative 250w
Monopolies, Ice cream 574w
Nadir, Asil, Bankruptcy 741w
Newspaper press, Retail trade 204w
Orders and regulations, Dept of Trade and Industry 799w
SL Homes 744–5w
Small businesses 247w

Hammersmith Hospital
83w
Charing Cross Hospital 83w

Hampstead
Listed buildings 3–4

Handicapped
Civil rights (11.03.94) 524–85
Discrimination 147, 322w
Energy prices 696w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 89w
Public petitions (11.03.94) 521
Wales 696w

Handicapped drivers
Parking 405–6w
Road tolls 654w

Handicapped students
Student grants 625–6w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy, Minister for the Armed Forces
Debates etc.
Parliamentary questions, Points of order (08.03.94) 151–2
Questions
Accounting officers, Ministry of Defence 401w
Air force, Armed forces pensions 92w
Air force, Armed forces training 89w
Air force, Defence expenditure 90w
Air force, Iraq 132
Air force, Repairs and maintenance 398w
Air force bases 93w
Air force bases, Yorkshire and Humberside 750–2w, 855–8w
Air force strength 90–2w
Air Training Corps, RAF Halton 517–8w
Alcoholic drinks, Ministry of Defence 516w
Ammunition, Waste disposal 858w
Armed forces, Blood sports 519w
Armed forces, Ceremonies 197–8w
Armed forces, Homosexuality 420w
Armed forces casualties, Armed forces training 749w
Armed forces civilians 520w
Armed forces deployment 202w, 520w, 657–8w
Armed forces deployment, Iraq 132
Armed forces deployment, Northern Ireland Military Reaction Force 656w
Armed forces deployment, USA 752–4w
Armed forces discharges, Homosexuality 420w
Armed forces discharges, Pregnant women 519w
Armed forces education allowances 397w
Armed forces housing 860w
Armed forces pensions 93w
Armed forces reserves 401w
Armed forces strength 199w
Armed forces women 198w
Armed forces women, Maternity leave 94w
Armoured fighting vehicles 394–6w
Army, Armed forces deployment 141
Army, Inquiries 203w
Army, Official hospitality 395–6w
Army, Redundancy 94–5w, 141–2
Ballistic missiles 199w
Beauforts Dyke, Explosives 520w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 200w, 420–1w, 859w
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Construction costs 392–4w
Chemical and biological warfare, Defence research 853–4w
Chemical weapons, Armed forces 852–3w
Civil service agencies, Ministry of Defence 749w
Day care of children, Ministry of Defence 96w
D-Day landings, Festivals and special occasions 199w, 656–7w
Defence equipment, Belize 400w
Defence expenditure 198w
Defence research establishments 202w
Desert storm syndrome 400–1w
Desert storm syndrome, Medical research 419w
Disabled workers, Ministry of Defence 880w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy—continued
Drug abuse, Armed forces 518w
F15 aircraft, Noise 420w
"Green Forces" 854w
HIV infection, Armed forces 518w
Immunity certificates, Ministry of Defence 93–4w, 399–400w
Low flying, Northern Ireland 197w
Low flying, Wales 858w
Menwith Hill 138
Menwith Hill, Ministers' domestic visits 752w
Menwith Hill, Official visits 137–8
MFV Copia, Shipping accidents 656w
Military aircraft 90–2w, 396–7w
Minesweepers 655w
Ministry of Defence, Crown immunity 854–5w
Ministry of Defence, EC grants and loans 753w
Ministry of Defence, Environment protection 852w
NATO 517w
Navy, Armed forces recruitment 202w
9 Squadron, Air force strength 420w
10 Squadron, Fees and charges 200w
Non-departmental public bodies, Ministry of Defence 753–4w
Nuclear non proliferation 143–4
Office furniture, Ministry of Defence 401w
Official hospitality, Ministry of Defence 516w
Peace keeping operations, Costs 200w
Public appointments, Fleet Air Arm Museum 851–2w
Public appointments, Meteorological committees 851w
Public appointments, Meteorological Research Sub-Committee 850w
Public appointments, Non-departmental public bodies 850w
Public appointments, Oil and Pipelines Agency 851w
Public appointments, RAF Museum 850w
Public appointments, Review Board for Government Contracts 850w
Public appointments, Royal Marines Museum 851w
Public appointments, Royal Naval Museum 880w
Public appointments, Royal Navy Submarine Museum 851w
Public appointments, Services Sound and Vision Corporation 850–1w
RAF Carlisle 94w
RAF Finningley 750w, 856w
RAF Finningley, Air traffic 749–50w
RAF Finningley, Aircraft 749–50w
RAF Finningley, Operating costs 750w
RAF Hendon, Property transfer 656w
RAF Innsworth, Building repairs 394w
RAF Machrihanish 855w
RAF Strike Command, Armed forces officers 655–6w
Rescue services, Republic of Ireland 94w
Rosyth Dockyard, Redundancy 201w
Submarines, Fishing vessels 202w, 398–9w
Telephone services, Ministry of Defence 518–9w
10 Squadron, fees and charges 200w
Territorial Army, Television advertising 397w
Tornado aircraft, Airmisses 398w
Wild boar, Catterick 396w
Yugoslavia, Armed forces deployment 517w, 860w

Hannam, Sir John
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 534–40

Hanson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 794–5, 851–3
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 952

Hanson, Mr David—continued
Questions
Fire services, Wales 363w
Hospital waiting lists, Wales 366w
Unemployment, Clwyd 603–4

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1242, 1270–9, 1286–7
Pastoral (Amendment) Measure 1994 (08.03.94) 250–2
Redundant Churches Fund Order 1994 (16.03.94) 895–8, 901
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Air force 134
Child Support Agency, Members' correspondence 708w
Council house waiting lists 871
Grant maintained schools 528w
Hedges and ditches 299w
Iron and steel industry 276–7
NHS and private practice, Hospital waiting lists 566w
Secondary education, Cost per pupil 625w

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
Day care of children 890–1w
Day care of children, Dept for Education 31–2w, 529w
Day care of children, Dept of Employment 191w
Day care of children, Dept of Health 89w, 537–8w
Day care of children, Dept of National Heritage 312w
Day care of children, Dept of Social Security 38w
Day care of children, Dept of the Environment 112w, 462w
Day care of children, Dept of Trade and Industry 251w
Day care of children, Home Office 17w
Day care of children, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 67w, 494–5w
Day care of children, Ministry of Defence 96w
Day care of children, Northern Ireland Dept of Health and Social Services 867w
Day care of children, OECD countries 447w
Day care of children, Scottish Office 61w, 737w
Day care of children, Treasury 223–4w
Day care of children, Welsh Office 36w, 526–7w
VAT, Energy prices 572w

Harmonisation of legislation
Metrication 905w

Harmonisation of standards
Plugs and sockets 332w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc.
European standing committees, Points of order (16.03.94) 882
Questions
Habitual offenders, Police cautions 356w
Water charges 879

Hartley Hospital
Property transfer (17.03.94) 1225–32

Harvey, Mr Nick
Questions
British Rail, Government grants 116–7w
Buses, Safety belts 5w
Bypasses 506–7w
Minibuses, Driving licences 6–7w
Railway closures 5–6w
Road accidents, Children 7–8w
Road construction 8w
School transport, Road safety 25w
Transport 117–8w
Transport infrastructure, Capital investment 318w
Transport infrastructure, EC grants and loans 117w

Harvey, Mr Nick—continued
Transport infrastructure, Private sector 505–6w

Hawkins, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Decorations for Gallantry (Display) Bill, 1R (09.03.94) 288–91
Questions
Bail, Habitual offenders 390
European fighter aircraft, Defence procurement 144
Festivals and special occasions, D-day landings 13
Trade unions 635w

Hawksley, Mr Warren
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 638
Questions
West Midlands Police, Manpower 670w

Hazardous wastes
Departmental circulars 870–1w
Expenditure 680w
Exports 40–1w, 875–6
Imports 43w
Inquiries 40–1w

Heald, Mr Oliver
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 113–4
Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 33
Business questions (10.03.94) 419
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 969
London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL), 2R (14.03.94) 705, 710
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 302–3
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 428, 453
Questions
Building industry, Sponsorship 865
Business questions 1024
Custodial treatment 356w
Employment, Clwyd 604
Milk, Production quotas 242w
Terrorism, Greater London 390

Health
158w

Health aid
Palestinians 482–3w
Primary health care 483w

Health & Safety at Work Etc Act 1974
Questions
63w

Health and Safety Executive
Open government 810w
Public appointments 643w

Health authorities
Disabled workers 827w
Managers 162w, 283w
Mergers 566w
Performance standards 443w
Wales 283w

Health Care International
734w

Health education
834w

Health Education Authority
445w

Health hazards
Air pollution 800w, 828–9w
Dogs 536w

Health Information Service
166w

Health insurance
446w
Tax allowances 99w

Health Management Trust
85–7w

Health service staff
Employment protection 891–2w
Fraud 533w
National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery 159w
Pembrokeshire Health Authority 155w
Pembrokeshire NHS Trust 155w
Redundancy pay 438w
Sick leave 84w
Wales 799–800w, 907w
Women's employment 442–3w

Health services
Dyfed 153w
Elderly 267–8w
Greater London 88w
Hotels 836w
Inspections 558w
Pembrokeshire 156w
Research 441–2w
Travelling people 161w

Health Services Management Unit
Finance 160w

Health visitors
445w
Manpower 444–5w
Training 444w, 719–20w

Health warnings
Heart pacemakers 81–2w

Heart diseases
Wales 696w

Heart pacemakers
83w
Death 82w
Health warnings 81–2w

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Questions
CFE Treaty, Army strength 243w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 245w
EC integration 474w
European Council 341–2w
Falkland Islands, Mines 96w
Intergovernment conference 1996 448w
Turkey, Foreign relations 21w
Turkey, Human rights 21w
Turkey, Kurds 21w
Western Honduras, Rio Tinto Zinc 113w

Heathrow Airport
Bombings 394, 398

Heating
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 75w

Hedgerows Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R order read (18.03.94) 1301

Hedges and ditches
299w

Help us to help you campaign
446w

Henderson, Mr Doug
Questions
Local government reform 876–7

Hendron, Dr Joe
Questions
Eastern Health and Social Services Board, Equal opportunities 259w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Equal opportunities 255–8w
Surgery, Hospital waiting lists 74–5w

Hendry, Mr Charles
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, Points of order (16.03.94) 883–4
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 641, 653–9
Questions
Companies political contributions 282–3
Contracts for services, Government departments 404w

Hendry, Mr Charles—continued
Dogs 878
Foyer hostel scheme 732–3
Homicide 177w
Regional development agencies, Government grants 798w
Squatting 392–3

Heppell, Mr John
Debates etc.
Gas safety, Domestic gas appliances (07.03.94) 123–5

Hereford and Worcester Training and Enterprise Council
737

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael, President of the Board of Trade
Debates etc.
Insolvency, Ministerial statements (14.03.94) 619–24
Insolvency (No 2) Bill, 1R (18.03.94) 1233
Questions
Aerospace industry 280
Car industry 278–9
Car industry, Takeovers 279, 281–2
Confederation of British Industry 246w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Legal opinion 211w
Design Council 470w
Economic growth 246w
Foreign investment in UK, Japan 278–9, 281–2
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 269–70
Immunity certificates, Dept of Trade and Industry 204w, 471w
Independent, Takeovers 906–7w
Industrial investment 265–6
Industrial production 275–7, 279–80
Industrial production, South Yorkshire 276
Iron and steel industry 276–7
Manufacturing industries 268–70
Manufacturing industries, Foreign investment in UK 246w
National Engineering Laboratory, Redundancy 799w
Radio frequencies 336–7w
Regional challenge, EC grants and loans 204–5w
Shipbuilding 270

Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Questions
A27, Planning blight 5w

Higher civil servants
79w

Higher education admission
623–4w

Higher Education Funding Council for England
883w
Universities 133w

Higher education teachers
Nurses' training 847w

Highways Agency
863w

Hill, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Northern line (17.03.94) 1130–1

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Questions
Baby milks, Dental health 87w
Bed and breakfast accommodation, Local government expenditure 48w
Community care 306–7w
Community care, Government grants to local authorities 308w
Community care, Hospital discharges 165–6w
County courts, Administrative delays 70–1w
Extra contractual referrals 727w
GP fundholders, Prescription drugs 834w
GP fundholders, Private health services 726–7w

Hinchliffe, Mr David—continued
Health services, Hotels 836w
Housing benefits, Tenants 38w
Incontinence, Medical treatments 164–5w
Limitation Act 1980 617
Magistrates, West Yorkshire 68–70w
Paternity leave 735
Private rented housing 47w
Social workers, Hospitals 165w
Wakefield Health Authority 566w

Historic buildings
Architectural conservation 611–2w

Historic Buildings Council for Wales
Annual reports 367w

HIV infection
Armed forces 518w

HM Inspectorate of Schools
Public appointments 379w
Scotland 378–9w

Hoey, Ms Kate
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 349
Questions
Dogs, Legislation 175w
Oval cricket ground, Duchy of Cornwall 822w
Playing fields, Greater London 897w
Playing fields, Lambeth 897w
Swimming, Curriculum 10
Unemployment, Lambeth 635w

Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Turkey, Kurds (17.03.94) 1169–72
Questions
Algeria 478w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 473w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Prisoners 449w
Chemical Weapons Convention 701w
Council of Europe, Armenia 243w
Council of Europe, Azerbaijan 244w
Eritrea, Terrorism 472–3w
GATT, Seeds 585w
Intelligence Services Bill (HL) 1993/94 701w
Iraq, Sanctions 21w, 244w
Israel, Occupied territories 244w, 584w, 881w
Kosovo, Human rights 23w
Kurds, Armed conflict 882w
Kurds, Iran 472w
Kurds, Iraq 21–2w, 472w
Kurds, Syrian Arab Republic 472w
Libyan Arab Republic, Sanctions 22w
Lome Convention 585w
Macedonia 474w
Milk, Production quotas 242w
Mines, Conferences 20w
Mines, Export controls 880w
North Korea, Nuclear reactors 242w
Occupied territories, Death 472w
Russia, Democracy 478w
Serbia, Albania 22–3w
Sudan, Armed conflict 340–1w, 472w
Sudan, Human rights 243w
Sudan, Peace negotiations 243w, 473w
Sudan, Sanctions 242w
UN Commission on Human Rights 244w
WENA Hotels, Egypt 19–20w
World Summit for Social Development 477w
World Trade Organisation, Sovereignty 880–1w
Yugoslavia, Defence expenditure 478w
Yugoslavia, Overseas aid 517w

Holidays abroad
Children in care 308w

Home energy efficiency scheme
375w
Elderly 791–2w

Home Office
Advertising 588w
Alcoholic drinks 499w
Civil service agencies 671w
Civil service manpower 777–80w
Computers in government departments 671w
Day care of children 17w
Immunity certificates 598w
Non-departmental public bodies 669w
Office furniture 499w
Official hospitality 500w
Open government 892w
Orders and regulations 669w
Telephone services 499–500w
Women's employment 777–80w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 402
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 907
Select committees, Points of order (09.03.94) 286
Questions
Local government reform, Scottish councils 268w
Lynx helicopters, Defence procurement 398w
Northern Ireland government 1007–8
Water pollution, Beaches 675w

Homelessness
292–4w, 674w
Council housing 45w
Standard spending assessments 291–3w, 582w

Homicide
177w
Bridgewater, Carl 358w
Doncaster (09.03.94) 372–80
Firearms 412–3w
Life imprisonment 384
Mentally ill (09.03.94) 372–80
Murrell, Hilda 356–7w
Pakistan 702w
Road accidents 893–4w
West, Frederick 331–2w
Yorkshire and Humberside 596w

Homosexuality
Armed forces 420w
Armed forces discharges 420w
Prosecutions (14.03.94) 719–26

Hong Kong
Annual reports 114w
British residents abroad 114w

Hoon, Mr Geoffrey
Questions
Coal mine closures, Employment rehabilitation 635–6w
Council tax, Rents 870
Income tax 326w
Married personal allowance 327w

Horam, Mr John
Questions
Mentally ill, Police training 84w

Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 406

Horse racing
Betting and gaming duties 414–5w

Horses
Veterinary drugs 491w

Horticulture
Imports 730w

Hospital admissions
167–8w
Air pollution 800w

Hospital beds
167w
Belfast 867–8w
Continuing care units 885w
Greater London 836w
Mental hospitals 84w
Mental patients 834w
Northern Ireland 867–8w
Political refugees 563w
Secure psychiatric units 447w, 888w

Hospital catering
NHS trusts 306w

Hospital closures
165w, 447w
Cottage hospitals 53w
Edgware Hospital (18.03.94) 1302–8
Guy's Hospital 533w
Long stay patients 157w
Meigle Cottage Hospital 53w, 380w
National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery 159w

Hospital consultants
836w
Accident and emergency departments 158w
Contracts of employment 343w
NHS and private practice 558w
Northern Ireland 839w
Pay 890w

Hospital discharges
Community care 165–6w
Scotland 62w

Hospital doctors
Disciplinary proceedings 342w

Hospital length of stay
887w
Maternity hospitals 533–4w

Hospital radio
(17.03.94) 1045–8

Hospital waiting lists
167w, 307w
Day surgery 165–6w
NHS and private practice 566w
Northern Ireland 74–5w
Surgery 74–5w
Wales 366w

Hospital wards
Mental patients 725w

Hospitals
303w
Buckinghamshire 345w
Fees and charges 376–7w
Scotland 376–7w
Social workers 165w
Wales 608

Hotels
Change of use 459–60w
Health services 836w
Social security recipients 741
Televisions 2

House of Commons broadcasting
Members' facilities 127w

House of Commons committees
(09.03.94) 371

House of Commons debates
Speaker's rulings and statements (10.03.94) 493

House of Commons divisions
513w
Speaker's rulings and statements (09.03.94) 335, 363

House of Commons standing committees
Speaker's rulings and statements (10.03.94) 392

House prices
41–2w

House renovation grants
North West region 48–50w

Housing
Change of use 459–60w
Northern Ireland 77–8w

Housing associations
Housing benefits 863–4
Rents 863–4
Teesside 864

Housing benefits
Council tenants 479w
Doncaster 136–8w, 707–8w
Housing associations 863–4
Private rented housing 218w
Scotland 136–8w
Social security abuse 879w
Tenants 38w, 136–8w

Housing construction
Rural areas 677w

Housing Corporation
Estimates days (14.03.94) 629–76, 713–4
Finance 863
Public appointments 111w

Housing finance
Wales 801w

Housing for Wales
Expenditure 151–2w

Housing improvement
Dampness 125w
Government grants to local authorities 125w

Housing (Right to Manage) Regulations 1994
Questions
417w, 452w

Howard, Rt Hon Michael, Secretary of State for the Home Department
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 292–306, 320, 325, 332–5
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Home Office 499w
Bail 386
Bail, Habitual offenders 390–1
Civil service agencies, Home Office 671w
Civil service manpower, Home Office 777–80w
Crime, City of London 388
Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme 224w
Day care of children, Home Office 17w
Drug crimes 283–4
Essex Police 383
Horse racing, Betting and gaming duties 414–5w
Immunity certificates, Home Office 598w
Intelligence services 896w
Magistrates, Public appointments 893w
Murrell, Hilda, Homicide 356–7w
Non-departmental public bodies, Home Office 669w
Office furniture, Home Office 499w
Official hospitality, Home Office 500w
Open government, Home Office 892w
Orders and regulations, Home Office 669w
Parole 16–7w
Police, Local government functions 388
Police accountability 388–9
Police authorities 385–6
Police authorities, South Wales 385
Police powers 389
Right of silence 352w
Royal residences, Security 169w
Telephone services, Home Office 499–500w
Terrorism, Legislation 357w
Young offenders, Basildon 383

Howarth, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 532, 550, 556
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 434
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 172–5, 200, 226–8, 231–2
Questions
Disclosure of information, Codes of practice 402w

Howarth, Mr Alan—continued
Handicapped, Discrimination 322w
Police accountability 388

Howarth, Mr George
Questions
Companies political contributions 283
Energy Saving Trust 867
Police custody, Merseyside 354w

Howell, Sir Ralph
Questions
Food, Consumer expenditure 605–6w
Food imports, EC countries 815w
North Norfolk action 636w
"Register of Members' Interests" 513w
Unemployment benefits, Expenditure 874w

Howells, Dr Kim
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 755, 808, 825–7
Oral question time intervention (14.03.94) 604
Questions
National income, Wales 522w
Water pollution 677w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 525
Questions
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Computers 19w

Huddersfield
Dental services 835w

Hughes, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Homicide, Doncaster (09.03.94) 375–6

Hughes, Mr Robert
Questions
Alcoholic drinks 383

Hughes, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 958
Questions
Hydrocarbon oil duties, Tax yields 569w
Motorways 652w
Motorways, Scotland 734w
Motorways, Wales 524w
Unemployment, Wales 522w, 605

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL), Points of order (14.03.94) 626
London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL), 2R (14.03.94) 677–87, 689, 698, 707–12
Northern line (17.03.94) 1132–4
Pastoral (Amendment) Measure 1994 (08.03.94) 255
Redundant Churches Fund Order 1994 (16.03.94) 898–9, 904
Questions
Air pollution control, Sulphur dioxide 871w
Air pollution monitoring 874–5
Clergy, Pay 540w
Energy policy, Wales 606–7
Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust 397
Hazardous wastes, Exports 40–1w
Nuclear power 797w
Patient's Charter 889w
Tipping of waste 41w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Privatisation 246w

Human rights
East Timor 340w
Indonesia 803–4w, 881w
Kosovo 23w
Punjab (17.03.94) 1058–60
Sudan 243w
Turkey 21w, 448w

Human Rights Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R order read (11.03.94) 590

Humberside Airport
650w
Airmisses 691w
Airport tax 221w, 651–2w

Hunger strikes
Immigrant detainees 504w

***Hunt, Rt Hon David**, Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 433–41
Questions
Sheltered employment 338–40w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 317–9
Questions
Northern Ireland government 1006
WENA Hotels, Egypt 19–20w
Zimbabwe, Deportation 471w

***Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas**, Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
EC Foreign Affairs Council 474–7w
Intelligence services 881w
Turkey, Human rights 448w
Turkey, Official visits 448w

Hutton, Mr John
Questions
Criminal Justice Act 1948, Prosecutions 669w
Landing platforms, Defence procurement 754w
Personal tax allowances 327w
RFA Sir Bedivere, Shipbuilding 754w
Shipbuilding 247w

Hydrocarbon oil duties
273w, 453w
Diesel fuel 272w
Tax yields 569w

Hydrographer of the Navy
Defence procurement 142

Hypermarkets
273

Hypnosis
Entertainment licensing 598–9w
Entertainments 567w

Ice cream
Monopolies 574w

Identity cards
EC countries 170w

Illegal immigrants
231w

Illsley, Mr Eric
Questions
Crime prevention, Closed circuit television 17w
Crime prevention, Government grants to local authorities 47–8w

Immigrant detainees
Campsfield House Detention Centre 781w, 894–5w
Hunger strikes 504w
Medical treatments 502w
Political refugees 501w, 591–2w
Self-mutilation 767w

Immigrants
Algeria 503w
Yugoslavia 503w

Immigration controls
Ministerial powers 587–8w
Political refugees 500w

Immigration officers
Entry clearances 699–700w

Immunity certificates
319w, 576w, 759w, 861w
Attorney General 576w
Bennett, Paul 704w, 739w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 646w
Criminal Justice Royal Commission 597w
Dept of Health 567w
Dept of Social Security 632w
Dept of Trade and Industry 204w, 471w
Disclosure of information 730w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 113w, 701w
Home Office 598w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 759w
Ministers 802w
Ministry of Defence 93–4w, 399–400w
Prime Minister 646–7w
Scottish Office 737w
Treasury 222–3w, 331w, 572w
Welsh Office 634–5w

Import of live animals
Poland 815w, 899–902w
Sheep 899–900w

Imports
Alcoholic drinks 330w
Cars 467w
Coal 746–7w
Drugs 559w
Hazardous wastes 43w
Horticulture 730w
Malaysia 468–9w
Motor vehicles 469w

Incapacity benefit
321w

Income support
Administrative delays 219w
Students 628–9w

Income tax
326w
Tax burden 325–6w
Tax rates and bands 568w
Yorkshire and Humberside 32w

Incontinence
Medical treatments 164–5w

Independent
Takeovers 906–7w

Independent Commissioner for the Holding Centres
Annual reports 496w

Independent Living 1993 Fund
782w

India
Sanctions 700w

Indirect taxation
Tax yields 568w

Indonesia
Aid financed trade 740w
Armed forces training 137
Arms trade 474w, 859w
East Timor 20w
Foreign relations 803–4w
Human rights 803–4w, 881w
Military aircraft 852w
Ministers' visits abroad 470w, 570w
Overseas aid 449w
Overseas trade 470w

Industrial accidents
Channel tunnel 241–2w
Coal mining 514w
Doncaster 713–4w
Wind power 583–4w
Youth training 808–9w

Industrial & Freight Transport (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994
Debates etc.
(16.03.94) 905–26

Industrial diseases benefits
Coal mining (16.03.94) 885–7

Industrial health and safety
636w
Disclosure of information 63w

Industrial injuries
Doncaster 629w

Industrial investment
265–6, 820w

Industrial production
275–7, 279–80
South Yorkshire 276

Industry
Germany 521w
Leicester 271
Northern Ireland 840–1w

Infant foods
279w
EC law 196w, 603w
Soya beans 87w

Infant mortality
557w, 826–7w

Inflation
455–6w

Information services
390w

Information technology
Inland Revenue 323–4w
Insolvency Service 207w
Science and technology research 205w

Information Technology Services Agency
411w, 709w

Ingram, Mr Adam
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (17.03.94) 1114, 1117–20, 1122
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 179–80, 189, 198, 207–12, 219–20, 223–6, 232–3
Questions
National Engineering Laboratory, Redundancy 799w
Statutory sick pay, Dept of Transport 2w

Inheritance tax
Access to countryside 98w, 220w
Tax allowances 569–70w

Injuries
Brain 161w, 525w

Inkin, Geoffrey
Working hours 34w

Inland Revenue
Civil service manpower 568–9w
Information technology 323–4w

Inner London boroughs
Student numbers 845–6w

Insolvency
208–10w, 249–50w
Contracts of employment (14.03.94) 619–24
Disqualifications 209w
Ministerial statements (14.03.94) 619–24
Professional misconduct 207–8w

Insolvency Act 1986
Debates etc.
(14.03.94) 619–24

Insolvency Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R* & rem stages* (18.03.94) 1301

Insolvency (No 2) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (18.03.94) 1229
Order relating to Com (18.03.94) 1301

Insolvency Service
Information technology 207w
Privatisation 206–7w

Insurance
Grant maintained schools 237–8w, 428w, 430w
Road haulage industry 745w

Insurance premium tax
739–40
Tax yields 571–2w

Integrated administration and control system
Departmental forms 494w

Integrated schools
Northern Ireland 842w

Intelligence services
881w, 896w

Intelligence Services Bill (HL) 1993/94
Questions
701w, 881w

Interdepartmental Racial Attacks Group
505w

Interest rates
Investment 672w
Loans 573w

Intergovernment conference 1996
448w

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
see World Bank

International conferences
Labour market 824–5w

International transport
Republic of Ireland 315–6w

International Year of the Family
833w

Interreg programme
Wales 612

Intervention prices
489w

Intervention stocks
Apples 490w
Cereals 491w

Interviews
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 784w
Prime Minister 464w

Invalidity benefits
Doncaster 631w, 782–3w
Social security benefits rules 320w

Inventions
14
Science and technology research 14

Ipswich
Council tax 47w

IRA
740, 1010

Iran
Kurds 472w
Overseas trade 470w

Iraq
Air force 132
Armed forces deployment 132
Kurds 21–2w, 472w
Malnutrition 646w
Overseas aid 148
Sanctions 21w, 244w, 703–4w

Iraq-Kuwait conflict
Merchant ships 132–3

Irish Republican Army
see IRA

Irish Sea
Oil pollution 269w, 271w

Iron and steel industry
248w, 276–8
European Coal and Steel Community 277

Isle of Dogs enterprise zone
792–3w

Isle of Wight
Local government reform 370w

Israel
472w
Occupied territories 244w, 584w, 881w

Italy
Extradition 670w

Jack, Mr Michael, Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food
Questions
Advertising, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 281–2w, 384w
Agricultural production 489w
Agricultural subsidies 729w
Agricultural subsidies, Beef 489–90w
Agricultural surpluses, EC law 604w
Agricultural workers 814w
Agriculture, Environment protection 604w
Agriculture, Parliamentary questions 388w
Apples, Intervention stocks 490w
Arable farming 279w
Banana Trade Advisory Committee 279w
Blackcurrants, Food imports 64w, 388w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Germany 818w
Butter, Prices 385–7w
Cereals 601w
Cereals, Agricultural subsidies 601w
Cereals, Intervention stocks 491w
Cereals, Prices 386w
Cereals, Set-aside schemes 386w
Citizen's Charter, Farmers 66w
Civil service agencies, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 493w
Civil service manpower, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 818w
Coastal erosion 813w
Coastal fishing, Dredging 815–6w
Common agricultural policy 66w, 275–6w, 388w, 601–2w, 814–5w
Common agricultural policy, Agricultural subsidies 388w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 489w
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 488–9w
Common agricultural policy, UK contributions to EC budget 275w
Dairy farming, Production quotas 279w
Day care of children, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 67w, 494–5w
Eggs, Food consumption 902–4w
Environmentally sensitive areas 602–4w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Essex 65w
Farm incomes 813–4w
Fish, Minimum prices 495w
Fish conservation 817w
Fisheries, Biodiversity 384–5w
Fisheries, Denmark 280–1w
Fisheries, EC action 279–80w
Fisheries, France 281w, 814w
Fisheries, North East region 903w
Fisheries, Norway 492–3w
Fishery decommissioning scheme 817w
Fishing catches, Norway 491–2w
Flood defence committees, Conflict of interests 197w
Flood defence committees, Public appointments 64–5w, 195–6w
Floods 387w
Food, Consumer expenditure 605–6w
Food imports, EC countries 815w
GATT 818–9w
Government buildings, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 493–4w
Horticulture, Imports 730w
Information services 390w
Intervention prices 489w
Linseed, Prices 277w
Milk, Agricultural marketing 607–8w
Milk, Prices 274w
Non-departmental public bodies, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 730w
Office furniture, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 490w
Official hospitality, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 490w

Jack, Mr Michael—continued
Oilseed rape, Agricultural subsidies 606w
Oilseed rape, Prices 276–7w
Olive oil, Prices 273–4w
Open government, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 902w
Orchard replanting scheme 606w
Potatoes, Agricultural subsidies 66–7w
Potatoes, Prices 277–8w
Public appointments, Consumers' Committee for Great Britain 273w
Public appointments, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 67–8w
Public appointments, Wine Standards Board 195w
Rice, Prices 275w
Set-aside schemes 279w
Sugar, Prices 387w
Telephone services, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 389–90w
Tobacco, Prices 274w
Wines, EC internal trade 196–7w

Jackson, Ms Glenda
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 438–9, 459, 478–80
Questions
Student unions, Finance 884w

Jackson, Mrs Helen
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 486–7, 489
Questions
Army, Redundancy 94–5w, 143
Housing construction, Rural areas 677w
Industrial health and safety 636w
Out of school childcare grant scheme 735
Social Security Commissioners, Social security appeals 405w
Water charges 673w, 879

Jamieson, Mr David
Questions
Armed forces, Blood sports 519w
Outdoor education 625w
Outdoor education, Northern Ireland 617–8w
Outdoor education, Safety standards 644w
Outdoor education, Scotland 734w
Outdoor education, Wales 633w
Private education, Complaints 626w
Private education, Inspections 626–7w

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
Business questions 1019
Industry, Leicester 271
Youth unemployment, Leicester 739

Japan
Car industry 249w
Foreign investment in UK 250w, 278–9, 281–2
Foreign trade 743w

Jenkin, Mr Bernard
Debates etc.
Air traffic, Europe (17.03.94) 1092, 1094–5, 1097, 1100, 1102
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 431, 480–4
Questions
Agricultural workers 814w
Broadcasting programmes, Exports 53w
Business questions 1025
Common agricultural policy 814–5w
Contracts for services, EC law 80w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme 224w
Employment policy 713w
European works councils 733
Industrial investment 266
Parole 16–7w

Jessel, Mr Toby
Questions
National lottery, Arts finance 11

Jet Provost aircraft
Defence procurement 516–7w

Jewellery
Prime Minister 25w, 464–5w

Job interview guarantee scheme
187–8w

Job review workshops
190–1w

Job search seminars
189–90w

Jobclubs
189–90w, 727–8
Doncaster 515w
North West region 727

Jobplan workshops
183–4w

Jobseeker's allowance
Social security recipients 140w

John Archer School
Wandsworth Borough Council 871w

John Radcliffe Hospital
Complaints 558w

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 409–10
Questions
BBC, Efficiency scrutinies 52w
Manufacturing industries, Trade competitiveness 471w

Johnston, Sir Russell
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1240–4, 1249, 1258

Jones, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 750
Questions
Aerospace industry 280
Agricultural workers, Wales 695w
Business questions 1025–6
Deaf, Wales 284–5w
Employment Service Agency, Equal opportunities 516w
Equal pay, Wales 632w, 694–5w
Local government staff, Wales 799–800w
Maternity benefits, EC law 708w
Minimum wage, Wales 633w
Multiple sclerosis, Medical treatments 161–2w
Multiply handicapped, Wales 363w
National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, Health service staff 159w
National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, Hospital closures 159w
Open government 78w
Wages councils, Wales 524w
Wages councils, Women's employment 640w
Women's employment, Part-time employment 695w
Women's employment, Wales 695w

Jones, Mr Gwilym, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office
Debates etc.
Dental services, Wales (15.03.94) 859–62
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 834–9
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 977–81
Questions
Air pollution, Health hazards 800w
Air pollution, Hospital admissions 800w
Air pollution monitoring, Wales 366w
Average earnings, Wales 520–1w
Blood transfusion services, Wales 367–8w
Brain, Injuries 525w
Carbon dioxide, Wales 450w
Community health councils, Welsh language 154w
Council housing, Wales 288–9w
Council housing management, Wales 452w
Day care of children, Welsh Office 36w, 526–7w

Jones, Mr Gwilym—continued
Deaf, Wales 284w
Dental services, Wales 451–2w
Disabled facilities grants, Wales 522w
District health authorities, Managers 155w
Electricity consumption, Wales 801w
Energy policy, Wales 606–7
Environmentally sensitive areas, Management agreements 287–8w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Wales 363–4w
Family doctors, Pay 285–6w
Family health services authorities, Wales 697w
Glan Clwyd District General Hospital NHS Trust 608
Government 521w
GP fundholders, Clwyd 152w
Health authorities, Managers 283w
Health services, Dyfed 153w
Health services, Pembrokeshire 156w
Hospitals, Wales 608
Housing finance, Wales 801w
Housing for Wales, Expenditure 151–2w
Landslips, St Dogmaels 522w
Local government reform, Bridgend 608–9
Local government staff, Wales 799–800w
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL) 1993/94 609
Multiply handicapped, Wales 363w
NHS trusts, Contracts of employment 154w
NHS trusts, Financial targets 157w
NHS trusts, Managers 155w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 607
Orimulsion, Wales 365w
Out-patients, Wales 632w
Patients, Medical treatments 157w
Pay beds, Wales 287w
Pembrokeshire Health Authority, Capital 155–6w
Pembrokeshire NHS Trust, Capital investment 156w
Pembrokeshire NHS Trust, Health service staff 155w
ReChem International, Pollution monitoring 801–2w
Standard spending assessments, Wales 365w
Vaccination, Wales 523w
Welsh Office, Environmental policy 800w

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R and Money res (15.03.94) 854
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 936, 967–8
Questions
Air force, Repairs and maintenance 398w
Arms trade, Indonesia 859w
Defence equipment, Repairs and maintenance 398w
Devolution, Wales 611
East Timor, Casualties 804w
Family doctors, Working conditions 565w
Family health services authorities, Wales 697w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 269–70
GATT, Seeds 585w
Health authorities, Managers 283w
International transport, Republic of Ireland 315–6w
Lome Convention 585w
NHS reform 564w
Prescription drugs 565w
Subsidiarity 584–5w
Training and enterprise councils 731–2
Unsolicited goods and services 205w

Jones, Mr Jon Owen
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 937, 952, 973–7

Jones, Mr Jon Owen—continued
Questions
Hospitals, Wales 608

Jones, Dr Lynne
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 663–5, 670–1, 673, 675
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 451–3
Questions
Bail hostels 226w, 361w
Bail hostels, Closures 225w
Bail hostels, Prisoners on remand 225w
Bail hostels, West Midlands 225–6w
Buchanan, Michael, Mental health community care 727w
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Arts Council grants 8
Company investigations 272
Computers in government departments, Attorney General 738w
Computers in government departments, Dept for Education 323w
Computers in government departments, Dept of National Heritage 312w
Computers in government departments, Dept of Social Security 781–2w
Computers in government departments, Dept of the Environment 416w
Computers in government departments, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 448w
Computers in government departments, Home Office 671w
Computers in government departments, Ministry of Defence 748w
Computers in government departments, Northern Ireland Office 705w
Computers in government departments, Scottish Office 547w
Computers in government departments, Welsh Office 694w
Crime prevention, Street lighting 173w, 233–4w
Defence Export Services Organisation 748w
East Timor, UN resolutions 803w
GATT 704w
Indonesia, Foreign relations 803–4w
Indonesia, Human rights 803–4w
Industrial health and safety, Disclosure of information 63w
Infant foods, EC law 196w
Mentally ill 888w
Mentally ill, Accident and emergency departments 888w
Mines, Conferences 20w
Mines, Export controls 880w
Motor vehicle registration 117w
National income 98–9w
Open government, Dept for Education 882–3w
Open government, Dept of Employment 810w
Open government, Dept of Health 834w
Open government, Dept of Social Security 879w
Open government, Dept of the Environment 870w
Open government, Home Office 892w
Open government, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 902w
Open government, Treasury 821w
Open government, Welsh Office 801w
Probation and aftercare, West Midlands 229–30w
Probation hostels, West Midlands 230w
Ruppert, Bryan, Deportation 586w
Television licences, Fine defaulters 230–1w
World Trade Organisation 741w
World Trade Organisation, GATT 741w
World Trade Organisation, Sovereignty 880–1w

Jones, Mr Martyn
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 954

Jones, Mr Martyn—continued
Questions
Bovine immunodeficiency virus 389w
Eggs, Food consumption 902–4w
Firearms, Homicide 412–3w
Food poisoning 728w
Poultry, Salmonella 901–2w
Prime Minister 398
Salmonella 888w

Jones, Mr Nigel
Questions
Cable systems 338w
Cable systems, Rural areas 337–8w
Information technology, Science and technology research 205w
Public libraries, Finance 897w
RAF Innsworth, Building repairs 394w
VAT, Energy prices 822w

Jones, Mr Robert B
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 629–35, 653, 656–7, 664

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Questions
Education, Local government expenditure 422–4w
Grant maintained schools 424–8w
Special education 430–2w

Jowell, Ms Tessa
Debates etc.
Edgware Hospital, Hospital closures (18.03.94) 1304
Questions
Accident and emergency departments, Greater London 440w
Community health services, Greater London 558w
District health authorities, Finance 720–2w
Electoral Register 11–2w
Family credit 218w
Guy's Hospital 889w
Guy's Hospital, Hospital closures 533w
Health visitors, Training 719–20w
London initiative zone 887w
Maternity hospitals 439w
Maternity hospitals, Hospital length of stay 533–4w
Maternity hospitals, Security 344w
Maternity services, Bedding 534w
Means tested benefits, Capital rules 321w
Mental patients, Hospital wards 725w
Patients, Greater London 729w
Primary health care, Greater London 534w
Secure psychiatric units, Hospital beds 888w
Toxoplasmosis, Screening 557w

Joyce, Christine
Widows' benefits 708w

Judges
Administration of justice 557w
Political impartiality 757w
Private education 757w
Recruitment 757–8w
Working hours 757w

Judgments
803w

Judicial Studies Board
Advisory bodies 757w

Juries
Ethnic minorities 414w

Jury disqualification
Deaf 405w

Justices' clerks
Magistrates' courts committees 615–6

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Questions
Parvaiz, Zahid 598w

Keen, Mr Alan
Questions
Air routes, Poland 647–8w
Travel, London boroughs 163w

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 93
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 423–4, 429, 433, 446, 452–3, 465, 469–70, 482, 493

Kennedy, Mrs Jane
Questions
Council tax 869
Doctors' list of patients, Merseyside 565w
Doctors' list of patients, Patients' rights 565–6w
Drug crimes 355w
Maintenance, Children 411w
Sheep, Import of live animals 900w
Unemployment, Liverpool 635w

Kenya
Food aid 481w

Key, Mr Robert, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport
Debates etc.
Air traffic, Europe (17.03.94) 1097–103
Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Bill, Money res (10.03.94) 509–12
Questions
A1, Dual carriageways 511w
A1, Gateshead 510–1w
A1-M1 link, Road construction 10w
A27, Planning blight 5w
A56, Road traffic 653w
A259, Road traffic 511w
Buses, Axle weights 408w, 650w
Buses, Bridges 509w
Buses, EC countries 650w
Buses, Safety belts 5w, 687w
Bypasses 506–7w
Bypasses, Ministerial powers 272w
Crime prevention, Street lighting 233–4w
Drinking and driving, Research 691–2w
Driving licences, Lorries 650w
Driving Standards Agency 647–8w
Driving Standards Agency, Contracts for services 115–6w
Driving tests, Scotland 115w
Entrance project, Southampton 512w
Fewston Transport, Motor vehicle safety 4–5w
Goods vehicles, Road safety 6w
Handicapped drivers, Parking 405–6w
Handicapped drivers, Road tolls 654w
Highways Agency 863w
Hydrocarbon oil duties 273w
Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler Management Consultants 406–7w
Lorries, Driving licences 650w
Lorries, Road tax 509w
M25, Road traffic 272w
M62, Road construction 407w
Minibuses, Driving licences 6–7w
Minibuses, Motor vehicle safety 120w
Motor vehicle registration 117w
Motor vehicle registration, Musical instruments 687w
Motorways 652w
Motorways, Road construction 1w
NYNEX CableComms Bolton, Road works 8w
Passenger carrying vehicle test 119w
Road accidents 498–9w
Road accidents, Children 7–8w
Road construction 7–8w
Road construction, Construction materials 1w
Road construction, EC law 509w
Road construction, Environmental impact assessment 863w

Key, Mr Robert—continued
Road construction, Suffolk 10w
Road freight transport, Goods vehicles 687w
Road haulage licences 271w, 687–9w
Road traffic, Research 2w
Road works, Telephone services 510w
Roads 693w
Roundabouts, Plymouth 121–2w
Salford, Compulsory purchase 654w
School crossing patrols 120w, 407–8w
School crossing patrols, Local government expenditure 273w
School transport 119w
Sellafield, Transport of radioactive materials 653w
Severn bridge, Road tolls 692w
Traffic areas, Civil service agencies 690–1w
Transport infrastructure, Economic growth 1–2w
Transport Research Laboratory 115w, 406w
Transport supplementary grants, Yorkshire and Humberside 317–9w
Vehicle number plates 269w
Wymondham bypass, Construction costs 653–4w

Kilfedder, Sir James
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 98–101
Questions
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 1009

Kilfoyle, Mr Peter
Questions
Banana Trade Advisory Committee 279w
Play, Children 3
Public appointments, Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service 640w
Public appointments, Central Arbitration Committee 640w
Public appointments, Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal 641w
Public appointments, Committees for the Employment of People with Disabilities 716–7w
Public appointments, Construction Industry Training Board 642w
Public appointments, Consumers' Committee for Great Britain 273w
Public appointments, Engineering Construction Industry Training Board 641–2w
Public appointments, Equal Opportunities Commission 643w
Public appointments, Fleet Air Arm Museum 851–2w
Public appointments, Health and Safety Executive 643w
Public appointments, Meteorological committees 851w
Public appointments, Meteorological Research Sub-Committee 850w
Public appointments, National Advisory Council on Employment of People with Disabilities 642–3w
Public appointments, National Council for Vocational Qualifications 643–4w
Public appointments, Non-departmental public bodies 850w
Public appointments, Oil and Pipelines Agency 851w
Public appointments, Race Relations Employment Advisory Service 715w
Public appointments, RAF Museum 850w
Public appointments, Remploy 641w
Public appointments, Review Board for Government Contracts 850w
Public appointments, Royal Marines Museum 851w
Public appointments, Royal Naval Museum 880w
Public appointments, Royal Navy Submarine Museum 851w
Public appointments, Services Sound and Vision Corporation 850–1w

Kilfoyle, Mr Peter—continued
Public appointments, Sheltered Employment Consultative Group 642w
Public appointments, Wine Standards Board 195w
Tanks 199w

King, Rt Hon Tom
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 298–9

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 756, 767, 769, 774, 782

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 361–2
Questions
Common fisheries policy 664w
Council housing, Dampness 124–5w
Fisheries, Scotland 662–3w
Fishing vessels, Scotland 662–3w
Health aid, Primary health care 483w
Home energy efficiency scheme, Elderly 791–2w
Housing improvement, Government grants to local authorities 125w

Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler Management Consultants
406–7w

Knapman, Mr Roger
Questions
EC enlargement 1012

Knight, Mrs Angela
Questions
Business questions 1025
Maternity benefits, EC law 139–40w
Republic of Ireland, Extradition 1002
Right of silence 352w
Science and technology research, Women 18–9

Knight, Dame Jill
Questions
Spectacles, NHS low income scheme 160w

Know-how Fund
Eastern Europe 466–8w
Romania 466w

Knox, Sir David
Questions
Press Complaints Commission 6
Tax burden, Personal taxation 324–5w

Kosovo
Human rights 23w

Kurds
Armed conflict 882w
Iran 472w
Iraq 21–2w, 472w
Syrian Arab Republic 472w
Turkey 21w

Kynoch, Mr George
Questions
Land pollution, Scotland 418w
Milk marketing scheme, Scotland 379w

Labour market
International conferences 824–5w

Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 417
Questions
A259, Road traffic 511w
Blackcurrants, Food imports 64w
Council housing management, Tenants' rights 417w
East Sussex County Council 877
Homelessness 674w
M25, Road traffic 272w

Lambeth
Playing fields 897w
Unemployment 635w

Lancashire
Local government finance 680–1w

Lancashire Constabulary
Emergency calls 587w

Land
English Industrial Estates Corporation 333w

Land acquisition
Forestry Commission 55w

Land ownership and tenure
Trent Regional Health Authority 726w

Land pollution
110w
Pollution control (15.03.94) 747
Scotland 418w

Land registration
Local government functions 417–8w

Landing platforms
Defence procurement 754w

Landslips
St Dogmaels 522w

Lang, Rt Hon Ian, Secretary of State for Scotland
Debates etc.
British Railways (No 2) Order Confirmation Bill, 1R (09.03.94) 265
British Railways (No 3) Order Confirmation Bill, 1R (09.03.94) 265
British Railways Order Confirmation Bill, 1R (08.03.94) 131
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Scottish Office 737w
Car boot sales, Scotland 376w
Civil service agencies, Scottish Office 659w
Civil service manpower, Scottish Office 825w
Computers in government departments, Scottish Office 547w
Congenital abnormalities, Ayrshire 262w
Day care of children, Scottish Office 61w
Death, Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 738w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Public appointments 379w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Scotland 378–9w
Immunity certificates, Scottish Office 737w
Land pollution, Scotland 418w
Non-departmental public bodies, Scottish Office 731w
Office furniture, Scottish Office 737w
Orders and regulations, Scottish Office 731–2w
Public appointments, Non-departmental public bodies 125w
Public appointments, Scotland 898–9w
Public appointments, Scottish Office 660w
School boards, Scotland 378w
School buildings, Scotland 665–8w, 732w
Scottish Homes, Marketing 898w
Scottish Office, Consultants 659–60w
Sheep premiums, Scotland 666w
Telephone services, Scottish Office 661–2w

Languages education
Cornwall 528w

LAUTRO
see Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation

"Law Commission Report, 175"
97w

Law enforcement
Motor insurance 356w

Law officers
16

Law Officers' Dept
see Attorney General

Law reform
Racial attacks 413w

Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Debates etc.
EC enlargement (17.03.94) 1042–4
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 298
Questions
Drugs 382–3
Horse racing, Betting and gaming duties 414–5w
Legal aid, Personal injury 331w
Legal aid scheme 617
Local government constituencies, Staffordshire 297w

Lead pollution
Water supply 299w

Learning for work
183w

Leeds
Legal aid 761–2w
Legal Aid Board 760w

Leeds Development Corporation
Employment opportunities 108–9w, 182–3w

Leeds-Bradford Airport
650w
Airmisses 691w
Airport tax 221w, 651–2w

Legal advice and assistance
Scotland (16.03.94) 927–35

Legal aid
761–2w
Expenditure 97w
Leeds 761–2w
Personal injury 331w
Sex discrimination 671w

Legal Aid Board
Leeds 760w
Manpower 760w
Performance standards 761–2w
Redundancy 554–6w

Legal aid scheme
71–4w, 498w, 553–7w, 616–7
Contracts for services 71–2w
Legal costs 760–1w
Liverpool 555w
Redundancy 71–3w
Solicitors 553–6w

Legal costs
Cornwall Healthcare NHS Trust 723w
Legal aid scheme 760–1w

Legal opinion
Dept of Trade and Industry 211w

Legal profession
Railtrack 270w

Legal representation
Barristers 861w

Legislative process
70w, 762–3w

Leicester
Industry 271
Youth unemployment 739

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 416
Questions
MARPOL Convention 272w
Oil pollution 122w
Shipping, Sea pollution 122w

Lennox-Boyd, Mr Mark, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1280–90

Lennox-Boyd, Mr Mark—continued
World Bank (17.03.94) 1206, 1208–15
Questions
Aid financed trade 586w, 683–4w
Aid financed trade, Indonesia 740w
Back to basics policy 584w
Biwater 11w
China, Family planning 483–5w
China, Overseas aid 484w
Entry clearances, Immigration officers 699–700w
Haiti 477w
Health aid, Primary health care 483w
India, Sanctions 700w
Kenya, Food aid 481w
Malaysia, Aid financed trade 684w
Overseas aid 11–2w, 483w, 685w
Overseas workers, Employment protection 20–1w
Pakistan, Homicide 702w
Palestinians, Health aid 482–3w
Pergau dam, Construction costs 684w
Philippines, Overseas aid 482w
Pinochet, Augusto 882w
Romania, Know-how Fund 466w
Sri Lanka 474w
Sudan, Food supply 585w
Sudan, Overseas aid 585w, 684–5w
Thailand, Aid financed trade 586w
Treaty on European Union 584w
Zimbabwe, Deportation 471w

Lestor, Miss Joan
Questions
Domestic energy conservation 678w
Energy conservation 295–6w
Energy Saving Trust, Finance 293–4w
Teenage pregnancy, Care proceedings 343w
Young offenders, Secure accommodation 501w

Levene, Peter
Conflict of interests 319w

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Agricultural surpluses, EC law 604w
Caribbean, State visits 704w
Firearms 391–2
Government grants to local authorities, Wandsworth 374w
Jobclubs, North West region 727
Local government revenue, Greater Manchester 374–5w
M62, Road construction 407w
NHS trusts, Salford 347w
Road construction, EC law 509w
Salford, Compulsory purchase 654w
Shopping centres, Planning permission 683w
Standard spending assessments, Greater Manchester 374w

Lewisham
Council tax 577–8w
Disability working allowance 135w
Family credit 135w
GP fundholders 302–3w
Schools 531w
Taxation 869–70w

Libyan Arab Republic
Sanctions 22w

Lidington, Mr David
Questions
Air Training Corps, RAF Halton 517–8w
Clergy, Pay 612–3
Food hygiene 85w
Foreign investment in UK, Japan 279
Hospitals, Buckinghamshire 345w
Public Record Office, Civil service dispersal 614
RAF Strike Command, Armed forces officers 655–6w

Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation
331w

Life expectancy
557w, 826–7w

Life imprisonment
384–5, 768w, 777w
Homicide 384
Northern Ireland 384
Parole 358w

Life insurance
452–3w

Light Dragoons
Bosnia-Herzegovina 859w

Lightbown, Mr David, Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 975

Lighting
(08.03.94) 153–4

Lilley, Rt Hon Peter, Secretary of State for Social Security
Questions
Maternity benefits, EC law 139–40w

Limitation Act 1980
Questions
617

Limited list prescribing
159w

Linseed
Prices 277w

Listed buildings
Demolition 107w
Hampstead 3–4
Shalfleet bridge 213w

Livera Foods
Government grants 49w

Liverpool
City challenge 108w
Legal aid scheme 555w
Shipping registration 692–3w
Standard spending assessments 673–4w
Unemployment 635w

Liverpool City Council
Local government corruption 787w

Livingstone, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 311
Questions
Charities, Complaints 174w
Charities, Maladministration 173w
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Construction costs 392–4w
Chemical and biological warfare, Defence research 853–4w
Foundation for Business Responsibilities 174w
Master Information Exchange Agreement 392w
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill 1993/94 1014–5

Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter, Minister of State, Home Office
Debates etc.
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 588–9
Questions
Betting shops, Gaming machines 358w
Black Training and Enterprise Group 893w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison population 12–3w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison staff 13w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prisoners' outings 14–5w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prisoners' transfers 13w
Charities, Complaints 174w
Charities, Maladministration 173w
Citizen's Charter, Prisoners 598w
Criminal records, Computer privacy 766w
Doncaster Prison, Prison accommodation 359w

Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter—continued
Electoral Register 11–2w
Electoral Register, Publicity 360w
Electoral Register, Young people 15–6w
Ethnic minorities, Government grants to local authorities 763–4w
European Parliament elections, Young people 15w
Fine defaulters, Prison sentences 226–8w, 892w
Forensic Science Service, Finance 671w
Foundation for Business Responsibilities 174w
Interdepartmental Racial Attacks Group 505w
Life imprisonment 768w, 777w
Life imprisonment, Parole 358w
Moorland Prison 775–7w
Moorland Prison, Prison escapes 231–2w
National Alliance of Women's Organisations, Government grants to voluntary organisations 172w, 360w, 500w
Parkhurst Prison, Mental health services 599w
Police custody 353–5w
Police custody, Merseyside 354w
Prison education services, Local government expenditure 232–3w
Prison population 767–8w
Prison staff, Crimes of violence 355w
Prison staff, Funerals 15w
Prisoners, Funerals 14w
Prisoners, Social security claims 586w
Prisoners, Yorkshire and Humberside 588–90w
Prisoners' home leave, Christmas 769–71w
Prisoners on remand, Yorkshire and Humberside 772–8w
Prisoners' release 233w
Prisoners' transfers, Northern Ireland 411–2w
Prisoners' transport, Death 359–60w
Prisons, Construction costs 17–8w
Racial attacks 414w
Racial attacks, Law reform 413w
Racial attacks, Surveys 413w
Segregation of prisoners 769w
Television licences, Fine defaulters 230–1w
Voting rights, EC nationals 588w
Young offenders, Prisons 224w
Young offenders, Remand in custody 360–1w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Questions
Astra Training Services 732
Blackpool and the Fylde College, National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education 338w
Business start-up scheme 183w
Community action 185–6w
Employment schemes, Expenditure 186–7w
Gas supply industry, Gas meters 267–8
Job interview guarantee scheme 187–8w
Job review workshops 190–1w
Jobclubs 189–90w
Jobplan workshops 183–4w
Learning for work 183w
Restart programme 184–5w
Restart programme, Social security benefits reductions 141w
Training, Expenditure 638–40w
Training, Scotland 418–9w
Training, Wales 284w
Training credits 188–90w
Training for work 188w
Vocational guidance, Contracts for services 644w
Workstart 184w, 241w

Lloyd's of London
469–70w

Llwyd, Mr Elfyn
Debates etc.
Dental services, Wales (15.03.94) 856
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 750, 800–7, 813–4
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 963
Questions
Administration of justice, Judges 557w
BBC, Local broadcasting 52w
Carbon dioxide, Wales 450w
Community health councils, Welsh language 154w
Departmental publications, Welsh language 695–6w
Development Board for Rural Wales 603
EC grants and loans, Training 718w
Grant maintained schools, Advertising 623w
Griffiths, Michael, Contracts 282–3w
Housing for Wales, Expenditure 151–2w
Inkin, Geoffrey, Working hours 34w
Legal aid scheme 616–7
Legal representation, Barristers 861w
Meirionnydd 799w
Non-departmental public bodies, Disclosure of information 450w
Non-departmental public bodies, Wales 694w
Public appointments, Former members 367w
Public appointments, Wales 364w
Railway network, Wales 522w
Science and technology research 79w
Standard spending assessments, Dwyfor 365–6w
Standard spending assessments, Wales 365w
Welsh language, Curriculum 450–1w

Loans
Interest rates 573w
NHS trusts 525–6w
Small businesses 266–7

Local authorities
Crime prevention 391
EC grants and loans 372–3w
Energy analysis 879

Local authority powers
Dogs 463w, 878

Local broadcasting
BBC 52w

Local government
Consolidated fund debates (17.03.94) 1173–95
Greater London (17.03.94) 1146–64
Wales (15.03.94) 749–854

Local government borrowing
435w

Local Government (Compensation for Redundancy & Premature Retirement) Regulations 1993
Questions
297w

Local government constituencies
Staffordshire 297w

Local government corruption
677w, 876
Liverpool City Council 787w

Local government expenditure
289–90w
Bed and breakfast accommodation 48w
Birmingham City Council 1011
Child safety 581–2w
Education 422–4w
Manchester City Council 1011
Prison education services 232–3w
Road safety 273w
School crossing patrols 273w

Local government finance
111w
Civil defence 352–3w
Fire services 352–3w
Lancashire 680–1w

Local government functions
Land registration 417–8w
Police 388
Public records 679w

Local government pensions
786w

Local government reform
369–70w, 581w, 876–7
Bridgend 608–9
Cleveland 370w, 577w
Council tax 876
Employment opportunities 638w
Isle of Wight 370w
Scottish councils 268w
Staffordshire 675w

Local government revenue
Council house sales 286–8w
Greater Manchester 374–5w

Local government staff
Wales 799–800w

Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL) 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R & Money res (15.03.94) 749–854
Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 936–88
Questions
609

Lome Convention
585w

London Ambulance Service
Emergency calls 1013

London boroughs
Cost per pupil 423w
Employment 163w
Rent arrears 872–3w
Standard spending assessments 582w
Travel 163w

London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
(14.03.94) 677–712

London Implementation Group
345–6w

London initiative zone
887w

"London Making the Best Better"
793–4w

London Regional Passengers' Committee
121w

London Tilbury and Southend Line
(17.03.94) 1045–8

London University
Early retirement 132–3w

Lone parent families
Scotland 53–4w

Lone parents
Family credit 628w

Long, George
Criminal appeals 763w

Long stay patients
Hospital closures 157w

Lord Chancellor's Dept
Civil service agencies 672w
Civil service manpower 758–9w
Immunity certificates 759w
Women's employment 758–9w

Lorries
Driving licences 650w
Road tax 509w

Lough Neagh
Fish conservation 496–7w
Fishing catches 497w

Low flying
Northern Ireland 197w
Wales 858w

Low incomes
810w

Low pay
Doncaster 637w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Questions
Domestic gas appliances, Carbon monoxide 275
Fire services, Merseyside 352w
Speke Hall 51w

Luff, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1260–7
Questions
Civil service manpower, Disabled workers 873–4w
Concessionary television licences 4–5
Council housing 676w
Educational assessment, Disclosure of information 146
Funeral payments, Social fund 218w
Hereford and Worcester Training and Enterprise Council 737
Hydrographer of the Navy, Defence procurement 142
National Blood Authority 440–1w

Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas, Attorney-General
Questions
Advertising, Centre for Policy Studies 437w
Alcoholic drinks, Attorney General 485w
Bennett, Paul, Immunity certificates 739w
Bennett, Paul, Prosecutions 739w
Crown Prosecution Service, Committal proceedings 803w
Evidence, Disclosure of information 803w
Immunity certificates 576w
Immunity certificates, Attorney General 576w
Immunity certificates, Ministers 802w
Judgments 803w
Office furniture, Attorney General 485w
Official hospitality, Attorney General 485w
Prosecutions, Racial incitement 485–6w
Student unions, Expenditure 486w

Lynne, Ms Liz
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 547–9
Questions
Air pollution monitoring, Urban areas 880
Dental health 445w
Dental services, Children 446–7w
Dental services, Northern Ireland 436–7w
Dental services, Scotland 736–8w
Dental services, Wales 451–2w
Health authorities, Performance standards 443w
Health service staff, Women's employment 442–3w
Health services, Research 441–2w
Help us to help you campaign 446w
Local authorities, Crime prevention 391
NHS, Telephone services 443w
NHS administration 539–40w
Prescriptions, Nurses 442w

Lynx helicopters
Defence procurement 398w

M4
Road traffic control 525w

M11
Contracts 314–5w
Road construction (11.03.94) 593–600

M25
Motorways (17.03.94) 1063–4
Road traffic 272w

M62
Road construction 407w

McAllion, Mr John
Debates etc.
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 917, 920–2
Questions
Contracts for services, Government departments 18
Nuclear non proliferation 143–4
Octopuses 415–6w

McAvoy, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 56, 95–8
Questions
Northern Ireland government, Political parties 999

McCartney, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Cancer (17.03.94) 1079–85, 1087–8
Roads, Greater London (17.03.94) 1062

McCrea, Rev William
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 50, 52, 54–63, 71, 94
Business questions (10.03.94) 414–5
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 362–3
Questions
Privatisation, Northern Ireland 1004

Macdonald, Mr Calum
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 133–4
Dentists, Pay 380–4w

Macedonia
474w

McFall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Legal aid, Advice & assistance (Scotland) regulations (16.03.94) 929, 931–3
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 906–10, 915
Questions
Conditions of employment, EC law 730
Dumbartonshire Enterprise 124w
Forestry, Environment protection 547w
Open government 394
Prison accommodation, Scotland 826w

McGrady, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 53, 75–83, 87, 89–90
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 359–61
Questions
Low flying, Northern Ireland 197w
Northern Ireland government 1000–1

***MacGregor, Rt Hon John**, Secretary of State for Transport*
Debates etc.
Transport Police (Jurisdiction) Bill, 1R (18.03.94) 1233
Questions
Air transport, USA 408w
Cash limits, Dept of Transport 115w
Nature conservation, EC law 7w
Office furniture, Dept of Transport 508w
Single regeneration budget, Dept of Transport 863w
Transport infrastructure, Capital investment 318w
Transport infrastructure, EC grants and loans 117w
Transport infrastructure, Private sector 505–6w

***MacGregor, Rt Hon John**—continued*
Vehicle Inspectorate 794–5w

McKelvey, Mr William
Questions
Handicapped, Discrimination 147

Mackinlay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Fenchurch Street Station (17.03.94) 1216–20, 1222
Railways Act 1993, Points of order (16.03.94) 881–2
Transport Police (Jurisdiction) Bill, Points of order (17.03.94) 1029
Questions
Bennett, Paul, Criminal proceedings 781w
Bennett, Paul, Immunity certificates 704w, 739w
Bennett, Paul, Prosecutions 739w
Birds, Coastal areas 301–2w
British dependent territories, Police 113–4w
Business questions 1028
Ear nose and throat, Medical equipment 562–3w
Ear nose and throat, Prescriptions 563w
Employment 737–8
Essex Police 383
Government 521w
Higher Education Funding Council for England, Universities 133w
Official visits, Parliamentary constituencies 647w
Open government 16
Privatisation, Northern Ireland 1003–4
Rutherford, Andrew, Public appointments 133w
Sutherland, Stewart, Public appointments 133w
Transport police 794w
Universities, Redundancy 132–3w

***Maclean, Mr David**, Minister of State, Home Office*
Questions
Age of consent, EC countries 600w
Alcoholic drinks 383
Animal welfare, Prosecutions 177–8w
Arbitration schemes 174w
Bail, Habitual offenders 229w
Bail hostels 226w, 361w
Bail hostels, Closures 225w
Bail hostels, Prisoners on remand 225w
Bail hostels, West Midlands 225–6w, 393–4
Bridgewater, Carl, Homicide 358w
Cannabis, Fines 170w
Capital punishment, Equipment 355–6w
Cellular phones, Theft 179–80w
Clubs 169w
Crime, Airports 654w
Criminal injuries compensation 357w, 503–4w, 763w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Annual reports 599–600w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme 413w, 895–6w
Criminal injuries compensation scheme, Expenditure 895w
Criminal Justice Act 1948, Prosecutions 669w
Criminal Justice Royal Commission, Immunity certificates 597w
Custodial treatment 356w
Domestic violence, Victim support schemes 587w
Drug abuse, Surveys 597w
Drug abuse, Young people 171w
Drug crimes 355w, 382, 393
Drug crimes, Crime prevention 381–2, 393
Drug crimes, Greater London 12w
Drug crimes, Prisoners 381
Drug prevention schemes 593w
Drugs 382–3
Drugs and crime, Police informers 503w
Evidence, Video recordings 502w
Extradition, Italy 670w
Fine defaulters, Prison sentences 172w, 670w

***Maclean, Mr David**—continued*
Firearms, Homicide 412–3w
Fraud, Convictions 229w
Genetics, Data banks 764–5w
Habitual offenders, Police cautions 356w
Homicide, Road accidents 893–4w
Homicide, Yorkshire and Humberside 596w
Juries, Ethnic minorities 414w
Life imprisonment 384–5
Life imprisonment, Homicide 384
Life imprisonment, Northern Ireland 384
Life imprisonment, Parole 358w
Long, George, Criminal appeals 763w
Members' correspondence 777w
Motor vehicle theft, Yorkshire and Humberside 597w
Offenders, Proceeds of crime 502w
Police, Arrests 228–30w
Police, Yorkshire and Humberside 765–6w
Pornography, Advertising controls 413w
Probation and aftercare 16w
Probation and aftercare, West Midlands 229–30w
Probation hostels, West Midlands 230w
Road traffic offences, Cycling 178–80w
Squatting 392–3
Theft 766–8w
"Trends in Cost Effectiveness of Enforcement Activity in Illicit Heroin Market 1979–1990" 502–3w
Young offenders, Doncaster 593–4w
Young offenders, Secure accommodation 501w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 308, 319–21
Questions
Administration of justice, Northern Ireland 142–4w
Buses, Safety belts 687w
Crime, Northern Ireland 142w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme 895–6w
Criminal injuries compensation scheme, Expenditure 895w
Employment Appeal Tribunal 614
Homicide, Road accidents 893–4w
Peat bogs, Scotland 126w
Police accountability 388–9
Probation and aftercare 16w

***McLoughlin, Mr Patrick**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Trade & Industry*
Questions
Beer, Measurement 574–5w
British Telecom, Regulatory system 210w
Cable systems 338w
Cable systems, Rural areas 337–8w
Cellular phones, Crime prevention 247–8w
Civil service agencies, Dept of Trade and Industry 746w
Electric vehicles, Coventry 572w
Engines, Research finance 573w
Exhaust emission controls 573w
Industry, Leicester 271
Information technology, Science and technology research 205w
Loans, Interest rates 573w
Manufacturing industries 246w
Measurement, EC law 799w
Metrication, Harmonisation of legislation 905w
Office of Water Services, Yorkshire and Humberside 747w
Patent Office, Privatisation 206w
Plugs and sockets, Harmonisation of standards 332w
Post Office, Optical character recognition 209–10w

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick—continued
Post offices, Franchising 333–5w
Post offices, Redundancy 333w
Post offices, South Yorkshire 744w
Postal deliveries 337w
Recycling, Research Finance 746w
Royal Mail, VAT exemptions 212w
Small businesses, Loans 266–7
Small businesses, Venture capital 266–7
Unsolicited goods and services 205w
Watt Committee on Energy, Methane 574w

McMaster, Mr Gordon
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (17.03.94) 1111
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 552–4, 556
Local government (17.03.94) 1177–83, 1185, 1188–91, 1193–4
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 917–20
Questions
Economic situation, Scotland 126w
Public appointments, Scotland 898–9w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 342–3, 346–51, 353
Questions
Northern Ireland government 1002, 1006–7

Madden, Mr Max
Questions
Business questions 1025
Menwith Hill, Official visits 137–8
Office of Water Services, Yorkshire and Humberside 747w
Parkhurst Prison, Mental health services 599w
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill 1993/94 390
Urban programme, Bradford 683w

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 72, 92, 97, 101–4
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 410
Northern Ireland government, Peace negotiations (17.03.94) 1048–51
Questions
Crime, City of London 388

Magistrates
758w
Age 617–8
Disclosure of information 758w
Political impartiality 758w
Public appointments 68w, 893w
West Yorkshire 68–70w

Magistrates courts
South London 616

Magistrates' courts committees
Justices' clerks 615–6

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Debates etc.
Cancer (17.03.94) 1086
Child Support Agency (17.03.94) 1104–8, 1122
Council house sales, Points of order (15.03.94) 748
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 436, 438, 479, 484–9
Questions
Indonesia, Human rights 881w

Maintenance
Children 37–8w, 134–5w, 141w, 213–7w, 411w, 479w
Departmental forms 37w
Social security appeals 134w
Social security benefits reductions 214w, 874–5w

Maitland, Lady Olga
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 569

Maitland, Lady Olga—continued
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 303, 321–3
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 589
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 431–2, 442, 448, 451, 463–7
Questions
Council house waiting lists 871
Council tax 396
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 840w, 1001
Sinn Fein, Broadcasting controls 50–1w

Major, Rt Hon John, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Prime Minister 100w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 645w
Attorney General 1011
Back to basics policy 464w
Bennett, Paul, Immunity certificates 704w
Birmingham City Council, Local government expenditure 1011
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 146–7
Building industry 742–3
Cabinet papers 813w
Car industry 1013–4
Car industry, France 704w
Caribbean, State visits 704w
Commonwealth 147
Council of Europe, UK delegations 647w
Council tax 396, 1011–2
Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme 145–6
Departmental responsibilities, Cornwall 465w
Drugs, Expenditure 145
EC enlargement 742, 1012, 1015–6
Economic policy 148, 395–6
Educational assessment, Disclosure of information 146
Employment opportunities 150
Forestry Review Group 1013
GATT 704w
Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust 397
Handicapped, Discrimination 147
Heathrow Airport, Bombings 394, 398
Hotels, Social security recipients 741
Immunity certificates 319w
Immunity certificates, Prime Minister 646–7w
Insurance premium tax 739–40
IRA 740
Iraq, Malnutrition 646w
Iraq, Overseas aid 148
Iraq, Sanctions 703–4w
Levene, Peter, Conflict of interests 319w
London Ambulance Service, Emergency calls 1013
Malaysia, Aid financed trade 100w
Manufacturing industries 742
Ministers, Exservicemen 25w
Ministers, Government departments 465w
Ministers' domestic visits, Scotland 396
Missing persons 1014
Museums and galleries, Duxford 396–7
NHS trusts, Expenditure 740–1
Non-departmental public bodies 24w
Northern Ireland government 24w, 741–2
Office furniture, Prime Minister 100w
Official engagements 100w, 319w, 646w, 813w
Official gifts 319w
Official hospitality, Prime Minister 703w
Official visits, Parliamentary constituencies 647w
Official visits, Prime Minister 463w
Open government 394
Osman, Lorrain Esme, Disclosure of information 646w

Major, Rt Hon John—continued
Overseas aid 147–8
Pre-school education 1012–3
Prime Minister 398
Prime Minister, Expenditure 319–20w
Prime Minister, Interviews 464w
Prime Minister, Jewellery 25w, 464–5w
Prime Minister, Official gifts 100w
Public sector borrowing 744
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill 1993/94 1014–5
Repossession orders, Nottingham 743
Republic of Ireland, Rescue services 148–50
Scottish Homes, Council house sales 1014
Telecommunications cables, Road works 397–8
10 Downing Street, Operating costs 464w

Maladministration
Charities 173–4w

Malaysia
Aid financed trade 100w, 114w, 449w, 684w, 740w
Arms trade 95–6w, 399w
Car industry 467w
Contracts 740w
Defence contracts 755–6w
Exports 274
Imports 468–9w
Overseas trade 470w
Trade agreements 274–5

Mallinson, Bill
Inquiries 128w

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 297, 308, 323–8
Questions
Dental charges, Northern Ireland 868w
Northern Ireland government 1005–6

Malnutrition
Iraq 646w

Malone, Mr Gerald
Questions
Zimbabwe, Public service pensions 235w

Management consultants
NHS 537w

Managers
District health authorities 155w
Health authorities 162w, 283w
NHS administration 563–4w
NHS trusts 155w, 162w

"Managing Set-Aside Land for Wildlife"
195w

Manchester
Pupil exclusions 703w

Manchester City Council
Local government expenditure 1011

Mandelson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 292, 319

Mans, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Energy Conservation (Lighting) Bill, 1R (08.03.94) 153–4
Questions
Air force, Armed forces pensions 92w
Air force, Armed forces training 89w
Air force, Defence expenditure 90w
Air force bases 93w
Air force strength 90–2w
Armed forces pensions 93w
Business questions 1022
Defence expenditure 93w
Dept of the Environment, Expenditure 110–1w
Energy Conservation (Lighting) Bill 1993/94 867
Housing Corporation, Public appointments 111w

Mans, Mr Keith—continued
Inventions 14
Iron and steel industry 278
Military aircraft 90–2w
Military aircraft, Defence procurement 91w

Manufactured goods
Overseas trade 795–6w

Manufactured imports
468w

Manufacturing industries
246w, 268–70, 742, 742w
Civil servants' secondment 796w
EC internal trade 743w
Foreign investment in UK 246w
Manpower 181–2w, 806w
Trade competitiveness 471w
Wales 610
Working hours 821w

Marek, Dr John
Questions
Drug side effects 563w
GP fundholders, Clwyd 152w

Marginal land
Farm incomes 390–1w, 608–10w

Marketing
Scottish Homes 898w

Markets
Deregulation initiative 250w

Marland, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 412
Questions
Forestry Review Group 1013

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 416
Questions
Yugoslavia, Armed forces deployment 517w
Yugoslavia, Defence expenditure 478w
Yugoslavia, Overseas aid 517w

MARPOL Convention
272w

Marriage
Young people 833w

Marriage (Amendment) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R order read (11.03.94) 590

Married personal allowance
327w

Marshall, Mr David
Questions
Contracts, Scotland 542w
Members, Car allowances 884–5w
Ministers' domestic visits, Scotland 396
Motorways, Road construction 1w
Road construction, Construction materials 1w
Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland, Public appointments 62w

Marshall, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 353, 358–9
Questions
Industry, Leicester 271
Trident 135–6

Marshall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Edgware Hospital, Hospital closures (18.03.94) 1303–4
Insolvency, Contracts of employment (14.03.94) 622
Northern line (17.03.94) 1126–30, 1144
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 586

Marshall, Mr John—continued
Questions
Citizen's Charter, Publicity 20
Clergy, Early retirement 613–4
Council house rents 870–1
Crime, Greater London 387
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 605–6
Integrated schools, Northern Ireland 842w
Iron and steel industry 277
Listed buildings, Hampstead 3–4
Open government 16
Trident 135

Martin, Mr Michael J
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 405–6
Questions
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 845w
Members' facilities, House of Commons broadcasting 127w

Martlew, Mr Eric
Questions
European fighter aircraft 144–5
Non-fossil fuel obligation 798w, 906w
RAF Carlisle 94w

Master Information Exchange Agreement
392w

Maternity benefits
EC law 139–40w, 708w

Maternity hospitals
439w
Greater London 533–4w
Hospital length of stay 533–4w
Security 344w

Maternity leave
735
Armed forces women 94w

Maternity services
Bedding 534w
Greater London 534w

Matrimonial property
"Family Law" 97w

Mawhinney, Rt Hon Brian, Minister for Health
Questions
Accident and emergency departments, Greater London 440w
Arthritis, Medical research 724w
Brain, Tumours 829–30w
Cornwall Healthcare NHS Trust, Legal costs 723w
Day surgery, Hospital waiting lists 165–6w
Dental health 445w
Dental services 836–8w
Dental services, Bristol 158–9w
Dental services, Children 446–7w
Dental services, Huddersfield 835w
Dental services, NHS 159w
Dental services, NHS and private practice 830w
Dental services, Northumberland 158w
Dentists, NHS 342–3w
Dentists, Patients 830–2w
Doctors, Disciplinary proceedings 723–4w
Doctors, Freedom of expression 567w
Doctors' list of patients, Merseyside 565w
Doctors' list of patients, Patients' rights 565–6w
Drugs 162–3w
Drugs, Imports 559w
Extra contractual referrals 167w, 567–8w, 727w
Extra contractual referrals, Codes of practice 167w
Family doctors 833w
Family doctors, Pay 158w
Family doctors, Working conditions 565w
Financial Information Project Systems, West Midlands Regional Health Authority 302w, 534w

Mawhinney, Rt Hon Brian—continued
GP fundholders 834w
GP fundholders, Expenditure 537w
GP fundholders, Finance 726w
GP fundholders, Greater London 346w
GP fundholders, Lewisham 302–3w
GP fundholders, Prescription drugs 834w
GP fundholders, Private health services 726–7w
Guy's Hospital 889w
Guy's Hospital, Hospital closures 533w
Hammersmith Hospital 83w
Hammersmith Hospital, Charing Cross Hospital 83w
Health authorities, Disabled workers 827w
Health authorities, Managers 162w
Health authorities, Mergers 566w
Health authorities, Performance standards 443w
Health education 834w
Health Management Trust 85–7w
Health service staff, Redundancy pay 438w
Health service staff, Sick leave 84w
Health services, Greater London 88w
Health services, Hotels 836w
Health services, Inspections 558w
Health services, Research 441–2w
Help us to help you campaign 446w
Hospital beds, Greater London 836w
Hospital beds, Political refugees 563w
Hospital consultants 836w
Hospital consultants, Contracts of employment 343w
Hospital consultants, Pay 890w
Hospital doctors, Disciplinary proceedings 342w
Hospital waiting lists 167w, 307w
Hospitals 303w
John Radcliffe Hospital, Complaints 558w
Life expectancy 557w
Limited list prescribing 159w
London Implementation Group 345–6w
London initiative zone 887w
Medical ethics 343w
Medical research 162w
Mersey Regional Health Authority, Public appointments 889w
National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, Health service staff 159w
National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, Hospital closures 159w
Negligence 536w
NHS, Ethics 303w
NHS, Public appointments 440w
NHS, Regulatory system 886w
NHS, Tobacco industry 566–7w
NHS administration 539–40w
NHS administration, Managers 563–4w
NHS complaints 832w
NHS low income scheme 839w
NHS reform 564w
NHS trusts 535w
NHS trusts, Contracts of employment 891–2w
NHS trusts, Financial targets 562w
NHS trusts, Public meetings 560w
NHS trusts, Salford 347w
Patients, Greater London 729w
Patient's Charter 889w
Prescription charges 834w
Prescription drugs 565w
Prescriptions, Private health services 83w
Primary health care, Greater London 534w
Spectacles, NHS low income scheme 160w
Tobacco Manufacturers' Association 164w
University College Hospital, Finance 346w
Wakefield Health Authority 566w
Wansbeck Hospital, Redundancy 159w
West Midlands Regional Health Authority, Financial Information Project Systems 534w
Wharfedale Hospital 304w

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 443, 461–3, 495, 497

Maxton, Mr John—continued
Questions
Electricity tariffs 245w

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 354, 360
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 327
Questions
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 1001
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 1007
Independent Commissioner for the Holding Centres, Annual reports 496w
IRA 1010
Northern Ireland government 841w, 844w, 1000–2, 1005–7, 1009–10
Northern Ireland government, Political parties 840w, 999
Republic of Ireland, Extradition 1002
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 1009

Meacher, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Select committees, Points of order (09.03.94) 285
Questions
Aid financed trade 312–3w
Arms trade, Malaysia 95–6w, 399w
Immunity certificates, Dept of Trade and Industry 471w
Immunity certificates, Lord Chancellor's Dept 759w
Immunity certificates, Ministry of Defence 399–400w
Immunity certificates, Treasury 222–3w, 331w
Open government 16–7
Pergau dam, Construction costs 684w

Meale, Mr Alan
Questions
Hospital waiting lists 307w

Means tested benefits
Capital rules 321w

Measurement
Beer 574–5w
EC law 799w

Medals
Ambulance services (08.03.94) 259–64

Medical cards
831–2w

Medical equipment
Ear nose and throat 562–3w
Theft 890w

Medical ethics
343w

Medical rehabilitation
Drug abuse 304–5w
Wales 525w

Medical research
162w
Arthritis 724w
Asthma 346w
Congenital abnormalities 723w
Desert storm syndrome 419w
Senses 566w

Medical treatments
Cancer 83w
Immigrant detainees 502w
Incontinence 164–5w
Multiple sclerosis 161–2w
Patients 157w

Megalab UK
Science and technology policy 19–20

Meigle Cottage Hospital
Hospital closures 53w, 380w

Meirionnydd
799w

Members
Car allowances 884–5w

Members' correspondence
167w, 302w, 771w
Child Support Agency 134–5w, 321w, 708w
Dept of Social Security 783w
Entry clearances 893w

Members' facilities
House of Commons broadcasting 127w

Mental Health Act 1983
Questions
888w

Mental Health (Amendment) Bill (HL) 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R* & rem stages* (11.03.94) 590

Mental health community care
307w
Buchanan, Michael 727w

Mental health services
Parkhurst Prison 599w

Mental hospitals
(11.03.94) 590
Hospital beds 84w

Mental patients
725w
Hospital beds 834w
Hospital wards 725w

Mentally disadvantaged
Residential care 722w

Mentally disturbed offenders
Bryn-y-Neuadd Hospital 366w

Mentally ill
888w
Accident and emergency departments 888w
Crimes of violence 445–6w
Homicide (09.03.94) 372–80
Police training 84w

Menwith Hill
138
Ministers' domestic visits 752w
Official visits 137–8

Merchant ships
Armed conflict 133
Armed forces 132–3
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 132–3

Mergers
Health authorities 566w

Meriden Hall
Caravan sites 297w

Mersey Regional Health Authority
Public appointments 889w

Merseyside
Doctors' list of patients 565w
Fire services 352w
General certificate of secondary education 849w
Police custody 354w

Meteorological committees
Public appointments 851w

Meteorological Research Sub-Committee
Public appointments 850w

Methane
Watt Committee on Energy 574w

Metrication
Harmonisation of legislation 905w

MFV Copia
Shipping accidents 656w, 659w, 692w

Michael, Mr Alun
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 938–40, 949, 963–5, 980
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 300

Michael, Mr Alun—continued
Questions
Car industry, Japan 249w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Annual reports 599–600w
Criminal injuries compensation scheme 413w
Fire prevention, Legislation 212w
Police authorities 385–6

Michie, Mr Bill
Questions
Child Support Agency, Members' correspondence 321w
Play facilities, Children 50w
Single regeneration budget 676w

Michie, Mrs Ray
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 447–50
Questions
Cattle, Export of live animals 493w
National Alliance of Women's Organisations, Government grants to voluntary organisations 172w
Railway freight transport, Crianlarich 56–7w
Submarines, Fishing vessels 202w

Microwaves
Safety standards 344w

Mid Glamorgan
General certificate of secondary education 802w
School population 802w

Milburn, Mr Alan
Questions
Blood transfusion services, NHS and private practice 567w
Civil servants' visits abroad, Air travel 645–6w, 873w
Drug crimes, Crime prevention 393
Health authorities, Mergers 566w
Health service staff, Sick leave 84w
Hospital admissions 167–8w
Hospital closures 165w, 447w
Manufacturing industries 268–9
Members' facilities, House of Commons broadcasting 127w
Negligence 536w
NHS trusts, Financial targets 562w
Nurses, Manpower 827w
Taxpayers 327–30w

Military aircraft
90–2w, 396–7w
Defence procurement 91w
Indonesia 852w
Smiths Industries 253w

Military attaches
East Timor 340w

Military decorations
(09.03.94) 288–91

Military exercises
South Korea 701w

Milk
Agricultural marketing 607–8w
EC grants and loans 495w
Prices 274w
Production quotas 242w

Milk Marketing Board
34w

Milk marketing scheme
280w
Scotland 379w

Milk Marque
Wales 526w

Millennium Commission
Public appointments 610–1w

Miller, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Insolvency, Contracts of employment (14.03.94) 624

Miller, Mr Andrew—continued
Questions
Business questions 1027–8
Housing associations, Rents 863
Manufacturing industries 742
Science and technology research, Women 19

Mills, Mr Iain
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Imports 330w
Caravan sites, Meriden Hall 297w
Mobile homes 107w
Patent Office, Privatisation 206w
War pensions 631w
Waste management, Licensing 41–2w

Mines
Conferences 20w
Export controls 246w, 880w
Falkland Islands 96w

Mines & Quarries (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994
Debates etc.
(16.03.94) 905–26

Minesweepers
655w
Defence procurement 141

Minibuses
Driving licences 6–7w
Motor vehicle safety 120w

Minimum prices
Fish 495w

Minimum wage
USA 191w
Wales 633w

Ministerial powers
Bypasses 272w
Immigration controls 587–8w

Ministerial speeches
Channel tunnel 865w

Ministerial statements
Bosnia-Herzegovina (10.03.94) 399–410
Insolvency (14.03.94) 619–24

Ministers
898w
Dept of the Environment 371–2w
Exservicemen 25w
Government departments 465w
Immunity certificates 802w

Ministers' domestic visits
Menwith Hill 752w
Scotland 396
Wales 800–1w

Ministers' private offices
Dept of Social Security 628w

Ministers' visits abroad
Indonesia 470w, 570w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food
Advertising 281–2w, 384w
Civil service agencies 493w
Civil service manpower 818w
Day care of children 67w, 494–5w
Government buildings 493–4w
Non-departmental public bodies 730w
Office furniture 490w
Official hospitality 490w
Open government 902w
Public appointments 67–8w
Telephone services 389–90w
Women's employment 818w

Ministry of Defence
Accounting officers 401w
Alcoholic drinks 516w
Civil service agencies 749w
Civil service manpower 859w
Computers in government departments 748w

Ministry of Defence—continued
Contracts for services 852w
Crown immunity 854–5w
Day care of children 96w
Disabled workers 880w
EC grants and loans 753w
Environment protection 852w
Immunity certificates 93–4w, 399–400w
Non-departmental public bodies 753–4w
Office furniture 401w
Official hospitality 516w
Orders and regulations 754w
Performance standards 852w
Telephone services 518–9w

Missing persons
589–90w, 1014

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc.
Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 28–30, 32, 37
European Parliament elections, Points of order (16.03.94) 881
Questions
Balance of trade 820w
Buses, Exports 748w
Car industry 465–6w
Car industry, France 704w
Common agricultural policy 602w
Courts, Disclosure of information 862–3w
EC aid 234–5w
EC integration 821w
EC internal trade, Manufacturing industries 743w
Economic growth 821–2w
Engineering industries, Productivity 741–2w
Fewston Transport, Motor vehicle safety 4–5w
Fisheries, France 814w
Fisheries, Norway 492–3w
Fishing catches, Norway 491–2w
Flats over shops initiative 43–4w, 294w
Foreign trade, Japan 743w
Fraud, Convictions 229w
Fraud, Prosecutions 206w
Fraud, Trials 208w
Government securities 456w
Industrial investment 820w
Inflation 455–6w
Insolvency 208–10w, 249–50w
Insolvency, Disqualifications 209w
Insolvency, Professional misconduct 207–8w
Insolvency Service, Information technology 207w
Insolvency Service, Privatisation 206–7w
Investment, Interest rates 672w
Legal aid scheme 498w
Manufactured goods, Overseas trade 795–6w
Manufactured imports 468w
Manufacturing industries 246w, 742w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 806w
Manufacturing industries, Working hours 821w
Members' correspondence, Dept of Social Security 783w
Microwaves, Safety standards 344w
Ministers, Government departments 465w
Money supply 570–1w
Motor vehicles, Imports 469w
Overseas aid 234w, 685w
Overseas aid, Charities 235w
Overseas Development Administration, Contracts 235w
Parliamentary questions, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 645w
Plugs and sockets, Harmonisation of standards 332w
Productivity, Pay incentives 433w
Public records, Local government functions 679w

Mitchell, Mr Austin—continued
Public sector borrowing requirement 331w
Rover Group 206w
Rover Group, BMW 18w
Rover Group, Cars 206w
UK trade with EC 469w
Unemployment 714–5w, 809w

Moate, Sir Roger
Questions
Apples, Intervention stocks 490w
Blackcurrants, Food imports 388w
Horticulture, Imports 730w
Orchard replanting scheme 606w

Mobile homes
107w

Mobility of disabled
Taxis 118w

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 355–6
Questions
Northern Ireland government 1000

Money supply
570–1w

Monopolies
Ice cream 574w

Monopolies and Mergers Commission
Private health services 835w

Monro, Sir Hector, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Questions
Agricultural subsidies, Norway 261–2w
Birds, Scotland 661w, 733w
Common fisheries policy 664w
Dounreay, Radioactive waste disposal 55–6w
Fisheries, Scotland 662–3w
Fishery protection, Scotland 658w
Fishing vessels, Scotland 662–3w
Forestry 55w
Forestry, Environment protection 547w
Forestry Commission 376w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 55w
Forests, Scotland 733w
Freshwater fishing, Scotland 734w
Milk marketing scheme, Scotland 379w
Ministers 898w
Peat bogs, Scotland 126w
Sites of special scientific interest, Scotland 124w

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 638–41

Moonie, Dr Lewis
Questions
"New Structure for Postgraduate Research Training Supported by Research Councils" 255w
Technology Foresight programme 16

Moorland Prison
775–7w
Prison escapes 231–2w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 798, 800, 827
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 938–48, 955, 959, 978–9
Questions
Administrative costs, Northern Ireland Office 495w
Cardiff Bay barrage 36w, 675w, 907–8w
Cardiff Bay barrage, Environment protection 871w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri—continued
Civil service agencies 80w
Company registration 212w
Development Board for Rural Wales 603
Government departments, Wales 634w
Health service staff, Wales 907w
Heart diseases, Wales 696w
NHS finance, Wales 634w, 907w
NHS trusts, Loans 525–6w
NHS trusts, Wales 634w
Non-departmental public bodies, Conflict of interests 634w
Non-departmental public bodies, Wales 634w, 694w
Prescriptions, Sports 528w
Watt Committee on Energy, Methane 574w
Welsh Development Agency, Directors 528w
Welsh Office, Capital investment 527w

Morley, Mr Elliot
Questions
Agricultural subsidies 729w
Agriculture, Environment protection 604w
Animal welfare, Orders and Regulations 670w
Birds, Scotland 661w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Transmissable encephalopathies 900w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 489w
Dounreay, Radioactive waste disposal 55–6w
Environment protection, EC law 290w
Export of live animals, Prosecutions 606–7w
Fish, Minimum prices 495w
Fish conservation 817w
Fisheries, EC action 279–80w
Fisheries, France 281w
Fishery decommissioning scheme 817w
Flood defence committees, Conflict of interests 197w
Flood defence committees, Public appointments 64–5w, 195–6w
Floods 387w
Forestry Commission 376w
Import of live animals, Poland 815w, 901–2w
Ministers 898w
Nature conservation, EC law 7w
Poisoning, Prosecutions 391w
Pollution control, Treaties 44–5w
St Mary's Hospital Medical School London, Animal experiments 896w
Sheep, Import of live animals 899–900w
Sites of special scientific interest 369w
Sites of special scientific interest, Management agreements 576–7w
Sites of special scientific interest, Prosecutions 576w
Sites of special scientific interest, Scotland 124w
Sites of special scientific interest, Wales 153w
Slaughterhouses, Scotland 63w
Westhay Moor 369w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 540–4, 556, 583
Commonwealth Institute (17.03.94) 1055
War pensions (17.03.94) 1032–5
Questions
City pride 677w
Foreign investment in UK, Japan 250w
Greater Manchester Buses, Buy outs 864w
Handicapped, Government grants to voluntary organisations 89w
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, Government grants to voluntary organisations 89w
Tenant management organisations, Government grants 681w

Morris, Ms Estelle
Questions
Education officers, Birmingham City Council 26w

Morris, Ms Estelle—continued
Schools, Amyl nitrite 883w
Schools, Birmingham 25w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 778–81
Questions
Legislative process 70w

Moss, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Independent, Takeovers 906–7w

Motability
478–80w

Motor insurance
Law enforcement 356w
Northern Ireland 141w

Motor vehicle registration
117w
Musical instruments 687w

Motor vehicle safety
Fewston Transport 4–5w
Grant maintained schools 25w
Minibuses 120w
Road construction 4–5w
School transport 25w

Motor vehicle theft
Northern Ireland 261w
Prison sentences 261w
Yorkshire and Humberside 597w

Motor vehicles
Imports 469w

Motorways
652w
Chelmsford (17.03.94) 1063–4
M25 (17.03.94) 1063–4
Road construction 1w
Scotland 734w
Wales 524w

Mowlam, Ms Marjorie
Questions
Arts Council 213w, 311w
Drama, Arts Council grants 480w
Film, Exports 481w
Museums and galleries 609–10w
National lottery 897w
Television licences 5

Mudie, Mr George
Debates etc.
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 187–92, 215–7

Mullin, Mr Chris
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Northern Ireland Military Reaction Force 656w
Dogs, Local authority powers 878
Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation 331w
Long, George, Criminal appeals 763w
Police interrogation, Northern Ireland 842w

Multiple sclerosis
Medical treatments 161–2w
Research 538–9w

Multiply handicapped
Wales 363w

Murphy, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 782, 831–4, 836
Questions
Railway transport, Wales 601

Murrell, Hilda
Homicide 356–7w

Museums and galleries
609–10w
Duxford 396–7
Scotland 11

Musical instruments
Motor vehicle registration 687w

Mycoplasma bovis
816–7w

Nadir, Asil
Bankruptcy 741w

National Advisory Council on Employment of People with Disabilities
Public appointments 642–3w

National Alliance of Women's Organisations
Government grants to voluntary organisations 172w, 360w, 500w

National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
Blackpool and the Fylde College 338w

National Blood Authority
440–1w

National Coal Board
see British Coal Corporation

National Council for Vocational Qualifications
Public appointments 643–4w

National Council of Victim Support
Government grants 706–7w

National Engineering Laboratory
Redundancy 799w

National Finance
see Treasury

National Health Service & Community Care Act 1990
Questions
891–2w

National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery
Health service staff 159w
Hospital closures 159w

National income
98–9w, 825w
Wales 521–2w

National insurance contributions
Yorkshire and Humberside 32w

National lottery
11, 50w, 450w, 686w, 897w
Arts finance 11

National vocational qualifications
Environment protection 789w

National Week of Science Engineering and Technology
487w

NATO
517w

Natural gas
EC action (17.03.94) 1067–9

Nature Conservancy Council for England
583w
Countryside Commission 301w

Nature conservation
EC law 7w

Naval Support Command
252–3w

Navy
Armed forces recruitment 202w

Needham, Mr Richard, Minister for Trade
Questions
Aid financed trade 740w
Aid financed trade, Malaysia 740w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Witnesses 745w
Arms trade, Export credit guarantees 251–2w

Needham, Mr Richard—continued
Balance of payments 274
Buses, Exports 748w
Cars, Imports 467w
Chemical Weapons Convention 18w
Contracts, Malaysia 740w
EC internal trade, Manufacturing industries 743w
Environment protection, Equipment 247w
Export credit guarantees 275
Exports, Malaysia 274
Exports, South East Asia 274
Exports, Steel leghold traps 267
Foreign trade, Japan 743w
Imports, Malaysia 468–9w
Know-how Fund, Eastern Europe 466–8w
Manufactured goods, Overseas trade 795–6w
Manufactured imports 468w
Manufacturing industries 742w
Mines, Export controls 246w
Ministers' visits abroad, Indonesia 470w
Motor vehicles, Imports 469w
Overseas investment 743w
Overseas trade, Indonesia 470w
Overseas trade, Iran 470w
Overseas trade, Malaysia 470w
Philippines, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 452w
Power industry, Exports 248–9w
Trade agreements, Malaysia 274–5
UK trade with EC 469w
World Trade Organisation 741w
World Trade Organisation, GATT 741w

Negligence
536w

***Nelson, Mr Anthony**, Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc.
Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 23, 31–8
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Treasury 455w
Balance of trade 820w
Bank notes 221w
Building societies, Profits 222w
Central Statistical Office, Contracts for services 575w
Clearing banks, Bank charges 32–3w
Commemorative coins 330w
Council tax, Valuation 220w
Day care of children, Treasury 223–4w
Debts, Cuba 571w
EC integration 821w
Economic growth 821–2w
Government buildings, Treasury 455w
Government securities 456w
Government securities, Economic policy 822–4w
Industrial investment 820w
Inflation 455–6w
Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation 331w
Manufacturing industries, Working hours 821w
Ministers' visits abroad, Indonesia 570w
Money supply 570–1w
National income 98–9w, 825w
Office furniture, Treasury 455w
Open government, Treasury 821w
Overseas investment 251–2w
Paris club, Debt rescheduling 220–1w
Public sector borrowing requirement 221w, 331w
Structural adjustment, Subsaharan Africa 673w
Telephone services, Treasury 222w

Network SouthEast
Railway stations 508w

Neubert, Sir Michael
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 200w

Neubert, Sir Michael—continued
Channel Four, Broadcasting licences 53w
EC labour policy 731
Markets, Deregulation initiative 250w
Open government 78w
Overseas workers, Employment opportunities 644w

New Roads & Street Works Act 1991
Questions
8w

"New Structure for Postgraduate Research Training Supported by Research Councils"
255w

New Towns (Amendment) Bill (HL) 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R* & rem stages* (11.03.94) 590

Newspaper press
Retail trade 204w

***Newton, Rt Hon Tony**, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc.
Business statements (10.03.94) 411–21
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 340–6, 355
Recess motions (17.03.94) 1068–71
Questions
Business questions 1018–28
Business statements 1017–8
Deregulation initiative, Legislation 845w
House of Commons divisions 513w
Immunity certificates, Disclosure of information 730w
Members, Car allowances 884–5w
Orders and regulations 127–8w
"Register of Members' Interests" 513w

NHS
Contracts for services 84w
Dental services 159w
Dentists 342–3w
Departmental forms 727w
Ethics 303w
Fraud 438w
Income 831w
Management consultants 537w
Privatisation 378w
Public appointments 440w
Public relations 307w, 537w
Regulatory system 886w
Scotland 54w, 378w
Telephone services 54w, 443w
Tobacco industry 566–7w

NHS administration
539–40w
Managers 563–4w

NHS and private practice
838w
Blood transfusion services 567w, 889w
Dental services 830w
Hospital consultants 558w
Hospital waiting lists 566w

NHS complaints
832w

NHS finance
Wales 634w, 698w, 907w

NHS low income scheme
839w
Spectacles 160w

NHS reform
564w

NHS Supplies Authority
159–60w

NHS trusts
535w, 562w
Amenity beds 839w
Audit 345w
Contracts of employment 154w, 891–2w
Expenditure 740–1
External financing limits 560w
Finance 562w
Financial targets 157w, 163–4w, 560–2w
Hospital catering 306w
Loans 525–6w
Managers 155w, 162w
Private health services 836w
Public meetings 560w
Salford 347w
Scotland 542–4w
Wales 154–5w, 157w, 525–6w, 634w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Questions
Business questions 1023
Life imprisonment, Homicide 384
Press, Photographs 7
Prisoners' release 233w
Technology Foresight programme 15–6

Nicholson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1268
Crime, Rural areas (17.03.94) 1040
Europe (18.03.94) 1295–8
Questions
Clearing banks, Bank charges 32–3w
Council house waiting lists 871–2
Deregulation initiative, Food shops 272–3
Drugs, Counterfeit manufacturing 719–20w
Drugs, Imports 559w
Drugs, Parallel imports 726w
Pre-school education 236w
Regional aid, EC grants and loans 209w
VAT, Tax evasion 222w

9 Squadron
Air force strength 420w

Nitrogen dioxide
Air pollution control 874
Asthma 874

Noise
F15 aircraft 420w
Wind power 797w

Noise control
Airports 122w

Non-departmental public bodies
24w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 693w
Conflict of interests 634w
Dept for Education 702w
Dept of Employment 719w, 812w
Dept of Health 728–9w
Dept of Social Security 709–10w
Dept of the Environment 681–2w, 869w
Dept of Trade and Industry 739w
Dept of Transport 686w, 688w
Disclosure of information 450w
Home Office 669w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 730w
Ministry of Defence 753–4w
Northern Ireland Office 705w
Public appointments 125w, 610, 850w
Scottish Office 731w
Wales 521w, 610–2, 634w, 694w
Welsh Office 696–7w

Non-domestic rates
Rateable value (16.03.94) 905–26

Non-fossil fuel obligation
607, 798w, 906w

Norfolk
Road construction 10w

Norman Shaw buildings
Parliamentary building maintenance and repair 127w

Norris, Mr Steve, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport
Debates etc.
M11, Road construction (11.03.94) 597–600
Northern line (17.03.94) 1137–45
Questions
Air routes, Poland 647–8w
Air safety, Smoke hoods 507w
Airports, Noise control 122w
Bus lanes, Greater London 652–3w
Civil service agencies, Dept of Transport 508–9w
Consultants, Dept of Transport 2–4w
Crossrail 10–1w
East London river crossing, Compulsory purchase 512w
Government buildings, Dept of Transport 649w
Leeds-Bradford Airport 650w
Leeds-Bradford Airport, Airmisses 691w
Leeds-Bradford Airport, Airport tax 651–2w
London Regional Passengers Committee 121w
M11, Contracts 314–5w
MARPOL Convention 272w
MFV Copia, Shipping accidents 692w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept of Transport 686w, 688w
North Circular Road, Departmental correspondence 648–9w
Northern line, Modernisation 315w
Oil pollution 122w
Oil pollution, Irish Sea 269w, 271w
Orders and regulations, Dept of Transport 687w
Ports, Oil pollution control 315w
Priority routes 316–7w
Shipping, Sea pollution 122w
Shipping registration, Liverpool 692–3w
Stansted Airport 118w
Statutory sick pay, Dept of Transport 2w
Taxis, Mobility of disabled 118w
Telephone services, Dept of Transport 316w
Transport 117–8w
Travel cards, Greater London 690w
Wandsworth Borough Council, Air traffic 649w

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
see NATO

North Circular Road
Departmental correspondence 648–9w

North East region
Fisheries 903w

North Korea
Nuclear reactors 242w

North Norfolk action
636w

North Sea
Sea pollution 64w, 111w

North West region
Allergies 726w
Development agencies 467w
House renovation grants 48–50w
Jobclubs 727
Unemployment 181w
Youth unemployment 181w

Northern Ireland
Abortion 866–7w
Administration of justice 142–4w
Appropriations in aid (07.03.94) 39–122
Blood transfusion services 497–8w, 844–5w

Northern Ireland—continued
Bovine tuberculosis 259w
Bridges 76–7w
Building industry 842w
Cereals 436w
Community care 841w
Crime 142w
Criminal injuries compensation 865–6w
Criminal injuries compensation scheme 844w
Custodial treatment 350w
Dental charges 868w
Dental services 436–7w, 618w
EC grants and loans 613–5w, 1010
European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund 614w
European Regional Development Fund 614–5w
European Social Fund 613w, 615–6w
Fine defaulters 839w
Fish 348w
Fish farming 348–9w, 435–6w
Fisheries 436w
Foreign investment in UK 612w, 841w, 1007
Hospital beds 867–8w
Hospital consultants 839w
Hospital waiting lists 74–5w
Housing 77–8w
Industry 840–1w
Integrated schools 842w
Life imprisonment 384
Low flying 197w
Motor insurance 141w
Motor vehicle theft 261w
Outdoor education 617–8w
Playing fields 844w
Police interrogation 842w
Power failures 75w
Prison sentences 261w
Prisoners' home leave 617w
Prisoners' transfers 411–2w
Privatisation 1003–5
Road accidents 260–1w
Road construction 75–6w
Salmon 259w, 348w
Student numbers 841–2w
Teacher training 352w
Teachers 351–2w
Terrorism 143–50w, (09.03.94) 292–339, 841w, 1009
UK contributions to EC budget 616–7w
Voluntary organisations 1010
Water treatment 351w
Women 866–7

Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee
(09.03.94) 340–71

Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund
EC grants and loans 614w

Northern Ireland Dept of Health and Social Services
Day care of children 867w

Northern Ireland government
24w, 151w, 497w, 741–2, 841–2w, 844w, 1000–2, 1005–10
Peace negotiations (17.03.94) 1048–51
Political parties 840w, 999

Northern Ireland health and social services boards
Equal opportunities 255–60w

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Heating 75w
Religion 612–3w
Tenancy agreements 843–4w

Northern Ireland Military Reaction Force
Armed forces deployment 656w

Northern Ireland Office
Administrative costs 495w
Advertising 350–1w
Alcoholic drinks 496w
Computers in government departments 705w

Northern Ireland Office—continued
Non-departmental public bodies 705w
Office furniture 496w
Official hospitality 497w
Orders and regulations 705w
Public appointments 141w

Northern line
Consolidated fund debates (17.03.94) 1126–45
Modernisation 315w

Northumberland
Dental services 158w
Government grants to local authorities 106–7w

Northumberland Training and Enterprise Council
Government grants 63w

Norway
Agricultural subsidies 261–2w
Fisheries 492–3w
Fishing catches 491–2w

Nottingham
Repossession orders 743

Nuclear disarmament
Strategic nuclear weapons 139

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Sellafield 250w
THORP 250w

Nuclear Installations (Increase of Operators Limits of Liability) Order 1994
Debates etc.
(16.03.94) 926

Nuclear non proliferation
136, 143–4

Nuclear power
745w, 797w, 874

Nuclear reactors
North Korea 242w

Nuclear safety
Sellafield 203w

Nursery Education (Assessment of Need) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
Order for resuming adjourned 2R read (11.03.94) 592, (18.03.94) 1301

Nursery schools
Wales 288w

Nurses
Manpower 827w
Prescriptions 442w

Nurses' homes
Empty housing 533w

Nurses' training
Higher education teachers 847w

Nursing homes
Inspections 559w

Nutrition and health
School meals 703w

NYNEX CableComms Bolton
Road works 8w

O'Brien, Mr Mike
Questions
Child Support Agency 213–4w
Magistrates 758w
Magistrates, Public appointments 893w
Opencast mining, Birch Coppice 578w
Redundancy, EC law 431–2w

O'Brien, Mr William
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 114–6, 122
Questions
Magistrates' courts committees, Justices' clerks 615–6

Occupied territories
Death 472w
Israel 244w, 584w, 881w

Octopuses
415–6w

OECD countries
Day care of children 447w

Offenders
Proceeds of crime 502w

Office furniture
Attorney General 485w
Dept for Education 530w
Dept of Health 343w
Dept of National Heritage 685w
Dept of the Environment 785w
Dept of Transport 508w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 340w
Home Office 499w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 490w
Ministry of Defence 401w
Northern Ireland Office 496w
Prime Minister 100w
Scottish Office 737w
Treasury 455w
Welsh Office 287w

Office of the Social Security Commissioners
see Social Security Commissioners

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees
see UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Office of Water Services
Water charges 878–9
Yorkshire and Humberside 747w

Offices
Customs and Excise 868w
Dept of Trade and Industry 280–1

Official engagements
84–5w, 100w, 319w, 646w, 813w

Official gifts
319w
Prime Minister 100w

Official hospitality
Army 395–6w
Attorney General 485w
Dept for Education 531w
Dept of Employment 713w
Dept of Health 885w
Dept of National Heritage 685w
Dept of Social Security 707w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 340w
Home Office 500w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 490w
Ministry of Defence 516w
Northern Ireland Office 497w
Prime Minister 703w
Welsh Office 288w

Official visits
Dept of the Environment 368w
Menwith Hill 137–8
Parliamentary constituencies 647w
Prime Minister 463w
Turkey 448w

O'Hara, Mr Edward
Questions
Fire services, Local government finance 352–3w

Oil and Pipelines Agency
Public appointments 851w

Oil pollution
122w
Irish Sea 269w, 271w

Oil pollution control
Ports 315w

Oilseed rape
Agricultural subsidies 606w
Prices 276–7w

Olive oil
Prices 273–4w

O'Neill, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
(16.03.94) 926
Nuclear Installations (Increase of Operators Limits of Liability) Order 1994 (16.03.94) 926
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 909, 915

Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Questions
Airports, Noise control 122w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Gas consumption 453–4w
Energy conservation, Government departments 416w
Fisheries, Denmark 280–1w

Open government
16–7, 78w, 394
Dept for Education 882–3w
Dept of Employment 810w
Dept of Health 834w
Dept of Social Security 879w
Dept of the Environment 870w
Health and Safety Executive 810w
Home Office 892w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 902w
Treasury 821w
Welsh Office 801w

Opencast mining
Birch Coppice 578w
Planning permission 295w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Questions
Car industry 278–9
Local government corruption 876
Unemployment 738

Opposition days
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 423–506

Optical character recognition
Post Office 209–10w

Oral questions
Speaker's rulings and statements (16.03.94) 881

Orchard replanting scheme
606w

Orchestras
Arts Council grants 611w

Orders and regulations
127–8w
Animal welfare 670w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 693w
Dept for Education 702w
Dept of Employment 812w
Dept of Health 728w
Dept of Social Security 707w
Dept of the Environment 682w
Dept of Trade and Industry 799w
Dept of Transport 687w
Home Office 669w
Ministry of Defence 754w
Northern Ireland Office 705w
Scottish Office 731–2w
Welsh Office 696w

Ordination of Women (Financial Provisions) Measure 1993
Questions
541–2w

Orimulsion
Wales 365w

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Questions
City pride 877
Festivals and special occasions, D-day landings 12–3

Osman, Lorrain Esme
Disclosure of information 646w, 881–2w

Osteoporosis
Greater London 725–6w
Scotland 126w
Screening 126w, 725–6w

Out of school childcare grant scheme
734–5

Outdoor education
625w
Northern Ireland 617–8w
Safety standards 644w, 719w
Scotland 734w
Wales 633w

Out-patients
Retirement pensions 711–2w
Wales 632w

Oval cricket ground
Duchy of Cornwall 822w

Ovaries
Cancer 827–8w

Overseas aid
11–2w, 147–8, 234w, 483w, 685w
Belize 700w
Charities 235w
China 484w
Cost effectiveness 314w
Indonesia 449w
Iraq 148
Pergau dam 313w
Philippines 482w
Sudan 585w, 684–5w
Yugoslavia 517w

Overseas Development
see Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Overseas Development Administration
Contracts 235w
Philippines 450w

Overseas investment
251–2w, 743w

Overseas trade
Indonesia 470w
Iran 470w
Malaysia 470w
Manufactured goods 795–6w

Overseas workers
Employment opportunities 644w
Employment protection 20–1w

Owner occupied housing
Energy Saving Trust 680w

Paice, Mr James
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 416–7
Questions
Training and enterprise councils 731

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 55, 58, 60, 66–74
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 532, 577–8
Terrorism, Points of order (11.03.94) 522–3
Questions
EC grants and loans, Northern Ireland 613–5w
European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, Northern Ireland 614w
European Regional Development Fund, Northern Ireland 614–5w
European Social Fund, Northern Ireland 613w, 615–6w
Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund, EC grants and loans 614w
Ports, Ballycastle 1003
UK contributions to EC budget, Northern Ireland 616–7w

Pakistan
Homicide 702w

Palestinians
Health aid 482–3w

Parallel imports
Drugs 726w

Parental leave
737
EC law 736–7

Paris club
Debt rescheduling 220–1w

Parkhurst Prison
Mental health services 599w

Parking
Handicapped drivers 405–6w

Parliamentary broadcasting
100–1w
Broadcasting reception 52w
Speaker's rulings and statements (07.03.94) 21

Parliamentary building maintenance and repair
Norman Shaw buildings 127w

Parliamentary buildings
Energy conservation 127w
Rents 512–3w

Parliamentary Commissioner Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R* (11.03.94) 592
Parliamentary constituencies
Official visits 647w

Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology
16

Parliamentary questions
Agriculture 388w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 488w, 645w, 784w
Dept of Social Security 879–80w
Royal residences 611w

Parole
16–7w
Life imprisonment 358w

Parole Board for Scotland
378w

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Ammunition, Waste disposal 858w
Beauforts Dyke, Explosives 520w
Cuba, Foreign relations 804w
Indonesia, Arms trade 474w
Iraq, Sanctions 21w
Kurds, Iran 472w
Kurds, Iraq 21–2w, 472w
Kurds, Syrian Arab Republic 472w
Libyan Arab Republic, Sanctions 22w
Local government corruption, Liverpool City Council 787w
Overseas trade, Iran 470w
Shipping registration, Liverpool 692–3w
Single regeneration budget 462w
South Korea, Military exercises 701w
Sri Lanka 474w
Turkey, Foreign relations 21w
Turkey, Human rights 21w
Turkey, Kurds 21w

Part-time employment
Doncaster 637–8w
Employment protection 431w
Women's employment 695w

Parvaiz, Zahid
598w

Passenger carrying vehicle test
119w

Passive smoking
Asthma 886w

Passport Agency
see United Kingdom Passport Agency

Pastoral (Amendment) Measure 1994
Debates etc.
(08.03.94) 249–58

Patent Office
Privatisation 206w

Paternity leave
735

Patients
Dentists 830–2w
Greater London 729w
Medical treatments 157w
Wales 157w

Patient's Charter
889w

Patients' rights
Doctors' list of patients 565–6w

Patnick, Mr Irvine, Lord Commissioner of the Treasury
Debates etc.
Fenchurch Street Station (17.03.94) 1224

Patten, Rt Hon John, Secretary of State for Education
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Dept for Education 531w
Dept for Education, Cash limits 849w
Education officers, Birmingham City Council 26w
Office furniture, Dept for Education 530w
Official hospitality, Dept for Education 531w
Schools, Birmingham 25w
Schools, Lewisham 531w
Schools, Staffordshire 846w

Pawsey, Mr James
Questions
Cereals 601w
Cereals, Intervention stocks 491w
Defence expenditure 198w
Information services 390w
Overseas investment 251–2w, 743w

Pay beds
443–4w
Scotland 62w
Trent Regional Health Authority 721w
Wales 287w

Pay incentives
Productivity 433w

Peace keeping operations
Costs 200w

Peace negotiations
Northern Ireland government (17.03.94) 1048–51
Sudan 243w, 473w

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 459–61
Questions
Milk, Agricultural marketing 607–8w

Peat bogs
Scotland 126w

Pembrokeshire
Health services 156w

Pembrokeshire Health Authority
Capital 155–6w
Health service staff 155w

Pembrokeshire NHS Trust
Capital 155–6w
Capital investment 156w
Health service staff 155w

Penalty fares
Railway fares 272w

Pennine Way
44w

Pension funds
British Rail 512w

Pensioners
(17.03.94) 1035–8
Energy prices 135–6w

Pensions
Railway workers 317–8w

Performance related pay
Dept of Social Security 480w

Pergau dam
Construction costs 684w
Overseas aid 313w

"Permanent Secretary's Handbook"
256w, 402w

Personal injury
Legal aid 331w

Personal pensions
629–30w

Personal savings
Taxation 98w

Personal tax allowances
327w

Personal taxation
Tax burden 324–5w

Pesticides
Fish farming 64w

Peto Institute
728–9w

Petroleum exploration licences
300–1w

Pets
Animal welfare 14w

Philippines
Arms trade 749w
BC aid 482w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 452w
Overseas aid 482w
Overseas Development Administration 450w

Photographs
Press 7

Physical education
52w

Pickles, Mr Eric
Questions
Council tax 873–4

Pickthall, Mr Colin
Questions
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Waste disposal 494w
Entertainment licensing, Hypnosis 598–9w
Hypnosis, Entertainments 567w

Pigment
Wales 522w

Pigs
Animal welfare 65w

Pike, Mr Peter L
Debates etc.
Decorations for Gallantry (Display) Bill, 1R (09.03.94) 289–91
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 632
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 158–9, 162–3, 229, 230–1
Questions
Ambulance services, Emergency calls 719w
Building industry 865
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 845w
Local government expenditure 289–90w

Pinochet, Augusto
882w
Security 781w

Planning blight
A27 5w

Planning permission
Flags 505w
Opencast mining 295w
Shopping centres 683w
Sports facilities 676w
Supermarkets 865
Water supply 290–1w
Wind power 461w

Play
Children 3

Play facilities
Children 50w

Playing fields
Greater London 897w
Lambeth 897w
Northern Ireland 844w

Plugs and sockets
Harmonisation of standards 332w

Plymouth
Habitual offenders 229w
Roundabouts 121–2w

Plymouth Development Corporation
109w

Poaching
Fish 348w
Salmon 259w, 348w

Poisoning
Prosecutions 391w

Poland
Air routes 647–8w
Import of live animals 815w, 899–902w

Police
361–2w
Arrests 228–30w
British dependent territories 113–4w
Expenditure 227–8w
Gloucestershire 355w
Local government functions 388
Pay 175w
Resignations 171–2w
War Crimes Act 1991 352w
Yorkshire and Humberside 596w, 765–6w

Police accountability
388–9

Police & Magistrates' Courts Bill (HL) 1993/94
Questions
385, 615–6

Police authorities
385–6
South Wales 385
Yorkshire and Humberside 229w

Police Authority for Northern Ireland
Public appointments 842–3w

Police cautions
Habitual offenders 356w

Police custody
353–5w
Greater Manchester 354w
Merseyside 354w

Police informers
Drugs and crime 503w

Police interrogation
Northern Ireland 842w

Police Negotiating Board
356w

Police powers
389

Police Responsibilities and Rewards Inquiry
501w

Police training
Arrests 358–9w
Mentally ill 84w

Political impartiality
Judges 757w
Magistrates 758w

Political parties
Northern Ireland government 840w, 999

Political refugees
500w, 590–1w, 593w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 360w
Hospital beds 563w
Immigrant detainees 501w, 591–2w
Immigration controls 500w

Pollution
Coal mining 868

Pollution control
Land pollution (15.03.94) 747
Treaties 44–5w

Pollution monitoring
ReChem International 801–2w

Pope, Mr Greg
Questions
Grants for education support and training 32w

Population
308–10w

Pornography
Advertising controls 413w

Porter, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 59–60
Questions
Priority routes 316–7w

Porter, Mr David
Debates etc.
Pensioners (17.03.94) 1035–8
Questions
Dogs, Local authority powers 463w
Health hazards, Dogs 536w
Road construction, Suffolk 10w

Ports
Ballycastle 1003
Oil pollution control 315w
Rathlin Island 1002–3

POST
see Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology

Post Office
Optical character recognition 209–10w

Post offices
Franchising 333–5w
Redundancy 333w
Scotland 333–5w
South Yorkshire 744w

Postal deliveries
337w

Postgraduate education
Science and technology 78w

Potatoes
Agricultural subsidies 66–7w
Prices 277–8w

Poultry
Salmonella 901–2w

Poverty
Children 217w

Powell, Mr Ray
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 759–60, 777–8, 797–8, 850
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 939
Questions
Non-departmental public bodies, Public appointments 610
Norman Shaw buildings, Parliamentary building maintenance and repair 127w
Parliamentary buildings, Energy conservation 127w
Parliamentary buildings, Rents 512–3w

Power failures
Northern Ireland 75w

Power industry
745–6w
Exports 248–9w

Pregnancy
Prescription drugs 160–1w

Pregnant women
Armed forces discharges 519w

Prentice, Mrs Bridget
Questions
Abortion 725w
Abortion, Northern Ireland 866–7w
Asthma, Air pollution 157w
Attorney General 1011
Cost per pupil, London boroughs 423w
Family credit, Lewisham 135w
Forests, Scotland 733w
GP fundholders, Lewisham 302–3w
Grant maintained schools, Greater London 620–4w
Heart pacemakers 83w
Heart pacemakers, Death 82w
Heart pacemakers, Health warnings 81–2w
National Alliance of Women's Organisations, Government grants to voluntary organisations 360w, 500w
Osteoporosis, Screening 725–6w
Pornography, Advertising controls 413w
Pupil exclusions, Greater London 623w
Schools, Lewisham 531w
Social security benefits, Energy prices 630–1w
Social security benefits, Greater London 630w
Standard spending assessments 289w
Tax burden, Greater London 98w
Taxation, Lewisham 869–70w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits rules 630w
Water supply disconnections 679w
Water supply disconnections, Greater London 581w

Prentice, Mr Gordon
Debates etc.
Hartley Hospital, Property transfer (17.03.94) 1225–30
Questions
A56, Road traffic 653w
Aerospace industry, Manpower 433–4w
Allergies, Algae 726w
Beer, Measurement 574–5w
British Telecom, Regulatory system 210w
Coastal erosion 813w
Council tax, Transitional arrangements 43w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Competition 18w
Drug crimes, Prisoners 381
Food stocks 606w
Higher civil servants 79w
Hospital doctors, Disciplinary proceedings 342w
Inheritance tax, Access to countryside 98w, 220w
Insurance, Road haulage industry 745w
Lancashire Constabulary, Emergency calls 587w
Listed buildings, Demolition 107w
Local government finance, Lancashire 680–1w
Local government reform 581w
Magistrates, Public appointments 68w
Manufacturing industries, Civil servants' secondment 796w
Multiple sclerosis, Research 538–9w
Overseas aid 11–2w
Pakistan, Homicide 702w
Pennine Way 44w
Planning permission, Wind power 461w
Post Office, Optical character recognition 209–10w
Rolls-Royce, Government assistance 454w
Taxpayers 673w
Telecommunications technology 486–7w
Training and enterprise councils 731

Pre-school education
236w, 1012–3
Borders region 899w
Costs 31w

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 495–8
Questions
Unemployment 729

Prescription charges
834w

Prescription drugs
565w
GP fundholders 834w
Pregnancy 160–1w

Prescriptions
Ear nose and throat 563w
Nurses 442w
Private health services 83w
Sports 528w
Wales 528w

Press
Photographs 7
Trials 6–7

Press Complaints Commission
6

Prevention of Pollution (Reception Facilities) Order 1984
Questions
315w

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994
Debates etc.
(09.03.94) 292–339

Price Marking Order 1991
Questions
905w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Questions
Amenity beds, NHS trusts 839w
Cancer, Skin disorders 538w
Crisis loans 218w
Deregulation initiative, Companies political contributions 271–2
Doctors, Freedom of expression 567w
Family doctors 833w
Family doctors, Pay 158w
GP fundholders 834w
GP fundholders, Expenditure 537w
Health education 834w
Health insurance 446w
Health visitors 445w
Health visitors, Manpower 444–5w
Health visitors, Training 444w
Hospital beds, Greater London 836w
Hospital consultants, Contracts of employment 343w
Hospital discharges, Scotland 62w
Hospital length of stay 887w
Hospitals, Fees and charges 376–7w
Housing benefits, Private rented housing 218w
Mental patients, Hospital beds 834w
Mentally ill, Crimes of violence 445–6w
NHS, Management consultants 537w
NHS, Public relations 537w
NHS, Regulatory system 886w
NHS low income scheme 839w
NHS trusts, Private health services 836w
Pay beds 443–4w
Pay beds, Scotland 62w
Pay beds, Wales 287w
Prescription charges 834w
Prescriptions, Private health services 83w
Primary health care, Greater London 534w
RU486 836w
St Albans Hospital, Accident and emergency departments 305w
Secure psychiatric units, Hospital beds 447w
Sex education 835w
Suicide 887w
Tax allowances, Health insurance 99w

Primary education
School population 847w

Primary health care
Greater London 534w
Health aid 483w

Prime Minister
398
Alcoholic drinks 100w
Expenditure 319–20w
Immunity certificates 646–7w
Interviews 464w
Jewellery 25w, 464–5w
Office furniture 100w
Official gifts 100w
Official hospitality 703w
Official visits 463w
Travelling expenses 463w

Priority routes
316–7w

Prison accommodation
Doncaster Prison 359w
Scotland 826w

Prison education services
Local government expenditure 232–3w

Prison escapes
Moorland Prison 231–2w

Prison population
767–8w
Blakenhurst Prison 12–3w

Prison sentences
Fine defaulters 172w, 226–8w, 670w, 892w
Motor vehicle theft 261w
Northern Ireland 261w

Prison staff
Blakenhurst Prison 13w
Crimes of violence 355w
Funerals 15w

Prison visiting committees
Scotland 262–6w

Prisoners
Bosnia-Herzegovina 449w
Citizen's Charter 598w
Costs 176w
Deportation 595–6w
Drug abuse 381
Drug crimes 381
Funerals 14w
Social security abuse 708–9w
Social security claims 586w
Yorkshire and Humberside 588–90w

Prisoners & Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993
Questions
61w

Prisoners' home leave
Christmas 769–71w
Northern Ireland 617w

Prisoners on remand
Bail hostels 225w
Yorkshire and Humberside 772–8w

Prisoners' outings
Blakenhurst Prison 14–5w

Prisoners' release
233w, 391
Community care grants 629w

Prisoners' transfers
Blakenhurst Prison 13w
Cornton Vale Prison 267w, 419w
Northern Ireland 411–2w

Prisoners' transport
Death 359–60w
Group 4 Securitas 359–60w

Prisons
Construction costs 17–8w
Directorate of Telecommunications 176–7w
Young offenders 224w

Private bills
Speaker's rulings and statements (14.03.94) 625–6

Private education
Complaints 626w
Inspections 626–7w
Judges 757w

Private health services
GP fundholders 726–7w
Monopolies and Mergers Commission 835w
NHS trusts 836w
Prescriptions 83w

Private Members' motions
Council of Europe (18.03.94) 1234–90
Europe (18.03.94) 1287–96
Western European Union (18.03.94) 1234–90

Private notice questions
Speaker's rulings and statements (11.03.94) 521–2

Private patients
568w
Fees and charges 889–90w

Private rented housing
47w
Housing benefits 218w
Rents 870–1

Private sector
Transport infrastructure 505–6w

Private sector housing
Domestic energy conservation 789w

Privatisation
British Coal Corporation 245w, 250–1w, 332w, 906w
British Rail 121w, 507w, 794w
Insolvency Service 206–7w
NHS 378w
Northern Ireland 1003–5
Patent Office 206w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 246w

Probation and aftercare
16w
West Midlands 229–30w

Probation hostels
West Midlands 230w

Procedure Select Committee
(08.03.94) 258

Proceeds of crime
Offenders 502w

Procurement Executive
252–3w

Production quotas
Dairy farming 279w
Milk 242w

Productivity
Engineering industries 741–2w
Pay incentives 433w

Professional misconduct
Insolvency 207–8w

Profit sharing
571w

Property transfer
Hartley Hospital (17.03.94) 1225–32
RAF Hendon 656w

Prosecutions
Animal welfare 177–8w
Bennett, Paul 739w
Criminal Justice Act 1948 669w
Export of live animals 606–7w
Fraud 206w
Homosexuality (14.03.94) 719–26
Poisoning 391w
Racial incitement 485–6w
Sites of special scientific interest 576w

Protection of Dogs Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
Order for resuming adjourned 2R read (11.03.94) 592

PSV operators licences
687–9w

Public appointments
Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service 640w

Public appointments—continued
Central Arbitration Committee 640w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 488w
Civil Service Arbitration Tribunal 641w
Committees for the Employment of People with Disabilities 716–7w
Construction Industry Training Board 642w
Consumers' Committee for Great Britain 273w
Defence Export Services Organisation 253w, 420w
Dept of Employment 431w
Dept of Health 80–1w
Dept of Trade and Industry 19w
Engineering Construction Industry Training Board 641–2w
Equal Opportunities Commission 643w
Fleet Air Arm Museum 851–2w
Flood defence committees 64–5w, 195–6w
Former members 367w
Health and Safety Executive 643w
HM Inspectorate of Schools 379w
Housing Corporation 111w
Magistrates 68w, 893w
Mersey Regional Health Authority 889w
Meteorological committees 851w
Meteorological Research Sub-Committee 850w
Millennium Commission 610–1w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 67–8w
National Advisory Council on Employment of People with Disabilities 642–3w
National Council for Vocational Qualifications 643–4w
NHS 440w
Non-departmental public bodies 125w, 610, 850w
Northern Ireland Office 141w
Oil and Pipelines Agency 851w
Police Authority for Northern Ireland 842–3w
Race Relations Employment Advisory Service 715w
RAF Museum 850w
Remploy 641w
Research councils 646w
Review Board for Government Contracts 850w
Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland 62w
Royal Marines Museum 851w
Royal Naval Museum 880w
Royal Navy Submarine Museum 851w
Rutherford, Andrew 133w
Scotland 125w, 898–9w
Scottish health boards 267w
Scottish Office 660w
Services Sound and Vision Corporation 850–1w
Sheltered Employment Consultative Group 642w
Sutherland, Stewart 133w
Wales 364w, 367w
Wine Standards Board 195w

Public libraries
Finance 897w

Public meetings
NHS trusts 560w

Public Order Act 1986
Questions
485–6w

Public petitions
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill 1993/94 (11.03.94) 521
Handicapped (11.03.94) 521
Religious education (09.03.94) 371
Video nasties (16.03.94) 989

Public Record Office
615
Civil service dispersal 614

Public records
Local government functions 679w

Public relations
NHS 307w, 537w

Public sector borrowing
744

Public sector borrowing requirement
221w, 331w

Public service obligation grant
British Rail 508w

Public service pensions
Zimbabwe 235w

Publications
Rural Development Commission 298–9w

Publicity
Citizen's Charter 20
Company accounts 210–1w
Electoral Register 360w

Punjab
Human rights (17.03.94) 1058–60

Pupil exclusions
421–2w
Drug abuse 421w
Greater London 623w
Manchester 703w

Purchase, Mr Ken
Questions
Balance of payments 274
Film, Exports 51w
Metrication, Harmonisation of legislation 905w

Quin, Ms Joyce
Debates etc.
Turkey, Kurds (17.03.94) 1168–9
Questions
A1, Gateshead 510–1w

Race bank
Dredging 791w

Race Relations Employment Advisory Service
Public appointments 715w

Racial attacks
414w
Detection rates 413–4w
Law reform 413w
Surveys 413w

Racial Attacks Group
see Interdepartmental Racial Attacks Group

Racial Hatred & Violence Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R adj (11.03.94) 586–9
Questions
387, 390, 1014–5

Racial incitement
Prosecutions 485–6w

Radar
Defence procurement 140–1

Radice, Mr Giles
Questions
Civil service, Pay 434–5w
Civil service agencies, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 401–2w
Civil service agencies, Dept for Education 323w
Civil service agencies, Dept of Employment 514w
Civil service agencies, Dept of Health 440w
Civil service agencies, Dept of National Heritage 311w
Civil service agencies, Dept of Social Security 411w
Civil service agencies, Dept of the Environment 371w
Civil service agencies, Dept of Trade and Industry 746w
Civil service agencies, Dept of Transport 508–9w
Civil service agencies, Home Office 671w
Civil service agencies, Lord Chancellor's Dept 672w

Radice, Mr Giles—continued
Civil service agencies, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 493w
Civil service agencies, Ministry of Defence 749w
Civil service agencies, Scottish Office 659w
Civil service agencies, Treasury 455w
Civil service agencies, Welsh Office 524w
Personal pensions 629–30w, 630w
Russia, Democracy 478w

Radio frequencies
336–7w

Radioactive waste disposal
Cumbria 45w, 579–81w
Dounreay 55–6w
Research 291w
Treaties 282w

Radioactive wastes
Dounreay 112w
Research finance 786w
Sellafield 112w
THORP 579–80w

RAF Carlisle
94w

RAF Finningley
750w, 856w
Air traffic 749–50w
Aircraft 749–50w
Operating costs 750w

RAF Halton
Air Training Corps 517–8w

RAF Hendon
Property transfer 656w

RAF Innsworth
Building repairs 394w

RAF Machrihanish
855w

RAF Museum
Public appointments 850w

RAF Strike Command
Armed forces officers 655–6w

Railtrack
119–20w
Capital 270–1w
Fees and charges 270w
Finance 270w
Legal profession 270w

Railway closures
5–6w
Central line 269w

Railway fares
Doncaster 864–5w
Penalty fares 272w

Railway freight transport
Brakes 510w
Crianlarich 56–7w
Scotland 56–7w

Railway network
Ashford 8w
Channel tunnel 8w, 405w, 865w, (17.03.94) 1056–9
Gravesham (17.03.94) 1056–9
Wales 522w

Railway stations
Closures 863w
Greater London 268–9w
Network SouthEast 508w

Railway timetables
Euston Station 651w

Railway transport
BC Transport Commissioner 601
Telecommunications technology 407w
Wales 601
West Wales 601

Railway travel
Glamorgan 610–1
Government grants to local authorities 9–10w
Tourist industry 1

Railway workers
Drug abuse 408–9w
Drunkenness 408–9w
Pensions 317–8w

Railways Act 1993
Questions
317–8w

Railways (Penalty Fares) Regulations 1994
Questions
272w

Rate rebates
Residential care 890w

Rateable value
Non-domestic rates (16.03.94) 905–26

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Questions
Dept of Trade and Industry, Offices 280–1

Rathlin Island
Ports 1002–3

Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978
Questions
890w

Raynsford, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 635, 641, 658, 664
Local government, Greater London (17.03.94) 1154–60
Northern line (17.03.94) 1128–9
Questions
Financial institutions, Manpower 241w, 810–1w
Housing associations, Rents 864
Network SouthEast, Railway stations 508w

Recess motions
(17.03.94) 1030–73

RECHAR
Wales 609–10

ReChem International
Pollution monitoring 801–2w

Recruitment
Judges 757–8w

Recycling
Batteries 679w
Bottle banks 524w
Research finance 746w
Supplementary credit approvals 524w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Questions
A1-M1 link, Road construction 10w
Abortion, South Yorkshire 306w
Accident and emergency departments, South Yorkshire 564w
Agricultural land, Wales 284w
Air force bases, Yorkshire and Humberside 750–2w, 855–8w
Airport tax, Leeds-Bradford Airport 221w
Arable farming 279w
Armed forces education allowances 397w
Army, Official hospitality 395–6w
Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England and Wales, Sick leave 291w
Bank notes 221w
Benefits Agency district offices, Closures 138w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 859w
Bovine immunodeficiency virus, Yorkshire and Humberside 900w
Brain, Tumours 829–30w
Cancer, Children 829w
Central line, Railway closures 269w
Cereals, Northern Ireland 436w
Citizen's Charter, Prisoners 598w
Coal, Imports 746–7w
Company accounts, Publicity 210–1w
Congenital abnormalities 885–6w
Congenital abnormalities, Medical research 723w
Congenital abnormalities, Trent Regional Health Authority 535w, 831w

Redmond, Mr Martin—continued
Cornwall Healthcare NHS Trust, Legal costs 723w
Council tax, Non-payment 43w
Council tax, Valuation 43w, 220w
Councillors 291w
Criminal injuries compensation 357w
Crisis loans, Doncaster 875w
Custodial treatment, Northern Ireland 350w
Dental services, NHS 159w
Dentists, Patients 830–2w
Doncaster College, College governors 703w
Doncaster Family Health Servics Authority, Expenditure 832w
Employment, Doncaster 809–10w
Employment service local offices, Vacancies 514–5w
Ethnic minorities, Government grants to local authorities 763–4w
Excise duties, Tax evasion 457–8w
F15 aircraft, Noise 420w
Family doctors, Pay 285–6w
Financial Information Project Systems, West Midlands Regional Health Authority 302w, 534w
Financial institutions, Yorkshire and Humberside 806–7w
Fine defaulters, Prison sentences 226–8w
Flags, Planning permission 505w
Forensic Science Service, Finance 671w
Goods vehicles, Road safety 6w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 43w
Health authorities, Disabled workers 827w
Health service staff, Fraud 533w
Health service staff, Redundancy pay 438w
Health services, Inspections 558w
Health Services Management Unit, Finance 160w
Homicide, Yorkshire and Humberside 596w
Hospital catering, NHS trusts 306w
Housing benefits, Doncaster 136–8w, 707–8w
India, Sanctions 700w
Industrial accidents, Doncaster 713–4w
Industrial injuries, Doncaster 629w
Industrial production, South Yorkshire 276
Inheritance tax, Tax allowances 569–70w
Invalidity benefits, Doncaster 631w, 782–3w
Jobclubs, Doncaster 515w
Joyce, Christine, Widows' benefits 708w
Judges, Political impartiality 757w
Judges, Private education 757w
Judges, Working hours 757w
Leeds-Bradford Airport 650w
Leeds-Bradford Airport, Airmisses 691w
Leeds-Bradford Airport, Airport tax 651–2w
Legal aid 761w
Legal aid, Leeds 761–2w
Legal Aid Board, Leeds 760w
Limited list prescribing 159w
Low pay, Doncaster 637w
Magistrates, Disclosure of information 758w
Magistrates, Political impartiality 758w
Medical ethics 343w
Menwith Hill, Ministers' domestic visits 752w
Military aircraft 396–7w
Ministers, Exservicemen 25w
Ministers' domestic visits, Wales 800–1w
Moorland Prison 775–7w
Moorland Prison, Prison escapes 231–2w
Motor vehicle theft, Yorkshire and Humberside 597w

Redmond, Mr Martin—continued
NHS, Contracts for services 84w
NHS, Ethics 303w
NHS, Fraud 438w
NHS, Public appointments 440w
NHS Supplies Authority 159–60w
NHS trusts 535w
NHS trusts, Public meetings 560w
Non-departmental public bodies 24w
Nursing homes, Inspections 559w
Offenders, Proceeds of crime 502w
Oilseed rape, Agricultural subsidies 606w
Overseas aid 483w
Overseas workers, Employment protection 20–1w
Parliamentary questions, Dept of Social Security 879–80w
Part-time employment, Doncaster 637–8w
Pay beds, Trent Regional Health Authority 721w
Pensioners, Energy prices 135–6w
Police 361–2w
Police, Arrests 228–30w
Police, Expenditure 227–8w
Police, Pay 175w
Police, Yorkshire and Humberside 765–6w
Police authorities, Yorkshire and Humberside 229w
Police Responsibilities and Rewards Inquiry 501w
Post offices, South Yorkshire 744w
Prime Minister, Jewellery 464–5w
Prisoners, Costs 176w
Prisoners, Yorkshire and Humberside 588–90w
Prisoners' home leave, Christmas 769–71w
Prisoners' home leave, Northern Ireland 617w
Prisoners on remand, Yorkshire and Humberside 772–8w
RAF Finningley 750w, 856w
RAF Finningley, Air traffic 749–50w
RAF Finningley, Aircraft 749–50w
RAF Finningley, Operating costs 750w
RAF Machrihanish 855w
Railway fares, Doncaster 864–5w
Residential care, Mentally disadvantaged 722w
Retirement pensions, Out-patients 711–2w
Road accidents 498–9w
School crossing patrols 407–8w
Schools, Doncaster 128w
Set-aside schemes 279w
Social fund, Doncaster 710–1w
Social security benefits, Doncaster 219–20w
South Yorkshire Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust, Ambulance services 564w
Special education, Doncaster 627w
Tax burden, Income tax 325–6w
Teacher training, Manpower 134w, 154w, 352w
Teachers, Manpower 133–4w, 154w, 351–2w
Television licences, Fees and charges 101w
10 Downing Street, Operating costs 464w
Territorial Army, Television advertising 397w
Theft 766–8w
Tornado aircraft, Airmisses 398w
Transport supplementary grants, Yorkshire and Humberside 317–9w
Trent Regional Health Authority, Land ownership and tenure 726w
Unemployment benefits, Doncaster 514–5w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits rules 139w
VAT, Doncaster 456–7w
Vehicle number plates 269w
West Midlands Regional Health Authority, Financial Information Project Systems 534w
Wheelchairs, Expenditure 722w
Wild boar, Catterick 396w
Young offenders, Doncaster 593–4w
Young offenders, Yorkshire and Humberside 594w

Redmond, Mr Martin—continued
Youth employment, Doncaster 635w
Youth training, Doncaster 808w
Youth unemployment, Doncaster 717–8w

"Reducing Emissions of Hazardous Chemicals to the Environment Consultation Paper"
788w

Redundancy
Army 94–5w, 141–3
British Aerospace 240–1w
EC law 431–2w
English National Board for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting 441w
Legal Aid Board 554–6w
Legal aid scheme 71–3w
National Engineering Laboratory 799w
Post offices 333w
Rosyth Dockyard 201w
Universities 132–3w
Wansbeck Hospital 159w
Warren Spring Laboratory 799w

Redundancy pay
Health service staff 438w

Redundant churches
(08.03.94) 249–58

Redundant Churches Fund Order 1994
Debates etc.
(16.03.94) 890–904

Redwood, Rt Hon John, Secretary of State for Wales
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 749–62, 766, 768–9, 771, 795, 800, 802–3, 853–4
Questions
Agricultural land, Wales 284w
Agricultural workers, Wales 695w
Agriculture, Deregulation initiative 607
Alcoholic drinks, Welsh Office 365w
British Gas, Wales 602
Bryn-y-Neuadd Hospital, Mentally disturbed offenders 366w
Cardiff Bay barrage 36w, 907–8w
Civil servants, Wales 521–2w
Civil service agencies, Welsh Office 524w
Civil service manpower, Welsh Office 908w
Computers in government departments, Welsh Office 694w
Council house sales, Local government revenue 286–8w
Development Board for Rural Wales 602–3
Devolution, Wales 611
Employment, Clwyd 604
Equal pay, Wales 632w, 694–5w
Eurolink programme, Wales 364–5w
Fire services, Wales 363w
FL Steelcraft, Government grants 695w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 34w, 605–6, 612
Forestry Review Group 633w
Government departments, Wales 634w
Griffiths, Michael, Contracts 282–3w
Handicapped, Energy prices 696w
Health service staff, Wales 907w
Heart diseases, Wales 696w
Hospital waiting lists, Wales 366w
Immunity certificates, Welsh Office 634–5w
Industry, Germany 521w
Inkin, Geoffrey, Working hours 34w
Interreg programme, Wales 612
Meirionnydd 799w
Milk Marketing Board 34w
Milk Marque, Wales 526w
Minimum wage, Wales 633w
Ministers' domestic visits, Wales 800–1w
National income, Wales 521–2w
NHS finance, Wales 634w, 698w, 907w
NHS trusts, Loans 525–6w
NHS trusts, Wales 634w
Non-departmental public bodies, Conflict of interests 634w
Non-departmental public bodies, Disclosure of information 450w

Redwood, Rt Hon John—continued
Non-departmental public bodies, Wales 521w, 611–2, 634w, 694w
Non-departmental public bodies, Welsh Office 696–7w
Nursery schools, Wales 288w
Office furniture, Welsh Office 287w
Official hospitality, Welsh Office 288w
Open government, Welsh Office 801w
Orders and regulations, Welsh Office 696w
Outdoor education, Wales 633w
Prescriptions, Sports 528w
Public appointments, Former members 367w
Public appointments, Wales 364w
Recycling, Bottle banks 524w
Recycling, Supplementary credit approvals 524w
"Research Wales, 1992/93" 34w
Rural areas, Wales 362–3w
Satellite communications, Wales 521w
Standard spending assessments, Dwyfor 365–6w
Telephone services, Welsh Office 522–3w
Tesco, Government grants 523–4w
Unemployment, Clwyd 603–5
Unemployment, Wales 522w, 605–6
Wages councils, Wales 524w
Welsh Development Agency 602
Welsh Development Agency, Directors 528w
Welsh Development Agency, Performance standards 156–7w
Welsh Economic Council 697–8w
Welsh Office, Capital investment 527w
Welsh Office, Deregulation initiative 607
Wines, Wales 366–7w
Women's employment, Part-time employment 695w
Women's employment, Wales 695w

Referendum (Scotland) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R order read (11.03.94) 590

Refugees
369w
Research 176w

Reg(EEC)2377/90
491w

Regional aid
EC grants and loans 209w

Regional challenge
EC grants and loans 204–5w

Regional development agencies
Foreign investment in UK 798w
Government grants 798w

"Register of Members' Interests"
513w

Registration of Small Children's Homes Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R order read (11.03.94) 591

Regulation of Political Funding Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R order read (11.03.94) 590

Regulatory system
British Telecom 210w
NHS 886w

Reid, Dr John
Debates etc.
Parliamentary questions, Points of order (08.03.94) 151–2
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 197
Questions
Armed forces civilians 520w
Armed forces deployment 202w, 520w
Armed forces women, Maternity leave 94w
Army, Redundancy 142
Defence research establishments 202w

Religion
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 612–3w

Religious discrimination
Western Health and Social Services Board 144w

Religious education
Public petitions (09.03.94) 371

Remand in custody
Young offenders 360–1w

Remploy
Public appointments 641w

Rendel, Mr David
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 641–5, 656–7
Questions
Council tax, Transitional arrangements 876
Motor vehicle registration, Musical instruments 687w
Police, Resignations 171–2w

Rent arrears
London boroughs 872–3w

Rent assessment panels
Wandsworth 578w, 580w

Rent increases
41–2w

Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Questions
Maintenance, Children 217w

Rents
410w, 675w
Council tax 870
Housing associations 863–4
Parliamentary buildings 512–3w
Private rented housing 870–1
Royal residences 481w, 611w, 896–7w

Repossession orders
Nottingham 743

Republic of Ireland
Constitutions 1005
Extradition 1002
International transport 315–6w
Rescue services 94w, 148–50

Rescue services
Republic of Ireland 94w, 148–50
Scotland 54–5w, 263w
Training 638w

Research councils
Public appointments 646w

Research finance
Engines 573w
Environment protection 787w
Radioactive wastes 786w
Recycling 746w

"Research Wales, 1992/93"
34w

Residential care
Mentally disadvantaged 722w
Rate rebates 890w
Trent Regional Health Authority 722w

Resignations
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board 379–80w
Clergy 541–2w
Police 171–2w

Restart programme
184–5w
Social security benefits reductions 141w

Retail trade
Gwent 523–4w
Newspaper press 204w

Retirement pensions
137–40w
Elderly 320–1w
Energy prices 321–2w
Out-patients 711–2w

Review Board for Government Contracts
Public appointments 850w

RFA Sir Bedivere
Shipbuilding 754w

Rice
Prices 275w

Richards, Mr Rod
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 769–70, 793, 818
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 948–53
Questions
Bail 386
Cathedrals, Wales 698w
Colwyn Borough Council, EC grants and loans 520w
Council housing management, Wales 452w
Glan Clwyd District General Hospital NHS Trust 608
Historic Buildings Council for Wales, Annual reports 367w
NHS finance, Wales 698w
Welsh Development Agency, Performance standards 156–7w
Welsh Economic Council 697–8w

Riddick, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, Points of order (16.03.94) 884
House of Commons standing committees (17.03.94) 1029
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 309, 328–9
Questions
Air pollution control, Fees and charges 299–300w
Council tax 674w
Menwith Hill, Official visits 138
Motability 478–80w
Northern Ireland government 1005

Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm, Secretary of State for Defence
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ministerial statements (10.03.94) 399–410
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 399–410
Questions
Armed forces deployment 143
Armed forces deployment, USA 139–40
Armed forces training 137
Armed forces training, Indonesia 137
Army, Redundancy 143
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Air force 134
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 134
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 133–5, 142–3, 198w
Nuclear disarmament, Strategic nuclear weapons 139
Trident submarines 139

Right of silence
352w

Rio Tinto Zinc
Western Honduras 113w

River Doe Lea
Water pollution 868

Road accidents
498–9w
Children 7–8w
Death 260w
Homicide 893–4w
Northern Ireland 260–1w

Road closures
Festivals and special occasions (10.03.94) 507–12, (11.03.94) 591

Road construction
7–8w
A1-M1 link 10w
Construction materials 1w
EC law 509w
Environmental impact assessment 863w
M11 (11.03.94) 593–600
M62 407w
Motor vehicle safety 4–5w
Motorways 1w
Norfolk 10w
Northern Ireland 75–6w
Suffolk 10w

Road freight transport
Goods vehicles 687w

Road haulage industry
Insurance 745w

Road haulage licences
271w, 687–9w

Road safety
Buses 650w
Goods vehicles 6w
Local government expenditure 273w
School transport 25w

Road tax
Lorries 509w

Road tolls
Handicapped drivers 654w
Severn bridge 692w

Road traffic
A56 653w
A75 57–61w
A259 511w
Air pollution 787–8w
M25 272w
Research 2w

Road traffic control
M4 525w

Road traffic offences
Cycling 178–80w

Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
Money res (10.03.94) 507–12
Rem stages (11.03.94) 591

Road works
A75 57w
NYNEX CableComms Bolton 8w
Telecommunications cables 397–8
Telephone services 510w

Roads
693w
Greater London (17.03.94) 1060–3

Robathan, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 295
Questions
Army, Redundancy 141
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 840w

Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn, Minister of State for Wales
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 936–40, 944, 947, 959, 962, 966–7, 977
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Wales 283w
Cathedrals, Wales 698w
Colwyn Borough Council, EC grants and loans 520w
Cost per pupil, Wales 523w
Deaf, Wales 284–5w
Departmental publications, Welsh language 695–6w
General certificate of secondary education, Mid Glamorgan 802w
Historic Buildings Council for Wales, Annual reports 367w

Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn—continued
M4, Road traffic control 525w
Manufacturing industries, Wales 610
Motorways, Wales 524w
Non-departmental public bodies, Public appointments 610
Pigmeat, Wales 522w
Railway network, Wales 522w
Railway transport, Wales 601
Railway transport, West Wales 601
Railway travel, Glamorgan 610–1
RECHAR, Wales 609–10
School population, Mid Glamorgan 802w
School population, Wales 633w
Sites of special scientific interest, Wales 153w, 431w
Teacher training, Manpower 154w
Teachers, Manpower 154w
Tourism, Wales 153w, 633w
Training, Wales 284w
Welsh language 35w
Welsh language, Curriculum 450–1w

Robertson, Mr George
Questions
Death, Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 738w

Robertson, Mr Raymond S
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Scotland 733w

Robinson, Mr Mark
Questions
Economic growth 246w

Robinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 46–50, 57, 72–3
Questions
Northern Ireland government 1000

Rochdale Borough Council
Safer cities scheme 391

Roche, Mrs Barbara
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 434
Questions
Black Training and Enterprise Group 893w
D-Day landings, Festivals and special occasions 656–7w
Disabled workers, Dept for Education 884w
Disabled workers, Dept of Health 564w
Disabled workers, Ministry of Defence 880w
Electoral Register, Young people 15–6w
Entry clearances, Immigration officers 699–700w
European Parliament elections, Young people 15w
Immigration controls, Ministerial powers 587–8w
Indonesia, Overseas aid 449w
Low incomes 810w
Sexual offences 615
Single regeneration budget, Ethnic minorities 870w

Roe, Mrs Marion
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1251–3, 1256

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 751–4, 757–8, 774–5, 789–90, 808–9
Questions
Welsh Office, Deregulation initiative 607

Rolls-Royce
Government assistance 454w

Romania
Know-how Fund 466w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 342

Rooker, Mr Jeff—continued
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 306
Questions
Council house rents 301w
Identity cards, EC countries 170w
School admission, Age 31w
Sixth form colleges 627w
Student numbers 322–3w

Rooney, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 187
Questions
Tourist industry, Railway travel 1

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 46, 50–3
Questions
A75, Road traffic 57–61w
A75, Road works 57w
Arthritis, Medical research 724w
Bovine tuberculosis, Northern Ireland 259w
Bridges, Northern Ireland 76–7w
Fine defaulters, Northern Ireland 839w
Housing, Northern Ireland 77–8w
Motor insurance, Northern Ireland 141w
Motor vehicle theft, Prison sentences 261w
National Council of Victim Support, Government grants 706–7w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Equal opportunities 258–60w
Population 308–10w
Prison sentences, Northern Ireland 261w
Road construction, Northern Ireland 75–6w
Western Health and Social Services Board, Religious discrimination 144w

Rosyth Dockyard
200w
Redundancy 201w
Shipbuilding 200–1w
Unemployment 201w

Rough Sleepers Initiative
458–60w

Roundabouts
Plymouth 121–2w

Rover Group
206w, 284
BMW 18w
Cars 206w
Profits 283–4

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
House of Commons reporting, Points of order (09.03.94) 286
Questions
Parental leave 737

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 753
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 939, 948
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 212–4, 219
Questions
Accounting officers, Dept of Trade and Industry 211w
Accounting officers, Ministry of Defence 401w
Independent Living 1993 Fund 782w
RECHAR, Wales 609–10

Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation
Government grants to voluntary organisations 89w

Royal Commission on Criminal Justice
see Criminal Justice Royal Commission

Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland
Public appointments 62w

Royal Mail
VAT exemptions 212w

Royal Marines Museum
Public appointments 851w

Royal Naval Museum
Public appointments 880w

Royal Navy Submarine Museum
Public appointments 851w

Royal residences
Parliamentary questions 611w
Rents 481w, 611w, 896–7w
Security 169w

RU486
836w

Ruddock, Ms Joan
Debates etc.
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 588
Questions
Blakenhurst Prison, Prisoners' transfers 13w
Council tax, Lewisham 577–8w
Doncaster Prison, Prison accommodation 359w
Interdepartmental Racial Attacks Group 505w
Juries, Ethnic minorities 414w
Nurses' training, Higher education teachers 847w
Police custody 353–5w
Prisoners' transport, Death 359–60w
Prisons, Construction costs 17–8w
Prosecutions, Racial incitement 485–6w
Racial attacks 414w
Racial attacks, Detection rates 413–4w
Racial attacks, Law reform 413w
Racial attacks, Surveys 413w
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill 1993/94 387

Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Questions
Levene, Peter, Conflict of interests 319w

Runciman Committee
see Criminal Justice Royal Commission

Ruppert, Bryan
Deportation 586w

Rural areas
298w
Cable systems 337–8w
Crime (17.03.94) 1038–42
Housing construction 677w
Wales 362–3w

Rural Development Commission
Publications 298–9w

Russia
Democracy 478w

Rutherford, Andrew
Public appointments 133w

Ryrie rules
740w

Sackville, Mr Tom, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Debates etc.
Ambulance services, Medals (08.03.94) 259, 263–4
Cancer (17.03.94) 1085–9
Edgware Hospital, Hospital closures (18.03.94) 1306–8
Hartley Hospital, Property transfer (17.03.94) 1229–32
Questions
Abortion 308w, 439w, 725w
Abortion, Congenital abnormalities 87–8w
Abortion, South Yorkshire 306w
Abortion, St George's Hospital Tooting 88w
Accident and emergency departments, South Yorkshire 564w

Sackville, Mr Tom—continued
Advertising, Dept of Health 347–8w, 438w
Air pollution, Asthma 829w
Air pollution, Health hazards 828–9w
Alcoholic drinks, Dept of Health 343w
Allergies, Algae 726w
Ambulance services, Emergency calls 719w
Amenity beds, NHS trusts 839w
Amniocentesis tests 439w
Asthma, Air pollution 157w, 559–60w
Asthma, Medical research 346w
Baby milks, Advertising controls 88w
Baby milks, Dental health 87w
"Best Sex Guide" 437–8w
Blood 889w
Blood transfusion services 348w
Blood transfusion services, NHS and private practice 567w, 889w
Cancer, Children 829w
Cancer, Medical treatments 83w
Cancer, Ovaries 827–8w
Cancer, Skin disorders 538w
Cancer hazards, Electromagnetic interference 835w
Civil service agencies, Dept of Health 440w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Health 838w
Community health services, Greater London 558w
Congenital abnormalities 885–6w
Congenital abnormalities, Medical research 723w
Congenital abnormalities, Sodium valproate 303w
Congenital abnormalities, Trent Regional Health Authority 535w, 831w
Day care of children, Dept of Health 89w
Dept of Health, Departmental publications 88w
Disabled workers, Dept of Health 564w
District health authorities, Finance 720–2w
Doncaster Family Health Servics Authority, Expenditure 832w
Drug side effects 563w
Drugs, Counterfeit manufacturing 719–20w
Drugs, Parallel imports 726w
Ear nose and throat, Medical equipment 562–3w
Ear nose and throat, Prescriptions 563w
Emergency services, Telecommunications technology 302w
English National Board for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting, Redundancy 441w
Food hygiene 85w
Food poisoning 728w
Gender selection 890w
Genetics, Screening 85w
Health 158w
Health Education Authority 445w
Health hazards, Dogs 536w
Health Information Service 166w
Health insurance 446w
Health service staff, Fraud 533w
Health service staff, Women's employment 442–3w
Health Services Management Unit, Finance 160w
Health visitors 445w
Health visitors, Manpower 444–5w
Health visitors, Training 444w, 719–20w
Heart pacemakers 83w
Heart pacemakers, Death 82w
Heart pacemakers, Health warnings 81–2w
Hospital admissions 167–8w
Hospital beds 167w
Hospital catering, NHS trusts 306w
Hospital closures 165w, 447w
Hospital consultants, NHS and private practice 558w
Hospital length of stay 887w
Hospitals, Buckinghamshire 345w
Hypnosis, Entertainments 567w
Immunity certificates, Dept of Health 567w

Sackville, Mr Tom—continued
Life expectancy 826–7w
Marriage, Young people 833w
Maternity hospitals 439w
Maternity hospitals, Hospital length of stay 533–4w
Maternity hospitals, Security 344w
Maternity services, Bedding 534w
Medical cards 831–2w
Medical equipment, Theft 890w
Microwaves, Safety standards 344w
Monopolies and Mergers Commission, Private health services 835w
National Blood Authority 440–1w
NHS, Contracts for services 84w
NHS, Departmental forms 727w
NHS, Fraud 438w
NHS, Income 831w
NHS, Management consultants 537w
NHS, Public relations 307w, 537w
NHS, Telephone services 443w
NHS and private practice 838w
NHS and private practice, Hospital waiting lists 566w
NHS Supplies Authority 159–60w
NHS trusts 562w
NHS trusts, Audit 345w
NHS trusts, External financing limits 560w
NHS trusts, Finance 562w
NHS trusts, Financial targets 163–4w, 560–1w
NHS trusts, Private health services 836w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept of Health 728–9w
Nurses, Manpower 827w
Nurses' homes, Empty housing 533w
Office furniture, Dept of Health 343w
Official hospitality, Dept of Health 885w
Open government, Dept of Health 834w
Orders and regulations, Dept of Health 728w
Osteoporosis, Screening 725–6w
Passive smoking, Asthma 886w
Pay beds 443–4w
Population 308–10w
Pregnancy, Prescription drugs 160–1w
Prescriptions, Nurses 442w
Private patients 568w
Private patients, Fees and charges 889–90w
Public appointments, Dept of Health 80–1w
RU486 836w
St Albans Hospital, Accident and emergency departments 305w
Salmonella 888w
Sex education 835w
South Yorkshire Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust, Ambulance services 564w
South Yorkshire Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust, Manpower 535w
Surrogate motherhood 558–9w
Telephone services, Dept of Health 343–4w
Toxoplasmosis, Screening 557w
Travel, London boroughs 163w
Trent Regional Health Authority, Land ownership and tenure 726w
Wheelchairs, Expenditure 722w

Safer cities scheme
Rochdale Borough Council 391

Safety belts
Buses 5w, 687w, (17.03.94) 1044–5

Safety standards
Microwaves 344w
Outdoor education 644w, 719w

Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim, Minister for Industry
Questions
Aerospace industry, Government assistance 248w
Biotechnology 905w
British Aerospace, Directors 795w
British Aerospace, Government shareholding 795w

Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim—continued
British Shipbuilders, External financing limits 797w
Car industry 465–6w
Car industry, Japan 249w
Car industry, Production 247w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Competition 18w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Offices 280–1
Engineering industries, Productivity 741–2w
English Industrial Estates Corporation, Factories 332w
English Industrial Estates Corporation, Land 333w
Foreign investment in UK, Japan 250w
Iron and steel industry 248w, 277–8
Iron and steel industry, European Coal and Steel Community 277
Manufacturing industries 742w
Manufacturing industries, Trade competitiveness 471w
Regional aid, EC grants and loans 209w
Regional development agencies, Government grants 798w
Rolls-Royce, Government assistance 454w
Rover Group 206w, 284
Rover Group, BMW 18w
Rover Group, Cars 206w
Rover Group, Profits 283–4
Ryrie rules 740w
Science and technology research, Government assistance 204w
Shipbuilding 247w

St Albans Hospital
Accident and emergency departments 305w

St Dogmaels
Landslips 522w

St George's Hospital Tooting
Abortion 88w

St Mary's Hospital Medical School London
Animal experiments 896w

St Patrick's School Birkby
Grant maintained schools 530w

Salford
Compulsory purchase 654w
NHS trusts 347w

Salmon
Northern Ireland 259w, 348w
Poaching 259w, 348w

Salmond, Mr Alex
Questions
Nuclear non proliferation 144

Salmonella
888w
Compensation 901w
Poultry 901–2w

Sanctions
India 700w
Iraq 21w, 244w, 703–4w
Libyan Arab Republic 22w
Sudan 242w

Satellite communications
Wales 521w

School admission
Age 31w
Grant maintained schools 427–8w

School boards
Scotland 378w

School buildings
School population 847–9w
Scotland 665–8w, 732w

School crossing patrols
120w, 407–8w
Local government expenditure 273w

School discipline
532w

School leaving
Scotland 660w

School meals
193w
Nutrition and health 703w

School milk
191–5w, 281w

School population
529w
City technology colleges 529w
Mid Glamorgan 802w
Primary education 847w
School buildings 847–9w
Wales 633w

School transport
26w, 119w
Motor vehicle safety 25w
Road safety 25w

Schools
Amyl nitrite 883w
Birmingham 25w
Doncaster 128w
Driving instruction 31w
Greater London 620–4w
Lewisham 531w
Sports 3
Staffordshire 846w

Science and technology
13
Postgraduate education 78w

Science and technology policy
Megalab UK 19–20

Science and technology research
79w
Government assistance 204w
Information technology 205w
Inventions 14
Wales 14–5
Women 18–9

Science education
619–20w
General certificate of secondary education 618w
Student numbers 846w

Scotland
Assisted places scheme 54w, 733w
Birds 371w, 661w, 733w
Blood transfusion services 548–52w
Car boot sales 376w
Charities 377w
Cold weather payments 712–3w
Congenital abnormalities 665w
Contracts 542w
Cost per pupil 658–9w
Cottage hospitals 53w
Council housing 124–5w
Dangerous drugs 735–6w
Defence industries 125w
Dental services 123w, 736–8w
Dentists 380–4w
Driving tests 115w
EC internal trade 61w
Economic situation 126w
Electoral Register 665–6w
Fisheries 662–3w
Fishery protection 658w
Fishing vessels 662–3w
Forests 733w
Freshwater fishing 734w
HM Inspectorate of Schools 378–9w
Hospital discharges 62w
Hospitals 376–7w
Housing benefits 136–8w
Land pollution 418w
Legal advice and assistance (16.03.94) 927–35

Scotland—continued
Lone parent families 53–4w
Milk marketing scheme 379w
Ministers' domestic visits 396
Motorways 734w
Museums and galleries 11
NHS 54w, 378w
NHS trusts 542–4w
Osteoporosis 126w
Outdoor education 734w
Pay beds 62w
Peat bogs 126w
Post offices 333–5w
Prison accommodation 826w
Prison visiting committees 262–6w
Public appointments 125w, 898–9w
Railway freight transport 56–7w
Rescue services 54–5w, 263w
School boards 378w
School buildings 665–8w, 732w
School leaving 660w
Sheep premiums 666w
Sites of special scientific interest 124w
Slaughterhouses 63w
Training 418–9w
Women's employment 123w

Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas, Minister for Social Security and Disabled People
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 565–73
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 206–7, 217–9, 230–3, 236–9, 243
Questions
Cold weather payments 782w
Cold weather payments, Scotland 712–3w
Crisis loans 218w
Crisis loans, Doncaster 875w
Day care of children, Dept of Social Security 38w
Disability working allowance 782w
Funeral payments, Social fund 218w
Handicapped, Discrimination 322w
Incapacity benefit 321w
Independent Living 1993 Fund 782w
Invalidity benefits, Doncaster 631w, 782–3w
Invalidity benefits, Social security benefits rules 320w
Motability 478–80w
Orders and regulations, Dept of Social Security 707w
Prisoners' release, Community care grants 629w
Sickness benefits, Social security claims 37w
Social fund 876–8w
Social fund, Coventry 711w
Social fund, Doncaster 710–1w
Social security benefits, Doncaster 219–20w
Social security benefits, Energy prices 629w
Social security recipients, British residents abroad 36w

Scott Inquiry
see Arms to Iraq Inquiry

Scottish Ambulance Service
664–5w
Expenditure 664w

Scottish councils
Local government reform 268w

Scottish health boards
545–8w
Geriatric patients 267–8w
Public appointments 267w

Scottish Homes
Building repairs 377w
Council house sales 1014
Marketing 898w

Scottish Office
Alcoholic drinks 737w
Civil service agencies 659w
Civil service manpower 825w
Computers in government departments 547w
Consultants 659–60w
Day care of children 61w, 737w
Immunity certificates 737w
Non-departmental public bodies 731w
Office furniture 737w
Orders and regulations 731–2w
Public appointments 660w
Telephone services 661–2w
Women's employment 825w

Screening
Genetics 85w
Osteoporosis 126w, 725–6w
Toxoplasmosis 557w

Sea pollution
North Sea 64w, 111w
Shipping 122w

Seacroft Hospital
304w

Secondary education
Capital investment 882w
Cost per pupil 625w

Secure accommodation
84w
Young offenders 501w

Secure psychiatric units
Hospital beds 447w, 888w

Security
Maternity hospitals 344w
Pinochet, Augusto 781w
Royal residences 169w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
M11, Road construction (11.03.94) 595
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 493

Seeds
GATT 585w

Segregation of prisoners
769w

Select committees
Speaker's rulings and statements (08.03.94) 152, 248, (09.03.94) 285–7

Self-mutilation
Immigrant detainees 767w

Sellafield
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 250w
Nuclear safety 203w
Radioactive wastes 112w
Transport of radioactive materials 653w

Senses
Medical research 566w

Serbia
Albania 22–3w

Services Sound and Vision Corporation
Public appointments 850–1w

Set-aside schemes
279w
Cereals 386w

Severn bridge
Road tolls 692w

Severn Bridges Act 1992 (Amendment) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R order read (11.03.94) 590

Severn Trent Water
Water supply disconnections 296w

Sewage
678w
Waste disposal 792w

Sex discrimination
432, 432w, 433, 433w
Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts 705–6w

Sex discrimination—continued
Legal aid 671w
Opposition days (10.03.94) 423–506

Sex education
236w, 835w

Sexual offences
615
Disclosure of information 615

Shalfleet bridge
Listed buildings 213w

Shaw, Mr David
Debates etc.
Local government (17.03.94) 1173–88
Questions
Housing benefits, Council tenants 479w
SL Homes 744–5w

Sheehy Committee
see Police Responsibilities and Rewards Inquiry

Sheep
Exports 66w
Import of live animals 899–900w

Sheep dipping
Waste disposal 47w

Sheep premiums
Scotland 666w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 524, 550, 559–60, 573–7
Questions
Film industry 52w
Manufacturing industries, Foreign investment in UK 246w
St Patrick's School Birkby, Grant maintained schools 530w
Science and technology research 79w

Sheltered employment
338–40w

Sheltered Employment Consultative Group
Public appointments 642w

Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food
Questions
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Antelopes 605w
Farm business survey 904w
Integrated administration and control system, Departmental forms 494w
"Managing Set-Aside Land for Wildlife" 195w
Marginal land, Farm incomes 390–1w, 608–10w
Milk, EC grants and loans 495w
Milk marketing scheme 280w
Mycoplasma bovis 816–7w
School milk 191–5w, 281w
Sheep, Exports 66w
Soil erosion, Floods 197w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Debates etc.
Ambulance services, Medals (08.03.94) 259–63
Business questions (10.03.94) 413–4
Questions
Commonwealth 147
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 845w

Shersby, Mr Michael
Questions
Albert Memorial, Repairs and maintenance 51w
Armed conflict, Merchant ships 133
Drug crimes 382
Hospital consultants, Northern Ireland 839w
Passenger carrying vehicle test 119w
Police Negotiating Board 356w
Welsh Development Agency 602

Shipbuilding
247w, 270
RFA Sir Bedivere 754w
Rosyth Dockyard 200–1w

Shipping
Sea pollution 122w

Shipping accidents
MFV Copia 656w, 659w, 692w

Shipping registration
Liverpool 692–3w

Shopping centres
Planning permission 683w

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc.
London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL), 2R (14.03.94) 682, 688

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 423–33, 437, 445, 447–8, 461, 466, 468–9, 474, 476, 481–2, 496
Questions
Employment Service Agency 811w
European Social Fund, Training 807–8w
Homelessness 292–4w
Northern Ireland government, Political parties 840w
Refugees 369w
Temporary accommodation 295w
Vocational guidance, Performance standards 861–2w
Youth training, Industrial accidents 808–9w

Sick leave
Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England and Wales 291w
Health service staff 84w

Sickness benefits
Social security claims 37w

Simpson, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (17.03.94) 1114–7
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 476, 486
Questions
Jobseeker's allowance, Social security recipients 140w
Repossession orders, Nottingham 743
Single regeneration budget 872
Skillcentres, East Midlands 645w

Sims, Mr Roger
Questions
Magistrates' courts, South London 616

Single regeneration budget
372w, 462w, 676w, 872, 880
Dept of Transport 863w
Ethnic minorities 870w

Sinn Fein
Broadcasting controls 12, 50–1w

Sites of special scientific interest
368–9w, 676w
Management agreements 576–7w
Prosecutions 576w
Scotland 124w
Solent (16.03.94) 990–8
Wales 153w, 451w

Sixth form colleges
627w

Skillcentres
East Midlands 645w

Skilled workers
733

Skin disorders
Cancer 538w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Building Societies (EFTA States) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 30–1
Skinner, Mr Dennis—continued
Business questions (10.03.94) 414
Calling of Members, Points of order (07.03.94) 22
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 579–80
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, Points of order (16.03.94) 883
EC enlargement (17.03.94) 1032
House of Commons standing committees (17.03.94) 1029
Insolvency, Contracts of employment (14.03.94) 623
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R and Money res (15.03.94) 849
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 588
Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Bill, Money res (10.03.94) 508–9
Select committees, Points of order (09.03.94) 286
Terrorism, Points of order (11.03.94) 522–3
Questions
Business questions 1024
Coal mine closures 247w
River Doe Lea, Water pollution 868
Swimming pools 10–1

SL Homes
744–5w

Slaughterhouses
Scotland 63w

Small businesses
247w
Loans 266–7
Venture capital 266–7

Smith, Mr Andrew
Questions
British Rail, Public service obligation grant 508w
Tax rates and bands 825w

Smith, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
M11, Road construction (11.03.94) 600
Questions
Armed forces, Homosexuality 420w
Armed forces discharges, Homosexuality 420w
Hazardous wastes, Exports 875–6
Road construction 7w
Sites of special scientific interest 368w

Smith, Rt Hon John
Questions
Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme 145–6
Economic policy 395–6
NHS trusts, Expenditure 740–1

Smith, Mr Llew
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 527
House of Commons procedure, Points of order (14.03.94) 627–8
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 753
Questions
Aid financed trade 313w, 449w, 683–4w
Air pollution 789w
Air pollution control 788–9w
Armed forces deployment, USA 752–4w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Witnesses 745w
Batteries, Recycling 679w
Cadmium, Research 790w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Interviews 784w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Parliamentary questions 488w, 784w
Chemical weapons, Armed forces 852–3w
Defence Export Services Organisation, Public appointments 253w
Desert storm syndrome 400–1w
Desert storm syndrome, Medical research 419w
Domestic energy conservation, Private sector housing 789w
Smith, Mr Llew—continued
East Timor 473w
East Timor, Indonesia 20w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 474–7w
Environment protection, National vocational qualifications 789w
Environment protection, Research finance 787w
Fine defaulters, Prison sentences 670w, 892w
Fish farming, Pesticides 64w
Fisheries, Biodiversity 384–5w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 34w
"Green Forces" 854w
Handicapped, Energy prices 696w
Hazardous wastes, Departmental circulars 870–1w
Hazardous wastes, Expenditure 680w
Housing finance, Wales 801w
Immunity certificates, Dept of Trade and Industry 204w
Immunity certificates, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 113w
Immunity certificates, Ministry of Defence 93–4w
Malaysia, Aid financed trade 449w
Military aircraft, Indonesia 852w
Ministers' visits abroad, Indonesia 470w, 570w
Ministry of Defence, Contracts for services 852w
Ministry of Defence, Crown immunity 854–5w
Ministry of Defence, EC grants and loans 753w
Ministry of Defence, Environment protection 852w
Ministry of Defence, Performance standards 852w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 607
North Korea, Nuclear reactors 242w
Nuclear power 745w
Overseas trade, Indonesia 470w
Pergau dam, Overseas aid 313w
Power industry 745–6w
Prime Minister, Interviews 464w
Prison population 767–8w
Radioactive waste disposal, Cumbria 579–81w
Radioactive waste disposal, Research 291w
Radioactive waste disposal, Treaties 282w
Radioactive wastes, Research finance 786w
ReChem International, Pollution monitoring 801–2w
Recycling, Research Finance 746w
"Reducing Emissions of Hazardous Chemicals to the Environment Consultation Paper" 788w
"Research Wales, 1992/93" 34w
Sellafield, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 250w
Sellafield, Nuclear safety 203w
Sellafield, Radioactive wastes 112w
Sellafield, Transport of radioactive materials 653w
Social security benefits, Energy prices 629w
Sustainable development 679w
THORP, Dail Eireann 579w
THORP, Radioactive wastes 579–80w
Tourism, Wales 633w
UN Environment Programme, UK contributions 578–9w
"Watch Your Waste" 112w
Welsh Office, Environmental policy 800w
Wind power 107w
Wind power, Industrial accidents 583–4w

Smith, Mr Tim, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Bridges, Northern Ireland 76–7w
Building industry, Northern Ireland 842w
Ferries, Antrim 1002–3
Fish farming, Waste disposal 348–9w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 612w, 841w

Smith, Mr Tim—continued
Housing, Northern Ireland 77–8w
Industry, Northern Ireland 840–1w
Motor insurance, Northern Ireland 141w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Heating 75w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Religion 612–3w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Tenancy agreements 843–4w
Ports, Ballycastle 1003
Power failures, Northern Ireland 75w
Road construction, Northern Ireland 75–6w
Water treatment, Waste disposal 351w

Smiths Industries
Military aircraft 253w

Smoke hoods
Air safety 507w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 40, 46, 49, 57, 59, 80, 89, 108–11
Business questions (10.03.94) 420
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 530
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 350
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 307–8
Terrorism, Points of order (11.03.94) 522–3
Questions
Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 839–40w
Dental services, Northern Ireland 618w
Republic of Ireland, Rescue services 148–50
Rescue services, Republic of Ireland 94w
Senses, Medical research 566w

Snape, Mr Peter
Questions
Road haulage licences 687–9w
Traffic areas, Civil service agencies 690–1w

Soames, Mr Nicholas, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture
Questions
Agricultural products, Eastern Europe 901–2w
Bovine immunodeficiency virus 389w
Bovine immunodeficiency virus, Yorkshire and Humberside 900w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Compensation 452w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Transmissable encephalopathies 900w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Waste disposal 494w
Cattle, Export of live animals 493w
Export of live animals, Animal welfare 607w
Export of live animals, Prosecutions 606–7w
Fish farming, Pesticides 64w
Food stocks 606w
Horses, Veterinary drugs 491w
Import of live animals, Poland 815w, 901–2w
Infant foods 279w
Infant foods, EC law 196w, 603w
Pigs, Animal welfare 65w
Poisoning, Prosecutions 391w
Poultry, Salmonella 901–2w
Sheep, Import of live animals 899–900w

Social fund
876–8w
Coventry 711w
Doncaster 710–1w
Funeral payments 218w

Social Fund Maternity & Funeral Expenses (General) Amendment Regulations 1994
Questions
218w

Social security abuse
Housing benefits 879w
Prisoners 708–9w

Social security appeals
Maintenance 134w
Social Security Commissioners 405w

Social security benefits
Doncaster 219–20w
Energy prices 629–31w
Greater London 630w

Social security benefits reductions
Maintenance 214w, 874–5w
Restart programme 141w

Social security benefits rules
479–80w
Invalidity benefits 320w
Unemployment benefits 139w, 630w

Social security claims
Prisoners 586w
Sickness benefits 37w

Social Security Commissioners
Social security appeals 405w

Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 155–248

Social security recipients
British residents abroad 36w
Hotels 741
Jobseeker's allowance 140w

Social Security Regulations (Chronic Bronchitis & Emphysema) Amendment Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
(16.03.94) 885–7

Social workers
Hospitals 165w

Sodium valproate
Congenital abnormalities 303w

Soil erosion
Floods 197w

Solent
Sites of special scientific interest (16.03.94) 990–8

Soley, Mr Clive
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 312
Questions
Asthma, Air pollution 559–60w
Press, Trials 6–7

Solicitors
Legal aid scheme 553–6w
Training 618

Solid fuels
Air pollution control 871–2w

South East Asia
Exports 274
Trade missions 274

South Korea
Military exercises 701w

South London
Magistrates' courts 616

South Wales
Police authorities 385

South Yorkshire
Abortion 306w
Accident and emergency departments 564w
Industrial production 276
Post offices 744w

South Yorkshire Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust
Ambulance services 564w
Manpower 535w

Southampton
Entrance project 512w

Sovereignty
World Trade Organisation 880–1w

Soya beans
Infant foods 87w

Spain
Export of live animals 66w

Speaker and deputies, For rulings & statements see separate heading
Speaker's rulings & statements
Debates etc.
Addressing the Chair (10.03.94) 452
Amendments & new clauses (08.03.94) 155, 164–5, 206, 221, (09.03.94) 340, (10.03.94) 423, (15.03.94) 749, (16.03.94) 936
Calling of Members (15.03.94) 778, 790, (16.03.94) 968
Calls to order (07.03.94) 60, (08.03.94) 151, 206, (09.03.94) 302, (10.03.94) 395, 429, 465, 493, (11.03.94) 589, (14.03.94) 641, (15.03.94) 848, (17.03.94) 1174, 1182
Members' conduct (07.03.94) 104
Members' interventions (08.03.94) 199, (10.03.94) 430, 437–8, 453, (14.03.94) 721, 724, (15.03.94) 770, (16.03.94) 913–4, (17.03.94) 1087, 1178–9, 1194, (18.03.94) 1303
Members' speeches (08.03.94) 160, (10.03.94) 440, 487, (11.03.94) 534, (17.03.94) 1065, 1178
Ministerial statements (10.03.94) 402, 410, 412, 416
Northern Ireland committee motions (09.03.94) 340
Order confirmation bills (08.03.94) 131
Orders & regulations motions (16.03.94) 901, 923
Points of order (07.03.94) 21–2, (08.03.94) 151–2, (09.03.94) 285–7, 303, (10.03.94) 509, (11.03.94) 522–3, 585, (14.03.94) 625–8, 638, 677–8, (15.03.94) 748, (16.03.94) 881–4, 930, 936–7, 940, 949, (17.03.94) 1029, 1179, 1181–3, (18.03.94) 1286
Private Members' bills, 2R order read (11.03.94) 590–2
Scope of debate (07.03.94) 24, 26, 113, (08.03.94) 161, 180, 182, 187, 189, 194–5, 215–7, 251, (10.03.94) 482, 509–11, (11.03.94) 557, (14.03.94) 649, 658, (16.03.94) 912, 915–7, 946, 949, 971, 973, (17.03.94) 1177, (18.03.94) 1296
Supplementary questions (07.03.94) 8, 20, (09.03.94) 266, 272, (10.03.94) 383, (16.03.94) 973, (17.03.94) 1004
Ways & means resolutions (16.03.94) 883–4

Speaker's rulings and statements
Consolidated fund debates (10.03.94) 422
House of Commons debates (10.03.94) 493
House of Commons divisions (09.03.94) 335, 363
House of Commons standing committees (10.03.94) 392
Oral questions (16.03.94) 881
Parliamentary broadcasting (07.03.94) 21
Private bills (14.03.94) 625–6
Private notice questions (11.03.94) 521–2
Select committees (08.03.94) 152, 248, (09.03.94) 285–7
Unparliamentary expressions (10.03.94) 389, (15.03.94) 729

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL), Points of order (14.03.94) 626
London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL), 2R (14.03.94) 678, 680–1, 693, 694–701, 704, 708, 710, 712
Questions
Business questions 1020
Departmental responsibilities, Greater London 682–3w

Spearing, Mr Nigel—continued
Deregulation initiative, Legislation 845w
Primary education, School population 847w
School buildings, School population 847–9w
Secondary education, Capital investment 882w

Special areas of conservation
Coastal areas 369w

Special education
430–2w
Codes of practice 26–8w
Doncaster 627w

Spectacles
NHS low income scheme 160w

Speed, Sir Keith
Questions
Yugoslavia, Armed forces deployment 860w

Speke Hall
51w

Spellar, Mr John
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (17.03.94) 1108–12
Punjab, Human rights (17.03.94) 1058–60
Questions
Government contracts 295w
Hong Kong, British residents abroad 114w
Minimum wage, USA 191w
Official engagements 84–5w
Procurement Executive 252–3w
Public sector borrowing requirement 221w
Railtrack, Legal profession 270w
Rent increases 41–2w
Taxation, Building industry 99w
War widows' pensions 255w

Spencer, Sir Derek, Solicitor-General
Questions
Computers in government departments, Attorney General 738w
West, Frederick, Homicide 331–2w

Spicer, Sir Jim
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1242, 1271
Europe (18.03.94) 1291–4
Europe, Private Members' motions (18.03.94) 1287–96

Spicer, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Air traffic, Europe (17.03.94) 1090–4, 1096, 1101–2
Questions
Housing associations, Rents 864

Spink, Dr Robert
Debates etc.
Homosexuality, Prosecutions (14.03.94) 719–24
Questions
"Best Sex Guide" 437–8w
Council tax, Colchester 371w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Essex 65w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 612
Sex education 236w
Sexual offences, Disclosure of information 615

Sponsorship
Building industry 865

Sports
Prescriptions 528w
Schools 3

Sports facilities
Planning permission 676w
VAT 222w

Sportsgrounds
Safety 4

Spring, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 428–9
Questions
Drug abuse, Surveys 597w
Drug prevention schemes 593w
Economic policy 148
Exports, South East Asia 274
IRA 1010
Land registration, Local government functions 417–8w
Swimming pools 10
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 841w

Sproat, Mr Iain, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of National Heritage
Debates etc.
Redundant Churches Fund Order 1994 (16.03.94) 890–2, 902–4
Questions
Albert Memorial 8
Amateur arts 7
Amateur arts, Arts finance 7
Civil service agencies, Dept of National Heritage 311w
Civil service manpower, Dept of National Heritage 897–8w
Computers in government departments, Dept of National Heritage 312w
Concessionary television licences 4–5
Day care of children, Dept of National Heritage 312w
English Tourist Board 6
Festivals and special occasions, D-day landings 12–3, 311w
Hotels, Televisions 2
Museums and galleries 609–10w
Play, Children 3
Play facilities, Children 50w
Public libraries, Finance 897w
Royal residences, Parliamentary questions 611w
Royal residences, Rents 481w, 611w, 896–7w
Speke Hall 51w
Sports, Schools 3
Sportsgrounds, Safety 4
Swimming, Curriculum 10
Swimming pools 10–1
Telephone services, Dept of National Heritage 312w
Television licences 5
Tourism 6
Tourist boards, Finance 5–6
Tourist industry 2–3
Tourist industry, Railway travel 1
Tourist industry, Taxation 9–10

Squatting
392–3

Squire, Ms Rachel
Debates etc.
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 464, 487
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 228–30
Questions
Child Support Agency, Members' correspondence 134–5w
Defence costs study 201–2w
Defence industries, Diversification 125w
Devonport Dockyard, Trident submarines 655w

Squire, Ms Rachel—continued
Maintenance, Children 134w, 215–6w
Minesweepers 655w
Navy, Armed forces recruitment 202w
Plymouth Development Corporation 109w
Rosyth Dockyard 200w
Rosyth Dockyard, Redundancy 201w
Rosyth Dockyard, Shipbuilding 200–1w
Rosyth Dockyard, Unemployment 201w
Standard of living 99w

Squire, Mr Robin, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept for Education
Questions
City technology colleges, School population 529w
Civil service agencies, Dept for Education 323w
Cost per pupil 238–40w
Cost per pupil, London boroughs 423w
Day care of children, Dept for Education 31–2w, 529w
Education, Local government expenditure 422–4w
Educational standards, Disclosure of information 236–7w
Funding Agency for Schools, Operating costs 133w
General certificate of secondary education, Merseyside 849w
Grammar schools, Gloucestershire 236w, 532w
Grant maintained schools 424–8w, 528w
Grant maintained schools, Advertising 623w
Grant maintained schools, Government grants 28–31w
Grant maintained schools, Greater London 620–4w
Grant maintained schools, Insurance 237–8w, 428w, 430w
Grant maintained schools, School admission 427–8w
Grant maintained schools, Wandsworth 238w
Grant Maintained Schools Centre, Government grants 428–30w
Grant Maintained Schools Mutual 237w
Grants for education support and training 32w
Languages education, Cornwall 528w
Pre-school education 236w
Private education, Inspections 626–7w
St Patrick's School Birkby, Grant maintained schools 530w
School admission, Age 31w
School transport, Motor vehicle safety 25w
Schools, Doncaster 128w
Schools, Driving instruction 31w
Science education, General certificate of secondary education 618w
Science education, Student numbers 846w
Secondary education, Cost per pupil 625w
Sixth form colleges 627w
Sutherland, Stewart, Public appointments 133w
Teacher training, Manpower 134w
Teachers, Manpower 133–4w
Technology colleges 128–32w, 531–2w, 883–4w

Sri Lanka
474w

Staffordshire
Local government constituencies 297w
Local government reform 675w
Schools 846w

Standard of living
99w

Standard spending assessments
289w, 373w, 461w, 580w, 676w
Council housing 293–4w, 788w
Dwyfor 365–6w
Greater Manchester 374w
Homelessness 291–3w, 582w
Liverpool 673–4w
London boroughs 582w
Wales 365w

Stansted Airport
118w

State earnings related pension scheme
137–40w, 409w

State visits
Caribbean 704w

Statistics
Employment 735–6
Employment level 240w

Statutory sick pay
Dept of Transport 2w

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Questions
Car boot sales, Scotland 376w

Steel leghold traps
Exports 267

Steen, Mr Anthony
Questions
Dept of Health, Departmental publications 88w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Deregulation initiative 747w
Deregulation initiative, Environment protection 248w
Environmental health officers, Manpower 682w
Non-departmental public bodies, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 693w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept for Education 702w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept of Employment 719w, 812w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept of Health 728–9w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept of Social Security 709–10w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept of the Environment 681–2w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept of Trade and Industry 739w
Non-departmental public bodies, Dept of Transport 686w, 688w
Non-departmental public bodies, Home Office 669w
Non-departmental public bodies, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 730w
Non-departmental public bodies, Ministry of Defence 753–4w
Non-departmental public bodies, Northern Ireland Office 705w
Non-departmental public bodies, Scottish Office 731w
Non-departmental public bodies, Welsh Office 696–7w
Orders and regulations 127–8w
Orders and regulations, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 693w
Orders and regulations, Dept for Education 702w
Orders and regulations, Dept of Employment 812w
Orders and regulations, Dept of Health 728w
Orders and regulations, Dept of Social Security 707w
Orders and regulations, Dept of the Environment 682w
Orders and regulations, Dept of Trade and Industry 799w
Orders and regulations, Dept of Transport 687w
Orders and regulations, Home Office 669w
Orders and regulations, Ministry of Defence 754w
Orders and regulations, Northern Ireland Office 705w
Orders and regulations, Scottish Office 731–2w
Orders and regulations, Welsh Office 696w

Steen, Mr Anthony—continued
Schools, Driving instruction 31w

Steinberg, Mr Gerry
Questions
Customs and Excise, Offices 868w
Health 158w
Sickness benefits, Social security claims 37w
Special education, Codes of practice 26–8w

Stephen, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 161

Stern, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 530, 538, 544, 554–61, 564

Stevenson, Mr George
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 528–9
Questions
Road works, Telephone services 510w

Stewart, Mr Allan, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Debates etc.
Rateable values (Scotland) orders (16.03.94) 905–6, 913–4, 924–6
Questions
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board, Educational qualifications 542w
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board, Resignations 379–80w
Blood transfusion services, Scotland 548–52w
Community nurses, Contracts for services 377–8w
Congenital abnormalities, Scotland 665w
Cottage hospitals, Hospital closures 53w
Dangerous drugs, Scotland 735–6w
Day care of children, Scottish Office 737w
Defence industries, Diversification 125w
Dental services, Scotland 123w, 736–8w
Dentists, Pay 380–4w
Dumbartonshire Enterprise 124w
Economic situation, Scotland 126w
Glasgow Development Agency 736w
Health Care International 734w
Health services, Elderly 267–8w
Hospital discharges, Scotland 62w
Hospitals, Fees and charges 376–7w
Hospitals, Scotland 376w
Local government reform, Scottish councils 268w
Lone parent families, Scotland 53–4w
Meigle Cottage Hospital, Hospital closures 53w, 380w
NHS, Privatisation 378w
NHS, Telephone services 54w
NHS trusts, Scotland 542–4w
Osteoporosis, Screening 126w
Pay beds, Scotland 62w
Rescue services, Scotland 54–5w
Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland, Public appointments 62w
Scottish Ambulance Service 664–5w
Scottish Ambulance Service, Expenditure 664w
Scottish health boards 545–8w
Scottish health boards, Public appointments 267w
Slaughterhouses, Scotland 63w
Training, Scotland 418–9w
Women's employment, Scotland 123w

Stott, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 41–6, 56
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 330–2

Stott, Mr Roger—continued
Questions
Privatisation, Northern Ireland 1004–5

Strang, Dr Gavin
Questions
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Antelopes 605w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Germany 818w
Farm business survey 904w
Health services, Elderly 267–8w
Marginal land, Farm incomes 390–1w, 608–10w
Milk, EC grants and loans 495w
Mycoplasma bovis 816–7w
School milk 191–5w, 281w
Sheep, Exports 66w
Sheep dipping, Waste disposal 47w

Strategic nuclear weapons
Nuclear disarmament 139

Straw, Mr Jack
Questions
Council tax 869–70
Local government finance 111w
Local government pensions 786w
Single regeneration budget 872

Street lighting
Crime prevention 173w, 233–4w

Streeter, Mr Gary
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 305
Select committees, Points of order (09.03.94) 285
Questions
Bail, Habitual offenders 229w
Business questions 1021
Industrial production 279–80
Office of Water Services, Water charges 878–9
Roundabouts, Plymouth 121–2w
Trident submarines 136

Structural adjustment
Subsaharan Africa 673w

Student grants
Handicapped students 625–6w

Student numbers
322–3w
Inner London boroughs 845–6w
Northern Ireland 841–2w
Science education 846w

Student unions
Expenditure 486w
Finance 884w

Students
Income support 628–9w

Submarines
Fishing vessels 202w, 398–9w

Subsaharan Africa
Structural adjustment 673w

Subsidiarity
584–5w

Sudan
Armed conflict 340–1w, 472w
Food supply 585w
Human rights 243w
Overseas aid 585w, 684–5w
Peace negotiations 243w, 473w
Sanctions 242w

Suffolk
Road construction 10w

Sugar
Prices 387w

Suicide
887w

Sulphur dioxide
Air pollution control 871w

Sumberg, Mr David
Questions
Telecommunications cables, Road works 397–8

Sunderland
Grant maintained schools 238w

Supermarkets
Planning permission 865

Supplementary credit approvals
Recycling 524w

"Supply Estimates 1992/93, Statement of Excess"
(14.03.94) 715–6

"Supply Estimates 1993/94, Supplementary Estimates"
(14.03.94) 629–76, 713–4, 716–8

"Supply Estimates 1994/95, Ministry of Defence Votes A"
(14.03.94) 714

Surgery
Hospital waiting lists 74–5w

Surrogate motherhood
558–9w

Sustainable development
679w

Sustainable Development Commission
see UN Commission for Sustainable Development

Sutherland, Stewart
Public appointments 133w

Sweeney, Mr Walter
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 794–9
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 942, 945–6, 952, 962–4, 971
Questions
Farm incomes 813–4w
Life imprisonment 384–5
Railway travel, Glamorgan 610–1

Swimming
Curriculum 10

Swimming pools
10–1

Switzerland
Export of live animals 493w

Sykes, Mr John
Questions
Hotels, Social security recipients 741

Syrian Arab Republic
Kurds 472w

Tai Cymru
see Housing for Wales

Take-away food shops
Licensing 361w

Takeovers
Car industry 279, 281–2
Distillers Group 747w
Independent 906–7w

Tanks
199w

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 405
Questions
Official engagements 100w, 319w, 646w, 813w

Tax allowances
Health insurance 99w
Inheritance tax 569–70w

Tax burden
Greater London 98w
Income tax 325–6w
Personal taxation 324–5w

Tax collection
VAT 456w

Tax evasion
Alcoholic drinks duties 98w
Excise duties 457–8w
VAT 222w

Tax rates and bands
825w
Income tax 568w

Tax yields
Betting shops 324w
Gaming machines 324w
Hydrocarbon oil duties 569w
Indirect taxation 568w
Insurance premium tax 571–2w
Tobacco duties 97w
VAT 457w

Taxation
(16.03.94) 888–9
Building industry 99w
Ealing 869w
Lewisham 869–70w
Personal savings 98w
Tipping of waste 578w
Tourist industry 9–10

Taxis
Mobility of disabled 118w

Taxpayers
327–30w, 673w

Taylor, Mrs Ann
Questions
City technology colleges, School population 529w
Dental services, Huddersfield 835w
Family credit, Take-up 879w
Monopolies, Ice cream 574w
School population 529w
Technology colleges 128–32w, 531–2w, 883–4w

Taylor, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1238, 1247–51
Questions
Armed forces deployment 143
Employee share ownership schemes 323w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 43–4, 52, 62, 71, 74, 78, 83–95, 97

Taylor, Mr John M, Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Dept
Debates etc.
Craig, John S, Custody (10.03.94) 514, 516–9
Questions
Administration of justice, Judges 557w
Benzodiazepines, Compensation 70w
Civil proceedings, Court rules and procedures 68w
Civil service agencies, Lord Chancellor's Dept 672w
Civil service manpower, Lord Chancellor's Dept 758–9w
County courts, Administrative delays 70–1w
Courts, Disclosure of information 862–3w
Debt collection, County courts 498w
Employment Appeal Tribunal 614
"Family Law", Matrimonial property 97w
Immunity certificates 759w, 861w
Immunity certificates, Lord Chancellor's Dept 759w
Judges, Political impartiality 757w
Judges, Private education 757w
Judges, Recruitment 757–8w
Judges, Working hours 757w
Judicial Studies Board, Advisory bodies 757w

Taylor, Mr John M*—*continued
Jury disqualification, Deaf 405w
Legal aid 761–2w
Legal aid, Expenditure 97w
Legal aid, Leeds 761–2w
Legal aid, Personal injury 331w
Legal aid, Sex discrimination 671w
Legal Aid Board, Leeds 760w
Legal Aid Board, Manpower 760w
Legal Aid Board, Performance standards 761–2w
Legal Aid Board, Redundancy 554–6w
Legal aid scheme 71–4w, 498w, 553–7w, 616–7
Legal aid scheme, Contracts for services 71–2w
Legal aid scheme, Legal costs 760–1w
Legal aid scheme, Liverpool 555w
Legal aid scheme, Redundancy 71–3w
Legal aid scheme, Solicitors 553–6w
Legal representation, Barristers 861w
Legislative process 70w, 762–3w
Limitation Act 1980 617
Magistrates 758w
Magistrates, Age 617–8
Magistrates, Disclosure of information 758w
Magistrates, Political impartiality 758w
Magistrates, Public appointments 68w
Magistrates, West Yorkshire 68–70w
Magistrates courts, South London 616
Magistrates' courts committees, Justices' clerks 615–6
Public Record Office 615
Public Record Office, Civil service dispersal 614
Sexual offences 615
Sexual offences, Disclosure of information 615
Social Security Commissioners, Social security appeals 405w
Solicitors, Training 618

Taylor, Mr Matthew
Questions
Advertising 260w
Advertising, Centre for Policy Studies 437w
Advertising, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 488w
Advertising, Dept of Health 347–8w, 438w
Advertising, Home Office 588w
Advertising, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 281–2w, 384w
Advertising, Northern Ireland Office 350–1w
Advertising, Treasury 99w
Commemorative coins 330w
Discretionary student grants 624w
Doctors, Disciplinary proceedings 723–4w
Festivals and special occasions, D-day landings 311w
Government buildings, Repairs and maintenance 38–40w, 680w
Inland Revenue, Civil service manpower 568–9w
Official visits, Dept of the Environment 368w
Official visits, Prime Minister 463w
Open government 17
Public appointments, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 488w
VAT, Tax collection 456w
VAT, Unpaid taxes 819–20w
Voting rights, EC nationals 588w

Taylor, Sir Teddy
Questions
Burglary 356w
Common agricultural policy 112w, 276w
Working hours, EC law 730

Teacher training
Manpower 134w, 154w, 352w
Northern Ireland 352w
Wales 154w

Teachers
Convictions 618w
Disciplinary proceedings 624–5w
Manpower 133–4w, 154w, 351–2w
Northern Ireland 351–2w
Wales 154w

Technology colleges
128–32w, 531–2w, 883–4w

Technology Foresight programme
15–6

Teenage pregnancy
Care proceedings 343w

Teesside
Housing associations 864

Telecommunications cables
Road works 397–8

Telecommunications Industry (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1994
Debates etc.
(16.03.94) 905–26

Telecommunications technology
486–7w
Emergency services 302w
Railway transport 407w

Telephone services
Dept for Education 237w
Dept of Employment 240w
Dept of Health 343–4w
Dept of National Heritage 312w
Dept of Social Security 409–10w
Dept of Trade and Industry 335–6w
Dept of Transport 316w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 244w
Home Office 499–500w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 389–90w
Ministry of Defence 518–9w
NHS 54w, 443w
Road works 510w
Scottish Office 661–2w
Treasury 222w
Welsh Office 522–3w

Television advertising
Territorial Army 397w

Television licences
5
Fees and charges 101w
Fine defaulters 230–1w

Televisions
Hotels 2

Temple-Morris, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 356–8

Temporary accommodation
295w

10 Downing Street
Operating costs 464w

10 Squadron
Fees and charges 200w

Tenancy agreements
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 843–4w

Tenant eviction
370w

Tenant management organisations
Government grants 681w

Tenants
Housing benefits 38w, 136–8w

Tenants' rights
Council housing management 417w

Territorial Army
Television advertising 397w

Terrorism
Eritrea 472–3w
Greater London 390
Legislation 357w
Northern Ireland 143–50w, (09.03.94) 292–339, 841w, 1009

Tesco
Government grants 523–4w

Thailand
Aid financed trade 586w

Theft
766–8w
Cellular phones 179–80w
Doncaster 766–8w
Medical equipment 890w

Theology
Educational institutions 541w

"This Common Inheritance White Paper"
875

Thomason, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 646, 651
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 770, 772–7
Questions
Air pollution control, Solid fuels 871–2w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 198w
Car industry 1013–4
Council tax 872–3

Thompson, Sir Donald
Debates etc.
Council of Europe & Western European Union (18.03.94) 1237, 1242, 1244–7, 1249, 1258–9, 1261–2, 1275, 1277
Questions
Calderdale and Kirklees Training and Enterprise Council 732
Contracts for services 18
Tourism 6

Thompson, Mr Jack
Questions
A1, Dual carriageways 511w

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Craig, John S, Custody (10.03.94) 513–6, 518
Questions
EC Foreign Affairs Council 245w
Heathrow Airport, Bombings 394

THORP
Dail Eireann 579w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 250w
Radioactive wastes 579–80w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 525, 549–52, 568
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 662–5
Questions
City challenge, Bolton 791w
Further education colleges, College governors 625w
Industry, Northern Ireland 840–1w
NYNEX CableComms Bolton, Road works 8w

Tibet
Family planning 484–5w

Tigers
Animal products 871w

Tipping, Mr Paddy
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Consultants 906w

Tipping of waste
41w
Taxation 578w
Water pollution 785w, 869w

Tobacco
Prices 274w

Tobacco duties
Tax yields 97w

Tobacco industry
NHS 566–7w

Tobacco Manufacturers' Association
164w

Tornado aircraft
Airmisses 398w

Tourism
6
Wales 153w, 633w

Tourist boards
Finance 5–6

Tourist industry
2–3
Railway travel 1
Taxation 9–10

Town & Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988
Questions
872w

Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987
Questions
459–60w

Town and country planning
Crown immunity 375w

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 134–5
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 841w
War Crimes Act 1991, Police 352w

Toxoplasmosis
Screening 557w

Tracey, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Northern line (17.03.94) 1131–2
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 440
Questions
Council tax 870

Trade agreements
Malaysia 274–5

Trade competitiveness
Manufacturing industries 471w

Trade missions
South East Asia 274

Trade union membership
644w

Trade unions
635w

Traffic areas
Civil service agencies 690–1w

Training
EC grants and loans 718w
European Social Fund 807–8w
Expenditure 638–40w
Health visitors 444w, 719–20w
Rescue services 638w
Scotland 418–9w
Solicitors 618
Wales 284w
Young people 732–3

Training and enterprise councils
731–2

Training credits
188–90w

Training for work
188w

Transmissable encephalopathies
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 900w

Transport
117–8w

Transport Act 1962
Questions
863

Transport & Works Act 1992
Questions
7w

Transport infrastructure
Capital investment 318w
EC grants and loans 117w
Economic growth 1–2w
Private sector 505–6w

Transport of radioactive materials
Drigg 653w
Sellafield 653w

Transport police
794w

Transport Police (Jurisdiction) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (18.03.94) 1233
Order relating to Com (18.03.94) 1301
Questions
1028

Transport policy
Wales 606–7

Transport Research Laboratory
115w, 406w

Transport supplementary grants
Yorkshire and Humberside 317–9w

Travel
London boroughs 163w

Travel cards
Greater London 690w

Travelling expenses
Dept of the Environment 368w
Prime Minister 463w

Travelling people
Health services 161w

Treasury
Advertising 99w
Alcoholic drinks 455w
Civil service agencies 455w
Day care of children 223–4w
Government buildings 455w
Immunity certificates 222–3w, 331w, 572w
Office furniture 455w
Open government 821w
Telephone services 222w

Treaties
Pollution control 44–5w
Radioactive waste disposal 282w

Treaty on European Union
584w

Trend, Mr Michael
Questions
Building regulations 300w
Council tax 674–5w

"Trends in Cost Effectiveness of Enforcement Activity in Illicit Heroin Market 1979–1990"
502–3w

Trent Regional Health Authority
Congenital abnormalities 535w, 831w
Land ownership and tenure 726w
Pay beds 721w
Residential care 722w

Trials
Fraud 208w
Press 6–7

Tribunals
(11.03.94) 592

Trident
135–6

Trident submarines
136, 139
Devonport Dockyard 655w

Trimble, Mr David
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 70–1
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 343
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 312–7

Trimble, Mr David—continued
Questions
Criminal injuries compensation, Northern Ireland 865–6w
Life imprisonment, Northern Ireland 384
Northern Ireland government 842w, 1006

Trotter, Mr Neville
Debates etc.
Religious education, Public petitions (09.03.94) 371
Questions
Armoured fighting vehicles 394–6w
Embassies, Expenditure 112–3w
Transport police 794w

Tumours
Brain 829–30w

Turkey
Consolidated fund debates (17.03.94) 1165–72
Foreign relations 21w
Human rights 21w, 448w
Kurds 21w
Official visits 448w

Turner, Mr Dennis
Questions
Companies political contributions 247w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Town & Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 872w

Tyler, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 413
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2P. (11.03.94) 528, 538
Crime, Rural areas (17.03.94) 1038–42
EC enlargement (17.03.94) 1031
Terrorism, Points of order (11.03.94) 584–5
Questions
Common agricultural policy 276w
Countryside Commission 583w
Milk, Agricultural marketing 607w
Nature Conservancy Council for England, Countryside Commission 301w
Potatoes, Agricultural subsidies 66–7w
Sewage, Waste disposal 792w

UK contributions to EC budget
Common agricultural policy 275w
Northern Ireland 616–7w

UK delegations
Council of Europe 647w
Western European Union 647w

UK Panel on Sustainable Development
297w

UK trade with EC
469w

Ulster Young Militants
706w

UN Commission for Sustainable Development
583w

UN Commission on Human Rights
244w

UN Environment Programme
UK contributions 578–9w

UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UK contributions 313w

UN resolutions
East Timor 803w

Unemployment
181w, 635w, 714–5w, 728–9, 738–9, 809w
Clwyd 603–5
Lambeth 635w
Liverpool 635w
North West region 181w
Rosyth Dockyard 201w
Wales 522w, 605–6

Unemployment benefits
Doncaster 139w, 514–5w
EC countries 874w
Expenditure 874w
Social security benefits rules 139w, 630w
Voluntary work 631w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Computers 19w
Privatisation 246w

United Kingdom Passport Agency
Contracts for services 169–70w

Universities
Higher Education Funding Council for England 133w
Redundancy 132–3w

University College Hospital
Finance 346w

University of London Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
2R order read (10.03.94) 381, (17.03.94) 995

Unpaid taxes
VAT 819–20w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speaker's rulings and statements (10.03.94) 389, (15.03.94) 729

Unsolicited goods and services
205w

Upper Waiting Hall
Exhibitions 845w

Urban areas
Air pollution monitoring 880

Urban development grants
462w
Central Manchester Development Corporation 461w

Urban programme
Bradford 683w
East Midlands 872
Finance 877
Government grants to local authorities 45–7w

USA
Air transport 408w
Armed forces deployment 139–40, 752–4w
Employment opportunities 638w
Minimum wage 191w

"Use of Drugs by Young People in Newcastle"
171w

Vacancies
Employment service local offices 514–5w

Vaccination
Wales 523w

Valuation
Council tax 43w, 220w

VAT
Charities 572w
Doncaster 456–7w
Energy prices 135–6w, 572w, 822w
Sports facilities 222w
Tax collection 456w
Tax evasion 222w
Tax yields 457w
Unpaid taxes 819–20w

VAT exemptions
Royal Mail 212w

Vaz, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Local government (17.03.94) 1184, 1188–93
Local government, Greater London (17.03.94) 1153
Questions
Dept of the Environment, Ministers 371–2w
Government grants to local authorities 111–2w

Vaz, Mr Keith—continued
Local authorities, EC grants and loans 372–3w
Local government reform, Isle of Wight 370w
Rents 410w
Single regeneration budget 372w
Standard spending assessments 373w
Urban programme, Government grants to local authorities 45–7w

Vehicle Inspectorate
794–5w

Vehicle number plates
269w

Venture capital
Small businesses 266–7

Veterinary drugs
Horses 491w

Victim Support
see National Council of Victim Support

Victim support schemes
Domestic violence 587w

Video nasties
(16.03.94) 989
Public petitions (16.03.94) 989

Video recordings
Evidence 502w

Viggers, Mr Peter
Questions
Motor insurance, Law enforcement 356w

Visual arts
Export controls 12

Vocational guidance
182w, 297w
Contracts for services 644w
Finance 790w
Performance standards 861–2

Voluntary organisations
Northern Ireland 1010

Voluntary work
Unemployment benefits 631w

Voting rights
EC nationals 588w

Wages councils
Wales 524w, 640w
Women's employment 640w

Wakefield Health Authority
566w

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William,
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Questions
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Interviews 784w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Parliamentary questions 488w, 784w
Chartermark scheme 15
Chartermark scheme, Yorkshire Water 15
Citizen's Charter 693w
Civil service agencies 80w
Contracts for services 18
Contracts for services, Audit 403–4w
Contracts for services, Government departments 18, 404w
Disclosure of information, Codes of practice 402w
Genetic engineering 79–80w
Higher civil servants 79w
Immunity certificates, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 646w
Multiple sclerosis, Research 538–9w
National Week of Science Engineering and Technology 487w
"New Structure for Postgraduate Research Training Supported by Research Councils" 255w
Open government 16–7, 78w
Orders and regulations, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 693w
Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology 16

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William—continued
Parliamentary questions, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 645w
"Permanent Secretary's Handbook" 256w, 402w
Public appointments, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 488w
Research councils, Public appointments 646w
Science and technology 13
Science and technology policy, Megalab UK 19–20
Science and technology research 79w
Technology Foresight programme 15–6
Telecommunications technology 486–7w

Wales
Agricultural land 284w
Agricultural workers 695w
Air pollution 800w
Air pollution monitoring 366w
Assisted places scheme 283w
Average earnings 520–1w
Blind 284–5w
Blood transfusion services 367–8w
British Gas 602
Carbon dioxide 450w
Cathedrals 698w
Civil servants 521–2w
Congenital abnormalities 723w
Cost per pupil 523w
Council house sales 286–8w
Council housing 288–9w
Council housing management 452w
Deaf 284–5w
Dental services 451–2w, (15.03.94) 855–62
Devolution 611
Disabled facilities grants 522w
District health authorities 155w
Driving tests 115w
Electricity consumption 801w
Employment Service Agency 516w
Energy policy 606–7
Environmentally sensitive areas 287–8w, 363–4w
Equal pay 632w, 694–5w
Eurolink programme 364–5w
European Social Fund 718w
Family doctors 285–6w
Family health services authorities 697w
Fire services 353w, 363w
Foreign investment in UK 34w, 269–70, 605–6, 612
Government assistance to industry 635w
Government departments 634w
Handicapped 696w
Health authorities 283w
Health service staff 799–800w, 907w
Heart diseases 696w
Hospital waiting lists 366w
Hospitals 608
Housing finance 801w
Interreg programme 612
Local government (15.03.94) 749–854
Local government staff 799–800w
Low flying 858w
Manufacturing industries 610
Medical rehabilitation 525w
Milk Marque 526w
Minimum wage 633w
Ministers' domestic visits 800–1w
Motorways 524w
Multiply handicapped 363w
National income 521–2w
NHS finance 634w, 698w, 907w
NHS trusts 154–5w, 157w, 525–6w, 634w
Non-departmental public bodies 521w, 610–2, 634w, 694w

Wales—continued
Nursery schools 288w
Orimulsion 365w
Outdoor education 633w
Out-patients 632w
Patients 157w
Pay beds 287w
Pigmeat 522w
Prescriptions 528w
Public appointments 364w, 367w
Railway network 522w
Railway transport 601
RECHAR 609–10
Rural areas 362–3w
Satellite communications 521w
School population 633w
Science and technology research 14–5
Sites of special scientific interest 153w, 451w
Standard spending assessments 365w
Teacher training 154w
Teachers' 154w
Tourism 153w, 633w
Training 284w
Transport policy 606–7
Unemployment 522w, 605–6
Vaccination 523w
Wages councils 524w, 640w
Wines 366–7w
Women's employment 695w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Air traffic, Europe (17.03.94) 1090–1, 1093
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 403
Questions
Armed forces deployment, USA 140
Cottage hospitals, Hospital closures 53w
Exports, Steel leghold traps 267
Meigle Cottage Hospital, Hospital closures 53w, 380w
Northern Ireland government 1008
Rescue services, Scotland 54–5w, 263w
Rescue services, Training 638w

Walker, Mr A Cecil
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 104–8
Questions
Hospital beds, Northern Ireland 867–8w
Northern Ireland government 1008
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Heating 75w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Religion 612–3w

Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Debates etc.
Homicide, Doncaster (09.03.94) 372–7
Questions
Cost per pupil 238–40w
Cost per pupil, Scotland 658–9w
Cost per pupil, Wales 523w

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc.
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 182–5, 196, 239
Questions
Aggregates, Dredging 790–1w
Coastal fishing, Dredging 815–6w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Public appointments 379w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Scotland 378–9w
Public appointments, Non-departmental public bodies 125w
Public appointments, Scotland 899w
Race bank, Dredging 791w
School boards, Scotland 378w
School buildings, Scotland 665–8w, 732w
Scottish Homes, Marketing 898w
Sheep premiums, Scotland 666w
VAT, Charities 572w

Walley, Ms Joan
Debates etc.
Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Bill, Money res (10.03.94) 508–9

Walley, Ms Joan—continued
Questions
Air pollution, Asthma 788w
Air pollution monitoring 785w
Child Support Agency 875–6w
Driving licences, Lorries 650w
Freight facilities grant 653w
Freight transport 689–90w
M11, Contracts 314–5w
Maintenance, Children 213w
Road construction, Environmental impact assessment 863w
Road freight transport, Goods vehicles 687w
Road haulage licences 689w
Roads 693w
School discipline 532w
Teachers, Convictions 618w
Teachers, Disciplinary proceedings 624–5w

Wandsworth
Government grants to local authorities 374w
Grant maintained schools 238w
Rent assessment panels 578w, 580w

Wandsworth Borough Council
Air traffic 649w
John Archer School 871w

Wansbeck Hospital
Redundancy 159w

War Crimes Act 1991
Questions
Police 352w

War pensions
631w, (17.03.94) 1032–5
Energy prices 322w

War widows' pensions
255w

Ward, Mr John
Questions
Drugs, Expenditure 145

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 759
Questions
Brain, Injuries 161w, 525w
Congenital abnormalities, Sodium valproate 303w
Deaf, Wales 285w
Disabled facilities grants, Wales 522w
Further education teachers, Contracts of employment 25–6w
Government assistance to industry, Wales 635w
Hammersmith Hospital 83w
School meals, Nutrition and health 703w
School transport, Motor vehicle safety 25w
Severn bridge, Road tolls 692w
Sites of special scientific interest, Wales 451w
Social security recipients, British residents abroad 36w
Tourism, Wales 153w
Vaccination, Wales 523w
Wind power, Noise 797w

Wardle, Mr Charles, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Questions
Advertising, Home Office 588w
Animal experiments, Birds 233w
Animal welfare, Orders and Regulations 670w
Arms trade 170w
Arrests, Police training 358–9w
Bennett, Paul, Criminal proceedings 781w
Burglary 356w
Campsfield House Detention Centre 780–1w
Campsfield House Detention Centre, Immigrant detainees 781w, 894–5w
Clubs, Fire regulations 169w
Computers in government departments, Home Office 671w

Wardle, Mr Charles—continued
Crime, Detection rates 355w
Crime, Greater London 387, 389–90
Crime prevention, Closed circuit television 17w
Crime prevention, Expenditure 769w
Crime prevention, Street lighting 173w
Davis, Sammy, Deportation 17w, 504w
Deportation 232w
Deportation, Prisoners 595–6w
Directorate of Telecommunications, Prisons 176–7w
Dogs, Legislation 175w
Drug seizures 600w
Drugs and crime, Police informers 503w
EC immigration 174–5w
Entertainment licensing, Hypnosis 598–9w
Entry clearances, Members' correspondence 893w
Fire services, Local government finance 352–3w
Fire services, Merseyside 352w
Fire services, Wales 353w
Firearms 391–2
Fires, Death 180–2w
Free movement of people, European economic area 362w
Grand National 413w
Homicide 177w
Identity cards, EC countries 170w
Illegal immigrants 231w
Immigrant detainees, Hunger strikes 504w
Immigrant detainees, Medical treatments 502w
Immigrant detainees, Self-mutilation 767w
Immigrants, Algeria 503w
Immigrants, Yugoslavia 503w
Immigration controls, Ministerial powers 587–8w
Lancashire Constabulary, Emergency calls 587w
Local authorities, Crime prevention 391
Missing persons 589–90w
Motor insurance, Law enforcement 356w
Octopuses 415–6w
Parvaiz, Zahid 598w
Pets, Animal welfare 14w
Pinochet, Augusto, Security 781w
Police 361–2w
Police, Expenditure 227–8w
Police, Gloucestershire 355w
Police, Pay 175w
Police, Resignations 171–2w
Police authorities, Yorkshire and Humberside 229w
Police custody, Greater Manchester 354w
Police Negotiating Board 356w
Police Responsibilities and Rewards Inquiry 501w
Political refugees 500w, 590–1w, 593w
Political refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina 360w
Political refugees, Immigrant detainees 501w, 591–2w
Political refugees, Immigration controls 500w
Prisoners, Costs 176w
Prisoners' release 391
Racial attacks 414w
Racial attacks, Detection rates 413–4w
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill 1993/94 387, 390
Refugees, Research 176w
Ruppert, Bryan, Deportation 586w
St Mary's Hospital Medical School London, Animal experiments 896w
Take-away food shops, Licensing 361w
Terrorism, Greater London 390
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Contracts for services 169–70w
War Crimes Act 1991, Police 352w
West Midlands Police, Manpower 670w
Young offenders, Yorkshire and Humberside 594w

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 407–8
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 579–80

Wareing, Mr Robert N—continued
Questions
Standard spending assessments, Liverpool 673–4w

Warren Spring Laboratory
Closures 583w
Redundancy 799w

Waste disposal
Ammunition 858w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 494w
Fish farming 348–9w
Sewage 792w
Sheep dipping 47w
Water treatment 351w

Waste management
Agriculture 42w
Licensing 41–2w

"Watch Your Waste"
112w

Water charges
296w, 673w, 879
Office of Water Services 878–9
Water supply industry 109–10w

Water (Domestic Disconnections) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
Order for resuming adjourned 2R read (11.03.94) 591–2

Water pollution
677w
Beaches 675w
Coal mine closures 867–8
River Doe Lea 868
Tipping of waste 785w, 869w

Water supply
Lead pollution 299w
Planning permission 290–1w

Water supply disconnections
296w, 679w
Coventry 296w
Greater London 581w
Severn Trent Water 296w

Water supply industry
Water charges 109–10w

Water treatment
Northern Ireland 351w
Waste disposal 351w

Waterson, Mr Nigel
Questions
Armed forces, Merchant ships 132–3
Citizen's Charter 693w
"Countrywide" 577w
European works councils 734
Research councils, Public appointments 646w
Tourist industry, Taxation 9–10

Watson, Mr Mike
Questions
World Summit for Social Development 477w

Watt Committee on Energy
Methane 574w

Weather
Betting and gaming duties 222w

Wells, Mr Bowen
Questions
Industrial production 277

Welsh, Mr Andrew
Questions
Electoral Register, EC nationals 665–6w

Welsh Development Agency
602–3
Directors 528w
Performance standards 156–7w

Welsh Economic Council
697–8w

Welsh language
35w
Community health councils 154w
Curriculum 450–1w
Departmental publications 695–6w

Welsh Office
Alcoholic drinks 365w
Capital investment 527w
Civil service agencies 524w
Civil service manpower 908w
Computers in government departments 694w
Day care of children 36w, 526–7w
Deregulation initiative 607
Environmental policy 800w
Immunity certificates 634–5w
Non-departmental public bodies 696–7w
Office furniture 287w
Official hospitality 288w
Open government 801w
Orders and regulations 696w
Telephone services 522–3w
Women's employment 908w

WENA Hotels
Egypt 19–20w

West, Frederick
Homicide 331–2w

West Midlands
Bail hostels 225–6w, 230w, 393–4
Probation and aftercare 229–30w
Probation hostels 230w

West Midlands Police
Manpower 670w

West Midlands Regional Health Authority
Financial Information Project Systems 302w, 534w

West Wales
Railway transport 601

West Yorkshire
Magistrates 68–70w

Western European Union
Private Members' motions (18.03.94) 1234–90
UK delegations 647w

Western Health and Social Services Board
Religious discrimination 144w

Western Honduras
Rio Tinto Zinc 113w

Westhay Moor
369w

Wharfedale Hospital
304w

Wheelchairs
Expenditure 722w

Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Debates etc.
Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (07.03.94) 39–41
Questions
Administrative costs, Northern Ireland Office 495w
Advertising 260w
Advertising, Northern Ireland Office 350–1w
Alcoholic drinks, Northern Ireland Office 496w
Computers in government departments, Northern Ireland Office 705w
Criminal injuries compensation, Northern Ireland 865–6w
Criminal injuries compensation scheme, Northern Ireland 844w
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 840w
Custodial treatment, Northern Ireland 350w
EC grants and loans, Northern Ireland 613–5w, 1010
European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, Northern Ireland 614w

Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John—continued
European Regional Development Fund, Northern Ireland 614–5w
European Social Fund, Northern Ireland 613w, 615–6w
Fine defaulters, Northern Ireland 839w
Motor vehicle theft, Prison sentences 261w
National Council of Victim Support, Government grants 706–7w
Non-departmental public bodies, Northern Ireland Office 705w
Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund, EC grants and loans 614w
Office furniture, Northern Ireland Office 496w
Official hospitality, Northern Ireland Office 497w
Orders and regulations, Northern Ireland Office 705w
Police Authority for Northern Ireland, Public appointments 842–3w
Police interrogation, Northern Ireland 842w
Prison sentences, Northern Ireland 261w
Prisoners' home leave, Northern Ireland 617w
Privatisation, Northern Ireland 1003–5
Public appointments, Northern Ireland Office 141w
Road accidents, Death 260w
Road accidents, Northern Ireland 261w
Salmon, Poaching 259w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 143–50w, 841w
UK contributions to EC budget, Northern Ireland 616–7w
Ulster Young Militants 706w

Whittingdale, Mr John
Questions
Milk marketing scheme 280w
Pupil exclusions, Drug abuse 421w

Wicks, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 175–82, 241–2
Questions
Community care, Northern Ireland 841w
Housing associations, Rents 863–4

Widdecombe, Miss Ann, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Employment
Debates etc.
Gas safety, Domestic gas appliances (07.03.94) 126–30
Sex discrimination (10.03.94) 494–8
Questions
ABB Transportation 636w
Aerospace industry, Manpower 433–4w
Astra Training Services 636w, 732
Blackpool and the Fylde College, National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education 338w
British Aerospace, Redundancy 240–1w
Business start-up scheme 183w
Calderdale and Kirklees Training and Enterprise Council 732
Civil service manpower, Dept of Employment 812–3w, 862w
Coal mine closures, Employment rehabilitation 635–6w
Day care of children, Dept of Employment 191w
Employment 637w, 729–30, 736
Employment, Doncaster 809–10w
Employment, Statistics 735–6
Employment level 714w
Employment level, Statistics 240w
European Social Fund, Training 807–8w
Financial institutions, Manpower 241w, 810–1w
Financial institutions, Yorkshire and Humberside 806–7w
Foyer hostel scheme 732–3
Hereford and Worcester Training and Enterprise Council 737
Learning for work 183w
Leeds Development Corporation, Employment opportunities 182–3w

Widdecombe, Miss Ann—continued
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 181–2w, 806w
Northumberland Training and Enterprise Council, Government grants 63w
Out of school childcare grant scheme 734–5
Rescue services, Training 638w
Sex discrimination 432–3w
Skillcentres, East Midlands 645w
Skilled workers 733
Training, Expenditure 638–40w
Training and enterprise councils 731–2
Training credits 188–90w
Training for work 188w
Unemployment 181w, 635w, 728–9, 809w
Unemployment, Lambeth 635w
Unemployment, Liverpool 635w
Unemployment, North West region 181w
Vocational guidance 182w
Vocational guidance, Contracts for services 644w
Vocational guidance, Performance standards 861–2w
Youth employment, Doncaster 635w
Youth training, Doncaster 808w
Youth training, Industrial accidents 808–9w
Youth unemployment, Doncaster 717–8w
Youth unemployment, Leicester 739
Youth unemployment, North West region 181w

Widows' benefits
Joyce, Christine 708w

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 526, 569
Dental services, Wales (15.03.94) 855–9, 861
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), 2R & Money res (15.03.94) 749
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 936, 938–9, 958, 961, 964–9
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, Rep & 3R (08.03.94) 196
Questions
Coal mining, Manpower 203–4w
Diesel fuel, Hydrocarbon oil duties 272w
Eurolink programme, Wales 364–5w
Members' correspondence 777w
National income 825w
Non-departmental public bodies, Wales 521w
Small businesses 247w
Unemployment, Wales 606
VAT, Sports facilities 222w
VAT, Tax yields 457w
Water charges 296w
Water supply industry, Water charges 109–10w

Wild boar
Catterick 396w

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
Questions
153w, 369w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, UN Protection Force (10.03.94) 406–7
Questions
Air force, Iraq 132

Willetts, Mr David
Questions
D-Day landings, Festivals and special occasions 199w
"Managing Set-Aside Land for Wildlife" 195w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Questions
Defence contracts, Malaysia 755–6w
Malaysia, Aid financed trade 100w, 114w
Royal residences, Parliamentary questions 611w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan—continued
Royal residences, Rents 481w, 611w, 896–7w

Williams, Mr Alan W
Debates etc.
Local Government (Wales) Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (16.03.94) 951, 953–7
Questions
Building societies, Profits 222w
Crime prevention, Expenditure 769w
Employment level 714w
Environment protection, Equipment 247w
GCE A Level 532w
Higher education admission 623–4w
Low flying, Wales 858w
National income, Wales 521w
Non-departmental public bodies, Wales 611–2
Out-patients, Wales 632w
Science education 619–20w
Science education, General certificate of secondary education 618w
Science education, Student numbers 846w

Wilshire, Mr David
Debates etc.
Terrorism, Points of order (14.03.94) 626–7
Questions
Grant maintained schools, Government grants 28–31w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 143–50w

Wilson, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
Air traffic, Europe (17.03.94) 1094–8, 1100–1
Questions
Agricultural subsidies, Norway 261–2w
Agriculture, Parliamentary questions 388w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 8w, 405w
Charities, Scotland 377w
European Passenger Services, Channel tunnel 121w
Railtrack 119–20w
Railtrack, Capital 270–1w
Railtrack, Finance 270w
Railway travel, Government grants to local authorities 9–10w
Transport police 794w

Wind power
107w
Industrial accidents 583–4w
Noise 797w
Planning permission 461w

Wine Standards Board
Public appointments 195w

Wines
EC internal trade 196–7w
Wales 366–7w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee (09.03.94) 344–5, 353
Oral questions, Points of order (16.03.94) 881
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1994 (09.03.94) 393
Racial Hatred & Violence Bill, 2R (11.03.94) 586
Select committees, Points of order (08.03.94) 248, (09.03.94) 285–6
Questions
Campsfield House Detention Centre 780–1w
Campsfield House Detention Centre, Immigrant detainees 781w
Concessionary television licences 5
Dept of Trade and Industry, Legal opinion 211w
Entry clearances, Members' correspondence 893w

Winnick, Mr David—continued
Maintenance, Children 141w
Members' correspondence 167w, 302w
Northern Ireland government 841w
Prime Minister, Expenditure 319–20w
Rents 675w

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Questions
Abortion 308w
Abortion, Congenital abnormalities 87–8w
Abortion, St George's Hospital Tooting 88w
Business questions 1019–20

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Cancer (17.03.94) 1075
EC enlargement (17.03.94) 1032
War pensions (17.03.94) 1034–5
Questions
Business questions 1020–1
Manufacturing industries 269
Mersey Regional Health Authority, Public appointments 889w

Wise, Mrs Audrey
Questions
Income support, Students 628–9w

Witnesses
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 745w

Women
Civil service manpower 862w
Northern Ireland 866–7
Science and technology research 18–9

Women into Parliament Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
Order for resuming adjourned 2R read (11.03.94) 591

Women's employment
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 784w
Dept for Education 849w
Dept of Health 838w
Dept of National Heritage 897–8w
Dept of Social Security 783w
Dept of the Environment 793w
Employment Service Agency 811–2w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 804–6w
Health service staff 442–3w
Home Office 777–80w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 758–9w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 818w
Part-time employment 695w
Scotland 123w
Scottish Office 825w
Wages councils 640w
Wales 695w
Welsh Office 908w

Working conditions
Family doctors 565w

Working hours
636–7w
EC law 730
Inkin, Geoffrey 34w
Judges 757w
Manufacturing industries 821w

Workstart
184w, 241w

World Bank
Consolidated fund debates (17.03.94) 1196–215

World Summit for Social Development
217–8w, 477w

World Trade Organisation
741w
GATT 741w
Sovereignty 880–1w

Worthington, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Commonwealth Institute (17.03.94) 1054–6

Worthington, Mr Tony—continued
Roads, Greater London (17.03.94) 1061
Questions
Aid financed trade, Indonesia 740w
Aid financed trade, Malaysia 740w
Blood 889w
Blood transfusion services, NHS and private practice 889w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 473w
Eritrea, Terrorism 472–3w
Israel, Occupied territories 584w, 881w
Macedonia 474w
Occupied territories, Death 472w
Overseas trade, Malaysia 470w
Palestinians, Health aid 482–3w
Sudan, Armed conflict 472w
Sudan, Food supply 585w
Sudan, Human rights 243w
Sudan, Overseas aid 585w, 684–5w
Sudan, Peace negotiations 243w, 473w
Sudan, Sanctions 242w
Unemployment 635w

Wray, Mr Jimmy
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 245w
"This Common Inheritance White Paper" 875

Wright, Dr Tony
Debates etc.
Business questions (10.03.94) 418–9
Citizen's Charter, Points of order (16.03.94) 882–3
Questions
Hospital beds, Continuing care units 885w
Hospital consultants, NHS and private practice 558w
Local government reform, Staffordshire 675w
NHS complaints 832w
Public appointments, Dept of Employment 431w
Public appointments, Dept of Health 80–1w
Public appointments, Dept of Trade and Industry 19w
Public appointments, Northern Ireland Office 141w
Public appointments, Scottish Office 660w
Schools, Staffordshire 846w

Wymondham bypass
Construction costs 653–4w

Yorkshire and Humberside
Air force bases 750–2w, 855–8w
Bovine immunodeficiency virus 900w
Burglary 597w
Financial institutions 806–7w
Homicide 596w
Income tax 32w
Motor vehicle theft 597w
National insurance contributions 32w
Office of Water Services 747w
Police 596w, 765–6w
Police authorities 229w
Prisoners 588–90w
Prisoners on remand 772–8w
Transport supplementary grants 317–9w
Young offenders 594w

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority
Congenital abnormalities 535w

Yorkshire Water
Chartermark scheme 15

Young, Mr David
Questions
British Aerospace, Defence procurement 253w

Young, Mr David—continued
British Aerospace, Redundancy 240–1w
Clubs 169w
Clubs, Fire regulations 169w
Israel, Occupied territories 244w
Royal residences, Security 169w

Young, Rt Hon Sir George, Minister for Housing and Planning
Debates etc.
Housing Corporation, Government grants (14.03.94) 671–6
Local government, Greater London (17.03.94) 1158–64
Questions
Bed and breakfast accommodation, Local government expenditure 48w
Caravan sites, Meriden Hall 297w
City pride 677w, 877
Construction, Government grants 101–6w
Council house rents 301w, 870–1
Council housing 674w, 676w
Council housing management, Disclosure of information 417w
Council housing management, Tenants' rights 417w
Council tax, Rents 870
Flats over shops initiative 43–4w, 294w
Homelessness 292–4w

Young, Rt Hon Sir George—continued
Homelessness, Council housing 45w
House renovation grants, North West region 48–50w
Housing associations, Rents 863–4
Housing associations, Teesside 864
Housing construction, Rural areas 677w
Local government corruption, Liverpool City Council 787w
"London Making the Best Better" 793–4w
Mobile homes 107w
Private rented housing 47w
Refugees 369w
Rent arrears, London boroughs 872–3w
Rent assessment panels, Wandsworth 578w, 580w
Rent increases 41–2w
Rents 675w
Rough Sleepers Initiative 458–60w
Temporary accommodation 295w
Tenant eviction 370w
Tenant management organisations, Government grants 681w

Young offenders
Basildon 383
Doncaster 593–4w
Prisons 224w
Remand in custody 360–1w

Young offenders—continued
Secure accommodation 501w
Yorkshire and Humberside 594w

Young people
Drug abuse 171w, 381–2
Electoral Register 15–6w
European Parliament elections 15w
Marriage 833w
Training 732–3

Youth employment
Doncaster 635w

Youth training
Doncaster 808w
Industrial accidents 808–9w

Youth unemployment
Doncaster 717–8w
Leicester 739
North West region 181w

Yugoslavia
Armed forces deployment 517w, 860w
Defence expenditure 478w
Immigrants 503w
Overseas aid 517w

Zimbabwe
Deportation 471w
Public service pensions 235w

REFERENCE LIBRARY CAMBRIDGE